



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

Address: 9/24 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East, 3151
 Email: vfbv@vfbv.com.au
 Telephone: 9886 1141
 Chief Executive Officer: Andrew Ford

Post: PO Box 453, Mt Waverley, 3149
 Website: www.vfbv.com.au
 Fax: 9886 1618
 State President: Nev Jones AFSM



RED PAPER

We encourage every volunteer to take CFA's Red Paper survey online – member input is open until 27 March and the survey consists of three questions.

While many volunteers feel CFA has been heavily scrutinised, reviewed and subjected to any number of external inquiries in recent years, the Red Paper is about CFA making its own decisions and setting its own path for the coming 10 years.

Naturally, practical input from volunteers on the front line is essential.

CFA says the Red Paper will inform its engagement with its stakeholders and Government about future investment, and give it authoritative evidence about what it needs and why; from fire trucks and stations, to new front line or support staff, community programs, technology innovation and research.

The survey asks three questions about: how the risks faced by communities will change, the changes CFA needs to make and what CFA should focus on achieving over the next 10 years.

You can find the Red Paper survey at <http://cfa.engagement-hq.com/red-paper>

FIRE WISE: SHARING AND BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

By Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

It won't have been missed by most of you that there has been a name change to this important publication.

Some people might struggle with this I know, others will love it, and some won't care – what's in a name, some might say.

So what's in the name? In the past and certainly into the future, this publication is one of the many important channels for information to be passed on, for first hand stories to be shared in order that we collectively learn, pass on knowledge, and as the name suggests, get wiser.

In CFA we talk a lot about the value of local knowledge, of organisational memory, and of the invaluable practical knowhow that comes from years of on ground experience.

In today's dynamic world the value and importance of learning and gaining knowledge through the passing down of stories and first hand experiences should not be underestimated.

Talking with a Sector Commander after one of our recent big fires, he reflected on the gratitude of local community members (and many of these were relative newcomers) and their thankfulness that the CFA "just knew how the fire would behave", "knew what to do" and "seemed amazingly calm" despite it being years since that community had experienced such a severe fire.

The training and experience of volunteers on that fire-ground was abundantly clear but there was also a deeper knowledge and inherited memory of the way things

would pan out that made an enormous difference to achieving the terrific outcome and the Sector Commander reflected on the dozens of stories that had been shared down through time that built their collective knowledge.

So what's in the name – *Fire Wise* – a vital communication tool to share information and stories so that we can build capability, celebrate, remember and learn.

Congratulations on being decisive enough to take the step Gordon, and I look forward to the value and role of this publication being widely recognised into the future.

CFA RED PAPER

Elsewhere on this page, you will see details of CFA's Red Paper, and I urge you to see this as a great opportunity to shape CFA's future direction.

One of the things of most



concern to VFBV and volunteers in recent years is that external factors have too often overridden CFA's setting of its own priorities.

VFBV's detailed submission to the State Government's Fire Services Review plus many previous VFBV submissions are already a key part of volunteer input to the Red Paper, and I urge you to have your say as both a contribution to the outcome and a form of support for this proactive decision making by CFA.

VOLUNTEER VIDEO FOR THE COMMUNITY

VFBV's clever animated video is getting a great reception. It has now been viewed an estimated 50,000 times online and will be available soon from your District Council for use in local presentations.

The video tells the story in simple pictures about the huge volunteer surge capacity that allows CFA to call on thousands of trained, experienced firefighters at any time, the professional levels of training and the wide range of roles that volunteers perform.

Your District Council will soon receive copies of the video on USB memory stick, for use by Brigades planning open days, public events, community information meetings or discussions with local Members of Parliament, Councils and other decision makers.

If you haven't seen the video, visit www.youtube.com/user/vfbvtv

TATURA'S TRIPLE SUCCESS

Hosts Tatura have won their third VFBV Urban Junior Championships in a row, with an impressive performance, taking the Dry, Wet and Under 14 Aggregates to win the Grand Aggregate by a clear margin.

At the end of the day, Tatura A came home with 89 points, leading Sale A with 41 and Moe A with 37 points.

Moe A and Sale A also appeared in the top three in most of the Aggregates, and other strong performers were Koo Wee Rup A and Melton A.

The championships attracted more than 700 competitors in 79 teams representing 47 Brigades from all over Victoria and two from Western Australia.

