



# 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



## ROLE OF GROUP: GET INVOLVED

Having waited since 2012 for the latest CFA review to strengthen the role of the Group, the VFBV/CFA Joint Operations Committee is disappointed with the lack of progress or CFA leadership, and has endorsed a plan for a volunteer-led review instead.

The review will gather feedback from all Groups to arrive at a formal position for which volunteers can advocate.

Starting after the Fire Danger Period, we will need representatives from all Districts to lead and coordinate discussion. We will also use the feedback from CFA's previous review as well as discussing the many ideas that may have been rejected by CFA at the time.

In the previous review, VFBV advocated for;

- Greater support and recognition from CFA to Groups and the Group structures in local command and control
- Greater flexibility in how Groups can structure themselves to accommodate and respect local and regional differences and flexibility to match operating models to local risks. A 'one size fits all' model is not supported.
- Strengthening the chain of command to empower and enhance the capability and capacity for local command and control being exercised by CFA members at the local level ensuring that local participation continues as incidents grow in size and complexity
- Systems of work that recognise and enhance how Brigades, Groups, OOs and RDOs interact and support each other in Operational Readiness & Response, Training & Mentoring and Community Education
- Strengthening the role of Groups in assisting Brigades building local capability for Incident Management and volunteer upskilling and mentoring for Level 2 and 3 incident management roles
- Greater support and recognition of the important role of Group Comms including role, systems and processes in supporting local incidents and deployments, and recognition in CAD processes and procedures of this vital role
- Greater support and recognition of the important role Groups play in readiness, pre-incident planning & coordination, strike team resourcing & deployment, maintaining situational awareness and training delivery

All members can share their thoughts, and VFBV will help Groups and Districts to participate in structured discussions and share information from neighbouring Groups and Districts.

To get involved, contact VFBV at vfbv@vfbv.com.au or (03) 9886 1141 and we will record your details.

## CUSHIONS FOR ROPS

Arcadia Fire Brigade members have briefed the VFBV/CFA Joint Equipment & Infrastructure Committee on a prototype cushion for use in vehicles with rear deck roll over protection.

As many volunteers would know, the solid fibreglass ROP seat can be hard on your back and very slippery when cornering, and the cushions offer benefits in firefighter safety, back injury reduction and firefighter comfort on long duration trips.

The Joint Committee has asked that the cushions be field tested by three Brigades in District 22, and they will also be offered for testing by Brigades in other Districts over the summer whilst analysis is completed.

The Joint Committee had previously authorised a VESEP grant to support the trial, and VFBV thanks the Arcadia Fire Brigade for this pro-active initiative. Cushions in Proban, Nomex and marine canvas are being field and burn tested over summer.

## CHAMPS JUST WEEKS AWAY

Teams all over Victoria and interstate are well into their training for the 2017 VFBV State Championships, and competition starts in a few days.

The VFBV State Urban Junior Championships will take place at Tatura on 25/26 February 2017, with 700 competitors in 75 teams from 45 Brigades including one from WA.

The VFBV State Urban Senior Championships will be at Bendigo on 11 to 13 March 2017, with 59 teams competing, including four from WA and one from Carterton in New Zealand.

The VFBV State Rural Championships will take place at Wodonga on 1 and 2 April 2017. Information is being sent to Brigades by mail, or see the VFBV website www.vfbv.com.au for entry forms.

## Media report has volunteers concerned

By Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

Most of us are now well and truly into the 2017 year. I know many of you had a chance to relax over Christmas and January, while others were busier than ever.

It has been a quiet summer to date with expectations in some parts of the state still anticipating later in February and March to be our challenging times with regard to larger fires.

Fingers crossed this doesn't eventuate but as ever I know CFA Brigades will rise to whatever challenge confronts us.

VFBV has received dozens of calls from volunteers concerned about recent media reports revealing that the Victorian Government may secretly be considering restructuring CFA to create a volunteer-only service for rural Victoria and a new body to include all paid firefighters to service metropolitan/urban areas and regional centres.

VFBV has had no contact from CFA or Government regarding such a restructure and there has been no consultation on this topic since the Victorian State Government Fire Services Review conducted in 2015.

In response to that independent review of the Victorian Fire Services, the current Government confirmed that CFA and MFB would not be

amalgamated at any level. That review provided a road map and commitment to consult with VFBV and volunteers on a number of key future directions issues, but much of this work has not yet commenced. For anyone to now be secretly and arbitrarily talking about major structural change without working through the issues and process identified by the Fire Services Review would be bizarre; a slap in the face for volunteers and an absolute abandonment of the obligations set down in the CFA Volunteer Charter.

