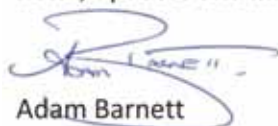


VFBV QUARTERLY SUPPLEMENT



Welcome to the latest edition of our quarterly feature supplement. The supplement includes relevant news, updates and information on current issues being pursued by VFBV on behalf of members.



Adam Barnett

CEO, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria.

Additional Resources and Updates Available Electronically

Emergency Services Tax Forecast Funding	https://tinyurl.com/vfbv-sup50
2025 Drought Relief Resources	https://tinyurl.com/vfbv-sup51
Editorial: Details Matter	https://tinyurl.com/vfbv-sup52

VFBV Quarterly Supplement Enclosures

This month's enclosures include:	Action Required:
1. State Council/AGM Special Notice	Please table and note
2. Editorial: Budget Woes	Please table and note
3. 2024/25 VFBV Volunteer Survey Results	Please table at your next meeting and pin to your noticeboard
4. 2 Minute Briefings (Joint Committee's)	Please table at your next meeting and pin to your noticeboard



VFBV | VOLUNTEER FIRE
BRIGADES VICTORIA

SPECIAL NOTICE

Annual General Meeting



This year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) is to be held on the afternoon of Sunday 5th October 2025, following State Council. The AGM is scheduled for 2:30pm.

Delegates intending to attend this year's AGM are requested to register their details with the VFBV office by the 22nd September. Following registration, delegates will be advised of relevant details.

The office can be reached via (03) 9886 1141 or via email at vfbv@vfbv.com.au

The normal business of the AGM includes confirming minutes from the previous meeting; tabling of the annual report, welcoming of new board members and annual appointment/confirmation of our auditors.



BUDGET WOES

By Adam Barnett, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

Published: 'Fire Wise' July 2025 and adapted for VFBV Quarterly Supplement

Many a politician has described budgets as not just being a collection of numbers on a page, but rather an expression of the government's values, principles and aspirations. In fact, this year's Victorian Budget papers are emblazoned with the motto "Focused On What Matters Most" so it is a telling and insightful reflection of this government's priorities. And spoiler alert – it is clearly not volunteers, fire services or CFA that matters the most.

Despite documenting a record tax hike under its new Emergency Services Tax, less of that money is making its way to CFA than ever before.

The budget papers reveal the new tax will collect \$1.6 billion dollars this year. This is the highest tax haul ever in the entire history of the preceding Fire Services Property Levy. So, with this record tax haul – surely CFA must be receiving a record-breaking budget? And if it were, government MPs would be very excited to tell everyone about it right?

So, what did this year's Parliamentary Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) inquiry into the 2025-26 budget estimates reveal over its two weeks of testimony from accountable Ministers?

If "I love you" are the three hardest words in the English language according to Hollywood and boybands, then "The CFA budget is...." must be the four hardest words for a Victorian MP to utter.

Despite hours and hours of testimony, neither the Premier, Treasurer nor Minister for Emergency Services were able to answer a very simple question - what is CFA's base budget this year? Each handballed to the other, with the Premier's testimony in particular - a sickening example of meaningless rhetoric dressed up as compassion and empathy that ultimately ignores the very people they claim to support.

The hearings confirmed that it will cost \$12M to administer the new tax. That's code for bureaucrats – and is \$2M more than what they committed to add to the CFA budget for fleet. Only in Victoria would spending on bureaucracy be more important than fire trucks.

Their non-response on the CFA budget is inconsequential however, as it is actually quite easy to calculate. If anything – their refusal to confirm what can already be calculated is a clear sign they find themselves on shaky ground.

First, let's look at the legislation itself. Section 12(d) of the applicable Act states that in the case of levy rates for each year subsequent to the 2024-2025 levy year – "(2B) The percentage of the annual funding requirements of the CFA and VicSES that are to be funded by the levy in a levy year is 95%."

Then we move to Section 12(5A) which stipulates that the Minister must publish the amount in dollars forecast for each funding recipient.

This was done through Government Gazette, dated 30 May 2025, that confirmed that 95% of CFA's forecast annual funding requirements for the upcoming year 2025/26 was \$312,004,751.

This makes it very easy to calculate that 100% of the forecast funding requirements for CFA is: \$328,426,053.68 or in other words - \$328 million. So now we compare this figure against the figure that the Treasurer tabled in PAEC last year for CFA's forecast budget for 2024/25 – which was \$337.6 million.

You don't have to be Einstein to figure out then that this year's number is about \$9 million less than the year before. That's the sixth year in a row.

Now when you heard the Government spruiking its new Emergency Services Tax and how our emergency services and volunteers were working harder than ever and needing much more support to justify the huge tax increases being imposed on property owners, where in that did you see them admit they were increasing the taxes they were collecting but would actually be giving less money to Victoria's largest volunteer emergency service whom they labelled their tax after?