For more details of the weekend, see page 11 of this edition of Fire Wise.



YOUTH NETWORK

The VFBV Youth Network will shortly begin to recruit young people in each District.

It is a key initiative for the year and will give younger volunteers a permanent place in VFBV's decision making at local and state levels.

Each District Panel will be made up of five to 10 young volunteers aged 18 to 35 years who will send a representative to a VFBV State Youth Advisory Committee that will inform the VFBV Board and State Council.

The District Panels will deal with issues from a youth perspective, not just youth specific issues, and like the existing VFBV District Councils, each District Panel will work to resolve issues at the local level wherever possible, as well as raising statewide matters at state level.

We are now recruiting local champions in each District to support our young people and start identifying and inviting those young people to be involved as potential youth representatives.

ULTRALIGHT PROTECTION SYSTEMS

The VFBV/CFA Joint Equipment & Infrastructure Committee is investigating crew protection systems for CFA's light vehicles.

There are over 150 ultra-light tankers and slip-on vehicles that were not covered under the crew protection system retrofit due to a lack of a suitable system.

Two new products designed to provide protection against radiant heat and direct flame contact in the event of a burn-over are now being evaluated; a Polymer Gel System and a Compressed Air Foam System.

Both products have shown promising early signs, with experimental testing during field burn-overs in moderate bushfire intensity conditions planned for early autumn 2016. The committee will keep you updated.

Survey coming soon

Register now for the 2016 VFBV Volunteer Welfare & Efficiency Survey.

A record 2,500 volunteers took part last year, and the new VICSES version of the survey achieved success in its first year.

The detailed 2015 survey report will be out soon, taking volunteers' opinions and comments to VFBV and CFA Boards, CFA's senior management, VICSES, the Emergency Management Commissioner and the Minister for Emergency Services.

Each year's results are compared with previous years' figures to show trends in how volunteers feel on each issue. It is a co-operative process; VFBV and the CFA Board have studied successive years' results and continue to use the survey to highlight aspects of volunteer support that need attention.

Sign up by sending your name, Brigade/Unit and District or Region to vfbv@vfbv.com.au or request a posted survey on paper on (03) 9886 1141.

D13 President moves on

VFBV District 13 President Bill Watson AFSM has stepped down from the role after distinguished service to the volunteers and career staff of the District.

Bill has retired and is moving to Wonthaggi, where he has volunteered in the past, and will continue his volunteering with CFA and his support of VFBV.

At District 13, Bill has shown strong leadership on the Firefighters' Cancer Law issue and all aspects of the welfare of volunteers.

While his operational commitment has been exceptional, he has truly made his mark as a networker who has reached out to those volunteer families struggling in the aftermath of fires, drought and floods, and was recognised with CFA's Outstanding Service Medal for his work in the wake of the 2009 fires.

WELFARE PATROL

In the wake of the major fires of summer, VFBV delegates, officials and Board Members have been hard at work, meeting with Brigades in the affected areas and conducting welfare checks on individual volunteers.

We have also posted a fresh list of government support services for people affected by bushfires and other natural disasters, on the VFBV web-

Great news on scanners

VFBV, with the support of CFA, has secured extra funding for more subsidised digital scanners for Brigades and Groups.

All Tier 1 orders have been dispatched to Brigades and Groups, and those who placed Tier 2 orders for any remaining

units will now receive their full order, rather than a share of any that were left over after Tier 1.

Brigades with Tier 2 orders have been sent notification and have until 15 May to send in their payment for the additional subsidised units.

Over 7,000 scanners have already been delivered under the VESEP funded scheme negotiated by VFBV and CFA.

VFBV first raised the need for a subsidy scheme in 2010, with a survey that revealed thousands of scanners and listening sets that would become obsolete when CFA radio channels switched to digital technology.

site at www.vfbv.com.au

If you are in need of practical assistance or could use a sympathetic ear, don't forget that CFA Peer Support is available through your CFA District Office, contact your VFBV State Councillor or talk to your own Brigade.

THE LATEST NEWS

Get the latest in our email newsletter or VFBV's popular Two Minute Briefing from the VFBV/CFA Joint Committees. Register at www.vfbv.com.au - click on the VFBV Newsletter box.

Join the discussion on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/cfaval or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/vfbv or on Instagram @volunteer_fire_brigades_vic