The extra money collected is now being diverted to Government departments and public sector employees, making a mockery that this new tax would be supporting Victoria's front line emergency services. Don't take my word for it, refer to the Government Gazette which now shows that only \$1.1 billion of the \$1.6 billion taxes collected are actually going to CFA, FRV and SES. The other \$500M is now being sent to departments that used to already be funded under consolidated revenue which is not only \$500M in new revenue, but an extra \$500M they are no longer spending from consolidated revenue.



So, what would a real investment in CFA look like? Well – it would cost \$515M to replace every single CFA truck in the fleet that is older than 20 years – even if you could do it all at once in a single year. How much did they actually commit from their record tax haul in extra funding? - \$10M. That is not a typo. That's just three fifths of one cent for every dollar collected.

Don't fall for the \$40M figure they bandy about – that is \$10M over four years. Don't fall for the \$70M "rolling fleet" they bandy about. That's the \$10M a year for CFA (40), and \$7.5M for SES over four years (30). And don't fall for the \$110M "rolling truck" figure they bandy about. That's just the \$70M over four years for CFA and SES plus the new \$10M for FRV over four years. (40) Talk about how many ways can you spin a single depressingly tiny figure.

This is the reality of the new emergency services tax. Gouging the eyes out of Victorian property owners without actually addressing the fundamental issues of Victoria's creaking old fire truck fleet.

So, if that won't move the needle on this much needed investment what will it actually take? I shudder to think it will only take a fatality or serious injury when an old truck fails on the fire ground to spark action.

We must continue to call out the brazen spin and mischievous untruths that continue to pull the wool over the eyes of Victorians and how badly its fire service budgets are being managed. While the \$10M investment is progress, VFBV will be redoubling its efforts to educate on the ageing CFA truck fleet and the looming catastrophe of a decade of fleet and budget mismanagement.

I have also recently reiterated VFBV's support for the actions taken by the Municipal Association of Victoria in its opposition to the new tax. We have requested that councils show a pie chart on rates notices that clearly shows taxpayers how much of their emergency service tax is actually going to each emergency service. This will show how little is going to frontline services. Our analysis confirms that just 20% of the total revenue collected from this new tax will go towards CFA. 50% will go towards FRV. The remaining 30% is now being redirected away from the fire services – and will now fund other government entities.

Given it is CFA volunteers who will still be relying on fundraising to fund essential equipment, trucks and stations they require just to protect their communities – we must educate the public that only 20 cents in every dollar they are paying in the new tax will actually make its way to CFA.

We will continue our public advocacy on the new tax, and I want to thank each and every individual volunteer who has made contact with their local member of parliament to discuss the impacts the government's new tax is having on their community, and the unfair treatment of CFA in the govern-

ment's budgeting process.

And while recent rains may take drought from front of mind for some, most of our members will know these very small rainfalls will have little to no impact on long-term drought conditions across Victoria. For those in the west of the state especially – conditions continue to be dire.

VFBV has prepared a Drought Relief resource guide to assist volunteers navigate what can be a very complex and confusing array of support. Our guide attempts to outline each of the supports available and where people can go to access more information.

Just like our flood and fire relief guides, the information is dynamic and changing daily – but this collection of information in one place is hoped to make a world of difference for those really struggling. Paper copies are available from the office, so please don't hesitate to reach out and ask for one to be posted to you should you not be able to access our online resources.

On a positive note, there has been recent good engagement and discussion on the proposed revised CFA Regulations with government. Thank-you to all members who got in touch to highlight the issues of most concern to you and your brigade. While it is still too early to judge progress, I am happy with the level of consultation and engagement by Minister Ward and the Department to ensure they are very clear on the issues and which aspects may negatively affect volunteers.

For example, we continue to hold serious concerns about the imbalance of power between CFA and volunteers on matters such as injury compensation, and have advocated very strongly for changes that ensure volunteers have the same rights and protections as any other Victorian worker claiming for injury through Worksafe. Thank-you to each volunteer who has contributed to our advocacy on this issue and provided feedback to either us or EngageVictoria.

With private members bill's entering the South Australian parliament to expand SA's treatment of firefighters under their respective presumptive legislation scheme and the number of cancers covered, VFBV's advocacy continues on Victoria's scheme which now sees Victoria progressively falling behind. The SA bills also propose including PTSD in line with QLD, TAS and NT, and asbestos related cancers in line with QLD and NT.

Firefighters deserve protection from the risks they are forced to expose themselves to when rushing to the aid of their fellow citizens. Cancers do not discriminate depending on what side of a line on a map you happen to live, and neither should our cancer legislation.

While we have accomplished much, there still remains much to do.

2024-25 VFBV Volunteer Survey Summary Results



VFBV QUARTERLY SUPPLEMENT EDITION

We are pleased to present the summary results of the VFBV Volunteer Survey conducted predominantly between November 2024 and early April 2025 and is the 13th annual survey run by VFBV since its launch in 2012.

The annual VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey is an initiative by VFBV, designed by us to help capture and communicate fundamental issues as volunteers see them. The survey connects grass root volunteers directly to decision makers and allows volunteers to influence funding, priorities and initiatives aimed at improving CFA.

Our annual survey is one of the many ways that VFBV gather evidence-based opinions from CFA volunteers on the matters important to them.

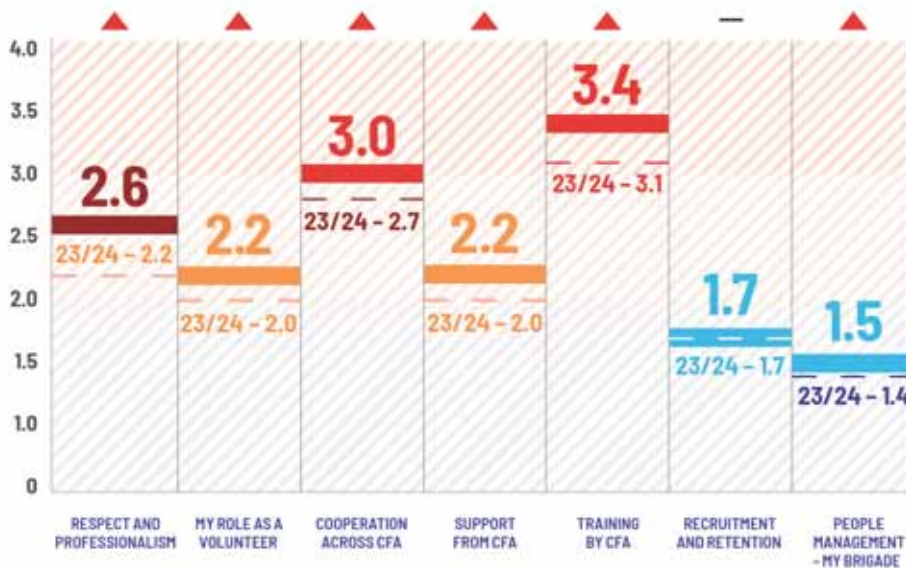
WHO RESPONDED?

WE LISTENED TO
2,115
CFA VOLUNTEERS

GENDER

18.7% 79.5%

VOLUNTEER WELFARE AND EFFICIENCY LEVEL (VolWEL) - OVERALL



NOT WORKING WELL
2.2
OVERALL VolWEL SCORE
23/24 - 2.1
WORKING WELL

▼ results have improved compared to last year ▲ results have worsened compared to last year — results are the same as last year

VOLUNTEER WELFARE & EFFICIENCY LEVEL (VOLWEL) DESCRIPTIONS

>3.0	Critical need for priority attention
2.5 - 2.9	Significant Gap - immediate attention required
2.0 - 2.4	Large Gap - remedial action to be taken
1.5 - 1.9	Mid-range Gap - need for improvement
1.0 - 1.4	Small Gap - potential for improvement
0 - 0.9	Meeting Expectations

HOW THE VOLWEL OUTCOME IS MEASURED

The survey measures CFA volunteer attitudes of the importance of each particular factor and their corresponding view of CFA's performance.

The gap between how closely Performance meets the expectation of Importance, is referred to as the Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Level (VolWEL) Outcome.

The VolWEL outcome is a simple way to illustrate where things are working well or what needs attention.



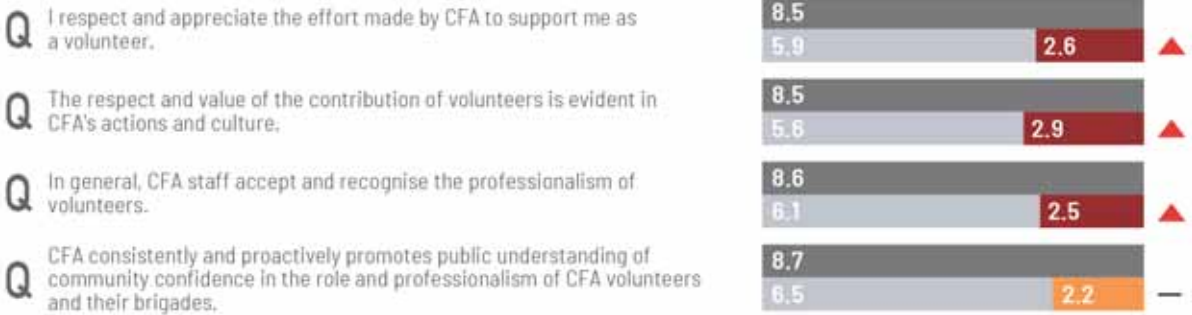
2024-25 VFBV Volunteer Survey Summary Results



SURVEY QUESTION RESULTS



RESPECT & PROFESSIONALISM



MY ROLE AS A VOLUNTEER



COOPERATION ACROSS CFA



2024-25 VFBV Volunteer Survey Summary Results



SURVEY QUESTION RESULTS



SUPPORT FROM CFA



TRAINING BY CFA



Q Do you have access to adequate internet in order to participate in online/electronic training?*



* New question inserted from 2022 survey onwards, has been excluded from the VolWEL calculation for this theme until trendline data can be established.

2024-25 VFBV Volunteer Survey Summary Results



SURVEY QUESTION RESULTS



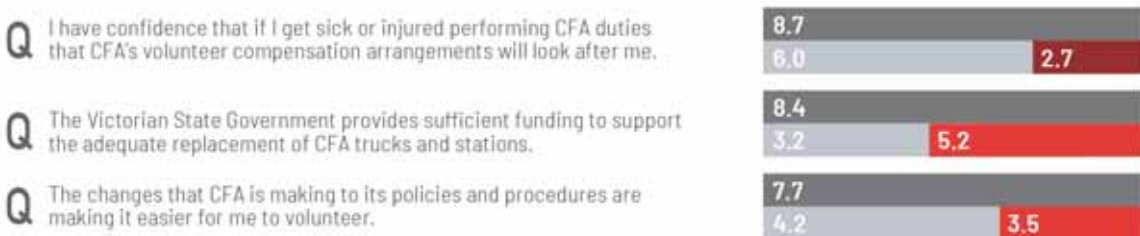
RECRUITMENT & RETENTION



PEOPLE MANAGEMENT: MY BRIGADE



2024-25 SPECIFIC QUESTIONS





2 Minute Briefing

Joint Community Safety

September 2025

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

JOINT FUEL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Joint Fuel Management Program (JFMP) is a statewide strategy for managing vegetation and reducing bushfire risk across public and private lands. Developed collaboratively by CFA and Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFM), the JFMP adopts a risk-based, ecologically sensitive approach that balances safety, environmental sustainability, land use, agriculture, and cultural values. The plan is updated annually and spans three years, with online access provided via maps and interactive platforms.

The 2024-25 Financial year saw strong program delivery, with a total of 3,734 burns completed across the state equating to 4,754 hectares. This was in excess of the target set of 3,271 burns and 4110 hectares. Burns were also conducted along an estimated 542km of roadside and rail corridors. The program's effectiveness is currently under review through multi-level debriefs (group to state level), with findings to be consolidated into thematic lessons and an action register.

The JFMP continues to face several logistical and operational challenges. As CFA is not a land manager there is a great deal of consultation and discussion that occurs and agreed upon with the various key stakeholders before a burn can be included in the JFMP. Legal and regulatory compliance remains a complex area (permits, stakeholder approvals, environmental and cultural considerations). Public perception, media scrutiny, and community expectations about burn impacts and responsibilities also present hurdles.

Planning for 2026 is underway, with 708 nominations received for potential burns. Prioritisation focuses on Year 1 deliverables, followed by Years 2 and 3. Brigades are encouraged to participate in the development of future programs by providing nominations for areas to be considered for planned burning. Nominations for burns must be made through the District first, and brigades should discuss their requirements with their ACFO, MCS and VMO for assistance.

PLANNED BURN TASKFORCE

The Planned Burn Taskforce has been active since 2022 and this year had a very productive year with 43 activations (7 cancelled), which saw 383 CFA members deployed to conduct 68 treatments. This was the Taskforce's second busiest year since it was created. Two of these deployments were to the Grampians Fire which saw members conducting burns around community assets and homes to assist in their protection. The Taskforce was also involved in a three-day deployment to Lakes Entrance during March to partner with FFMV.

Future goals of the Taskforce are the establishment of an Asset Protection Unit. This unit, which is likely to be modelled on a currently existing Canadian unit, would further support burn activities and responses by having CFA volunteers deployed ahead of a fire to prepare structures for the fire's arrival. All members who have completed General Fire Fighter can participate in the Planned Burns Taskforce. More information on registering your interest can be found in the Members area of the CFA website.

RENEWABLE ENERGY ACTION PLAN

Battery energy storage is on the rise in Australia. Australia currently has around 3 GWh of large-scale battery storage, with a further 7.8 GW under construction. There are currently around 313,000 Australian homes with installed battery systems. In Victoria the State Government is offering incentives to build 100 mid-size community batteries. In readiness for this, CFA is developing a Renewable Energy Action Plan, which aims to ensure readiness for this energy transition. The plan aims to clearly articulate CFA's role and responsibilities in relation to renewable energy production. Ensuring that CFA members are well informed and trained on how to safely respond to related incidents. A key priority is delivering consistent messaging to the community across all CFA levels and reassuring the public that brigades are well-trained and prepared. The CFA will continue participating in planning and development processes for renewable facilities, prepare business cases for government investment and to address emerging fire safety needs.



2 Minute Briefing

Joint Equipment & Infrastructure

September 2025

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

LIGHT TANKER

CFA has provided an update on the next gen Light Tanker. Key requirements include a low profile, 2000L water capacity, modern vehicle safety systems, BA capability, a maximum height of 2.6m, and a GVM of 8000kg. A roadshow from April to August 2024 featured over 100 visits across all districts, including a prominent spot at the 2024 state championships. An online survey received 110 responses, 91% were positive.

Feedback from volunteers has focused on usability, injury risk reduction, and operational efficiency, leading to over 30 design improvements which are being considered by the design team for the final build. As a result of the comprehensive feedback and great work from the working party a BA variant has been designed. 50 cab chassis have been ordered for delivery in 2025, including 6 VESEP builds for FY24/25. The body build contract is pending CFA Board approval.

BRIGADE FUNDED WORKS REQUEST FORM

Brigades have been waiting for some time for CFA to implement an improved formalised process to request station modifications when using brigade funds. A draft Brigade Funded Works form was presented to the delegates for consideration. The form has been designed to streamline the CFA approval process and provide a structured approach to managing requests funded by Brigades or grants for station modifications.

Under the proposal, the Brigade Captain will complete this form in consultation with the Land & Buildings Asset Project Officer. The form requires endorsement from the District Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) as a minimum level of operational support before it receives endorsement and approval from Land & Buildings. This ensures that the requested modifications align with operational requirements, and compliance standards. Additionally, the form captures the purpose of the proposed works, including their intended benefits for the Brigade, CFA, and the community. It also includes a detailed scope of works, any enabling works, hand-drawn plans or schematics with measurements (though not to scale), and supporting photos. Furthermore, the form will list proposed contractors, note any potential works-in-kind contributed by members or through donations, and provide cost estimates and quotes for significant expenses. It will also include written support and endorsement through the chain of command, from the District ACFO to the Regional DCO, and assess the Brigade's capacity to fund future maintenance and replacement of the asset.

For significant or high-risk works, project oversight will be managed by the Asset Project Officer (APO). The new process has been trialled successfully, with positive feedback so far, though delegates are still keen to hear from brigades involved in the pilot. Delegates have requested a comprehensive communications plan be developed to support implementation.

ENTRAPMENT CHECKLIST

In 2021, members proposed a novel approach to enhance safety during burn-over incidents by suggesting that burn-over checklists be printed on the back of deployable curtains. The need for quick access to crucial operational guidelines in high-pressure situations drove this innovative idea.

Since the inception of this proposal, the committee has engaged in extensive discussions, conducted trials, and generated prototypes to evaluate the effectiveness and practicality of this initiative. Currently, the initiative remains unfunded, but delegates have suggested retrofit could be undertaken during the annual maintenance of each appliance. In response to inquiries regarding future builds, the committee clarified that the integration of these checklists could be included in new appliance designs. Delegates have requested CFA give favourable consideration to the proposal for the installation of burn-over checklists on both existing and new appliances. This recommendation encompasses not only the approval of the checklist installations but also the funding necessary to cover the associated costs, including additional support for DMOs to complete the installations.

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

The importance of volunteer consultation has been highlighted during discussions in relation to the CFA annual firefighter memorial service. Each year, the memorial service is held to remember those firefighters who gave their lives to protect others and to honour the personal sacrifices and commitment our people make each and every day. The Memorial Service was first instigated in 1987 and is held in May each year on the closest Sunday to St Florians Day (4th May).

Feedback was received from attendees to this year's service that noted that the service underwent significant changes with no opportunity for volunteers to consider those changes prior to the event. CFA has advised the changes were made in an attempt to make the service more inclusive and non-denominational. Whilst not opposed to these objectives, delegates have reiterated that part of consultation is to build support and understanding for changes and this opportunity was missed by the lack of consultation with volunteers or the families of the deceased members. The committee has advocated for consultation to be undertaken ahead of the 2026 service to better understand the degree of secularism and the changing views and beliefs of the community over time, so that CFA volunteers and the families of the deceased remain at the forefront of the service and can be remembered in the most appropriate way possible.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION IN MEMORIUM

The committee is in the early stages of formulating a proposal for honouring and recognising deceased members' service to CFA. The proposal being discussed is to recognise volunteer CFA members through a marker that may be placed on a member's memorial tombstone. Research is being undertaken into how CFA could offer and administer this type of recognition to deceased members' families after a volunteer has passed away. The committee will continue to seek feedback and concepts on how members who have contributed through their CFA volunteer service can be recognised.

EXTERNAL REVIEW OF RECRUITMENT AND ONBOARDING

The committee received a presentation and then workshop delivered by Right Lane Consulting to review the current journey a new, transferring or transitioning member must undertake. The current journey follows members through an expression of interest, registration or review prior to CFA approval. The workshop allowed for feedback relating to various stages including Working with Children Checks (WWCC), police record check, medical assessment and provided opportunity to highlight what things are missing, opportunities for improvement and what is working well. The review is ongoing, and key changes to the process to be considered in line with recent updates to the Volunteer Recruitment Hub (VRH), recruitment campaign and branching into the induction space once onboarding has been finalised. Branching into the induction phase provides new opportunity and scope for exploring ways to retain new members once they have successfully joined CFA. CFA has also been asked to look at opportunities to review the organisations retention policies to highlight what needs to be done to ensure members continue to serve the community through their volunteer journey.

UPDATED ONLINE FUNDRAISING FORM

CFA's Brigade Finance Policy and Procedure sets out requirements for fundraising by brigades. In line with the updated CFA Regulations released on 31 July 2025, CFA Finance has reviewed and updated the brigade/group application to fundraise form in place of the old schedule 10s. The updated form is available via Members Online and can be accessed by all brigade members and with the support of a brigade motion, members can submit the electronic form to the District Business Manager for review. There will continue to be a paper form for brigades with limited connectivity and brigades should talk to their district business manager or the district office for assistance. Each fundraising type will require separate applications, however a fundraising event over a duration of time may be included in a single application. Feedback and support are available via CFA.brigade.finance@cfa.vic.gov.au.

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

FIRE MEDICAL RESPONSE UPDATE

FMR has been operating for over 6 months now and the many reports of gratitude from communities and Ambulance Victoria prove the amazing work being done by the participating brigades. CFA's FMR team continue to deliver the next round of training, following a break over the summer period. The program now has 31 brigades committed to the program. The next group of brigades have been identified and the FMR team will be visiting the relevant Brigades, BMTs and District Staff to consult on the offer of a place in the program and the detail of the program arrangements. The team are now working their way through the new Patient Care Record (PCR) reporting tool which was launched earlier in the year. This application is available to FMR and EMR brigade members and allows them to complete both their FIRS Online and PCR records all in one easy-to-use digital platform. The application also takes ECG data from used defibs and sends all the information to Ambulance Victoria for patient audit and research purposes. Brigades involved in FMR meet regularly to provide support to each other and get updates on any issues that may arise from the calls they attend.

ROAD RULE 79A

The State Government announced changes to Road Rule 79A earlier this year and CFA issued an Operations Bulletin to explain to members who drive CFA vehicles of how the changes will affect brigade response. Road Rule 79A was first introduced in 2017 and requires drivers to slow to 40km/h when passing stationary emergency or enforcement vehicles with flashing red, blue, magenta, or yellow lights; and approach stationary emergency services or enforcement vehicles at a speed that will allow them to stop safely if required and not increase their speed until a safe distance from the scene. The changes were that Road Rule 79A has been extended to include accident towing, breakdown towing, roadside assistance, and all incident response service vehicles. CFA drivers are still required to comply with SOP 12.02 which outlines requirements when driving through speed limit locations with road works, school zones and to always give way to pedestrians. If you are unclear on the changes Operations Bulletin 002/2025 can be accessed through members online or talk to your brigade's driving co-ordinator.

RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

CFA has reported that it is continuing to develop a series of 6 specialty capability plans for Respiratory Protection, Hazmat Response, Alpine Response, Marine Response, Specialist Rescue and Fire Investigation. The proposed plans will set the direction the organisation will take for the next 10 years. Volunteers will remember the Respiratory Protection trial that was undertaken by 300 volunteers over the 2022-23 fire season. Data from this trial is being used to plan for the future state of respiratory protection for all members regardless of the type of incident and delegates look forward to seeing some tangible results from the information already collected. The Respiratory Protection Trial was funded to research alternate wildfire respiratory protection products and delegates have requested CFA look at other fire services and move swiftly to ensure firefighters this fire season are adequately protected.

FIRE SEASON PREPARATION

With much of the state experiencing significant rainfall deficits and the weather bureaus forecasting grim predictions for the remainder of the year, CFA Operations has requested that all districts be operationally ready by the 1st October. Districts are working closely with all agencies across the state to ensure a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to this year's Fire Danger Period. It is anticipated that aviation resources will be engaged earlier this year, and plans are in place for an expected early start. Brigades are again requested to ensure all operational members have completed their annual entrapment drill, ensure their tree hazard awareness is current and have completed GFF. Members are reminded to be aware of their own limitations when responding to incidents, monitor fatigue at all times, hydrate and look out for each other and stay safe this fire season.

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

SECTION 29 AUDIT

CFA has reported to delegates that KPMG has been engaged to audit the Section 29 process and will report back to the committee on the proposed future state. Many volunteers have varying stories regarding Section 29s from a meeting that has taken hours to complete through to the Section 29 being undertaken without members or BMT's presence. Section 29s have gone through many changes over the years since they were introduced in the current format back in 2004 with the intent on increasing the efficiency in the process and setting standards across all brigades and regions. It is hoped that the audit will allow CFA to reset priorities and provide a clear consistent criterion when and how Section 29s are undertaken. Delegates have reported to VFBV that some districts are opting to not undertake Section 29s this year which is concerning. The delegates have expressed the importance of a solid Section 29 process and development of extensive training that may be required for catchment officers who sit down with a brigade throughout the process. We will continue to update members as we go through and understand any possible changes.

IMT TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS

In the role of performance improvement and CFA being able to meet the obligations of the Act, CFA has requested that the Training team prioritise the development and rollout of IMT training in all areas. There is clear gap in IMT capability for the organisation and a shortfall at all levels. Volunteers have highlighted that the availability of IMT training for volunteers has been lacking for some time and are keen to understand how CFA will bridge the gap. The Chief Officer has stated for some time that districts need to be self-sufficient at Level 2 incidents to maintain local coverage for at least the first 48 hours. Concern was expressed that training that has been available is 'city based' and not practicable for most volunteers to attend. Delegates have commented that a more decentralised training capability needs to be developed urgently and be available immediately given the long pathway for people to progress through this level of training.

FIRST ON SCENE

Operational Performance has developed a series of articles titled 'First on Scene', these are a part of the Lessons Management Centre and are focused on steps you can take in the first 20 minutes of arriving on scene, rather than how to manage the entire incident. The resource has taken experiences from volunteers and real incidents and is aimed at CFA members who attend incidents and may not be familiar with the situation they are confronted with. The new series of First on Scene has some guiding principles that give hints on establishing control in an incident you may not be familiar with, how to effectively evaluate a fire to determine a course of action in size-ups, how to follow the correct process for a Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA) and the best way to provide a situational report to describe the current situation and assist with response and planning. The current incidents of interest are responding to an aircraft incident, responding to a hazmat incident and how to manage a house fire without BA wearers. The First on Scene series is a great training resource and is available to download on Members online - <https://www.members.cfa.vic.gov.au/brigades-operational/operational/lessons-management-centre/first-on-scene-series>.

INCIDENT INCREASES

CFA has reported over 6,087 incidents for the first quarter 2025/26. This is putting significant pressure on service delivery across the State after such a busy summer. There is an understanding that as the incredible population growth in the country areas continues the organisation will have to be more flexible and adaptive to meet the demand. The gaps in capability will have to be acted on as soon as they are highlighted, and the involvement of District Planning Committees, Groups and Brigades is critical. Section 29 reports will need to look forward at possible gaps in service delivery and actions will need to become a primary focus in some areas so that there are no gaps in capability as growth occurs. This will also put more pressure on the district's ability to overcome and plan for the changes in the future. Planning to improve service delivery will be critical to positive outcomes for the ever-changing communities.

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

INJURY RECOVERY REVIEW

As a result of VFBV concerns with how volunteer compensation was operating within CFA, CFA agreed to engage an external provider to undertake a review of the CFA Injury Recovery Model (which includes the Volunteer Compensation Scheme). As part of that review, the provider (NOUS) conducted face to face and virtual interviews with a number of injured members, CFA staff involved in the process, VFBV and reviewed 22 survey responses submitted by injured members to the review team outlining their experience.

The external review has validated VFBV's concerns and highlighted that while the current model serves most volunteers well for simple and straightforward claims, there are fundamental issues that arise as injuries become more complex.

Among the key insights, the review has highlighted that the system can be process-heavy and documentation driven making it difficult to navigate; return to work and return to life supports are underdeveloped; the impacts and inconsistency that arises when there is high staff turnover, heavy caseloads and capability gaps among the team; the complexity where CFA is carrying out the dual role as administrator and final decision maker of claims; instances where communication has been poor, felt unclear and lacked empathy; and the significant challenges and complexity in providing loss of income support for self-employed volunteers. An important insight for brigades was the impact that brigade leadership and culture can have, and the effect this can have on timely injury reporting and support for the injured member.

VFBV has been complimentary of CFA's commitment to the review and sharing its preliminary outcomes but has reminded CFA that the review has for the most part highlighted the same issues that VFBV has been raising for some time now. While good progress has been made on reviewing processes, delegates are keen to see tangible and timely progress on steps taken to address the issues identified and the ongoing commitment required from CFA to deliver. VFBV will continue to monitor, and keep members updated on progress.

CULTURE REVIEW

In September 2021, Dr. Helen Zsoke AO and Allen and Clarke led an independent review into CFA culture and issues management at CFA. Approximately 200 volunteers participated in interviews with Allen and Clarke. Allen and Clarke have again been engaged by CFA to evaluate progress of CFA's response to the 10 recommendations made. In early discussions, it is clear the review has identified gaps and ongoing problems with CFA compared to best practice in similar organisations. Diversity and inclusion and gender equality have a 'long way to go' and complaints and issue resolution were identified as major concerns for CFA, citing long time frames, issues becoming more complex to manage and workload for the issue resolution team as contributing factors. Volunteer and stakeholder engagement took place during July and August, with delegates noting this was a very short time frame without notice. During this time, one on one interviews were conducted, both face to face and virtually, with approximately 45 members. 5 Focus Groups were also held in all 5 Regions. This was an important opportunity for volunteers who have been involved in the CFA complaint process, either as a complainant or respondent, to speak directly to their experience. The committee look forward to being briefed on the outcome(s) of this important work and will keep volunteers updated accordingly.

CFASAFE UPDATE

CFA provided the committee with an update on the look and feel of the new CFASafe, with enhanced capability to report and manage incidents, improved reporting for suspected asbestos incidents and a mobile app (Riskware) to include reporting and hazard inspections in one app. VFBV delegates raised concerns with applicable fields already being populated and this could cause problems for volunteers distracted or hurrying through and missing changing these populated fields. CFA assured the committee this is in line with best practice. VFBV would suggest volunteers take their time to ensure the correct information is populated in each available field before submitting their CFA Safe report.



2 Minute Briefing

Joint Technology & Innovation

September 2025

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

MAJOR PROJECTS UPDATE

The Radio Replacement Program reached a major milestone with all districts having completed training on the new sets. There are over 9,300 portables delivered, with all districts now completed. With an average of 75-80 vehicles being completed each week - the installation of the new mobile radio's into vehicles is also progressing well with all vehicles expected to be completed by mid-September. There was huge interest at the project's stand at this year's Championships in Mooroopna which flowed into the district-based Train the Trainer sessions as well. The project team has developed a set of posters and fact sheets for brigades to pin up in station to help members familiarise themselves with the new sets, which are available through the members online portal.

The Mobile Data Capability Project continues to develop a user-friendly way of members accessing real time information and data to support field operations to improve safety and improve operational efficiency. CFA, with support of the CFA & Brigades Donations Trust, has purchased 950 tablets to be installed into primary response vehicles including pumpers, tankers and command and control vehicles. Work has begun across many Districts with over 400 docks being installed into vehicles nominated by the districts. The project team is working diligently towards completion of this project for this year's fire season.

CFA's ICT strategy is well underway with multiple projects including the introduction of the new Service Now system. BA Exchange Swap & Go workshops are also underway with the intent being for brigades to use a mobile app to swap cylinders across different locations. This is intended to reduce the time volunteers spend refilling cylinders. For a long time now volunteers have commented on the outdated process for FEM brigades to undertake their reporting and invoicing. A new app will now replace the antiquated manual process and is expected to be ready for use in the last quarter of 2025.

DIGITAL STORE

CFA launched the long-awaited Digital Stores which has been welcomed by volunteers who have been asking for an online ordering system for some time. The online ordering platform is intended to streamline the ordering of goods across the organisation. The aim of Digital Stores is to create efficiencies in the ordering for volunteers and districts. Members can personally order PPC and PPE through a brigade and district authorisation process that will be consistent across the state. Workwear, dress uniform, operational support items, protective equipment and merchandise call all be ordered through the platform with the ability to track and monitor at what stage the order is at.

Version 1 of a CFA Digital Store has started with an upgrade expected in November; additional functions and user experience enhancements will occur over the course of 2025 and member feedback and suggestions can be made at digitalstore@cfa.vic.gov.au

WORKZONE

Maintenance requests for fleet, land and buildings as well as protective equipment can now be actioned through the new WorkZone application also available online. The new WorkZone app can be used for requesting maintenance, reporting faults through land and building services as well as fleet and personal protective equipment.

This app will replace the online/email systems currently used and will allow the CFA maintenance teams to quickly review your request and plan for the rectification in a timely manner. WorkZone can also track the progress of members request in real time. Search "Workzone" in Members Online to locate the portal.

Quick snapshot of the priority issues and actions from discussions between CFA and VFBV.

CFA SAFE DRIVING COURSE

VFBV delegates continue to advocate for practical and accessible training that supports volunteer safety, particularly in high-risk activities such as driving CFA appliances. Driving remains one of the most dangerous tasks CFA members undertake and incidents involving vehicles have been a consistent area of concern for some time.

CFA advised that it has now released a Safe Driving Training Course available online through the Learning Management System (LMS). The course is designed to improve awareness of rules, regulations and laws that govern the driving of CFA vehicles in both emergency and non-emergency situations. The online course also aims to make members aware of the highest risk hazards that emergency vehicle drivers are likely to encounter.

All members who drive CFA vehicles, regardless of whether they are currently Code 1 endorsed or not, are strongly encouraged to complete this course. While the new SOPs for driving CFA vehicles are still being finalised, early indications are that this course will likely become mandatory for all Code 1 drivers once those changes are introduced.

Members can access the course by logging into the LMS and searching for “Safe Driving.” For Brigades who do not have appropriate internet access, the course is available to be delivered in face to face or by arrangement with your District support team.

COMPARTMENT FIREFIGHTING PROPS

CFA State Training has invested in new Compartment Fire Behaviour training props. These will enhance the practical training available to volunteers undertaking urban firefighting qualifications. These new training props are designed to support and extend the learning outcomes of the Respond to Urban Fire and Suppress Urban Fire training courses. They allow for realistic demonstrations of key fire behaviour concepts, such as the movement and impact of the thermal layer. Unlike traditional burn cells, these new props allow for the safe burning of actual household items under controlled conditions, while capturing and treating exhaust gases to minimise environmental impact. This type of advanced training gives members a more authentic learning experience while maintaining the highest level of safety and compliance standards.

Initially the two props will be installed at VEMTC Bangholme and Central Highlands, with the potential for expansion to other training sites in future. The props are similar to those already in use by other agencies for advanced structural firefighting training and represent a significant step forward in aligning the organisations training with contemporary industry best practice. CFA is now reviewing training materials to ensure they align to industry standards.

FIRST AID

Following a lengthy and frustrating interruption to First Aid training, CFA has now resumed regular delivery of courses through the new provider, Healthcorp. The disruption began when the contract with the previous provider, Allens Training, ended in mid-2024. It took several months for CFA to complete the procurement of a new provider and further time for the new provider to establish systems and processes to deliver the training.

Therefore, it was with some relief that Training Committee delegates have been informed that Healthcorp has been delivering approximately 100–120 courses per month since April this year. While feedback on the courses and administration offered has been generally positive, some brigades and members have reported unsatisfactory experiences. Anyone experiencing trouble accessing a course or has any serious issues with course delivery they should report their experience, including the date and location of the course, to CFA via training@cfa.vic.gov.au.