VFBV would be concerned with any change to the current CFA integrated service model or structural change to the fire service that diminishes volunteer capacity generally and in particular any change that erodes CFA volunteer capacity in outer metropolitan Melbourne and regional centres.

CFA volunteers from outer metropolitan Melbourne and regional centres are vital to Victoria's surge capacity for major fires and other emergencies. Any change that diminishes CFA volunteer capacity will not only mean significant cost, but will also mean that Victoria will not have the firefighting capacity required to respond to major

bushfires and other disasters.

CFA's own turnout data shows that any normal summer can mean hundreds of incidents a day, calling on thousands of firefighters at any one time, requiring CFA Brigades to maintain service delivery in the local patch and at the same time drawing on the enormous pool of ready, trained volunteers to deploy across the state (and often interstate) to major events. The same data also shows that as major fires occur and/or continue for days on end, up to 40% of the firefighting resources need to be drawn from volunteer Brigades in the greater metropolitan Melbourne area and regional provincial centres.

As an example, over four days in mid-February 2013, CFA responded to 695 incidents with more than 2,500 trucks in the field, many from the greater Melbourne area.

The map on this page uses CFA turnout data from that time to show crews responding to major, simultaneous fires at Donnybrook, Harrierville and Aberfeldy. The yellow lines show the dependence on predominantly volunteer crews from metro Melbourne. Of 103 Brigades at the Donnybrook fire, 69 were from outer Melbourne, and of



915 CFA personnel deployments, 711 were from the metro area, 98% of them volunteers.

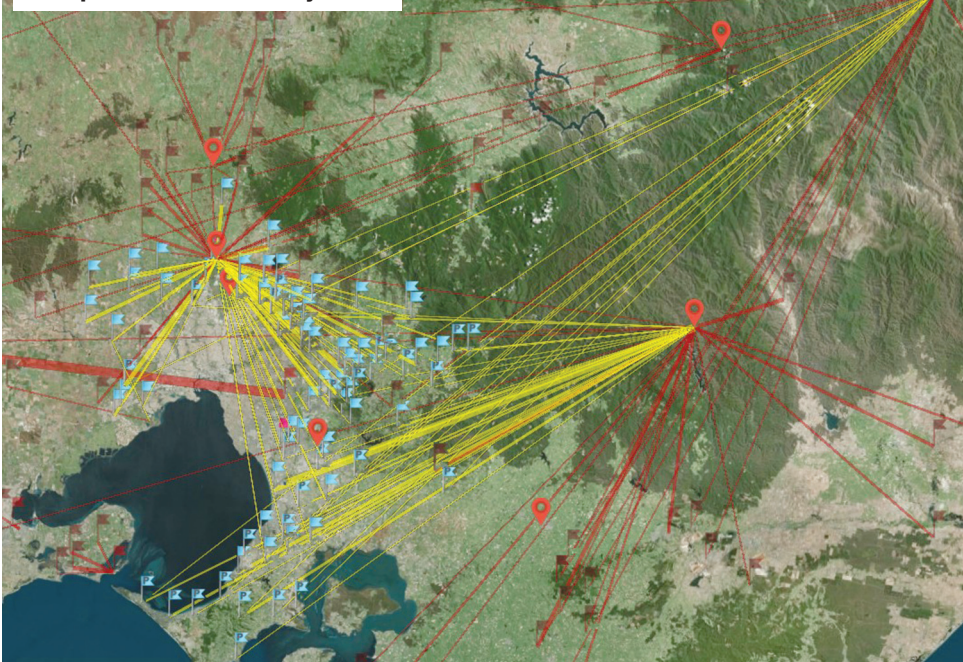
For now, Minister Merlino has said that talk of any structural change to the fire services or any change to the current CFA model is mere speculation. If we are to take the Minister's comments on face value, we can take his word to mean that there is no plan to announce a change.

Along with volunteers across Victoria, we will be watching this space very carefully and will advise Brigades if we hear any more.

Any enhancements that strengthen volunteer capacity and Victoria's firefighting capacity will certainly be embraced and we look forward to working actively with Government, CFA, EMV or whoever, on such changes. At the same time, we have a duty to highlight and seek to avoid any changes that intentionally or unintentionally erode volunteer capacity or Victoria's capacity to deal with the frequent occurrence of major and concurrent long duration fires experienced most summers.

For now, we should keep our focus on protecting our communities and as opportunity presents have a chat with decision-makers and your local community networks, MPs and other community leaders to ensure they understand why the current CFA service model in Melbourne's outer metropolitan areas is absolutely fundamental to Victoria having the capacity to mobilise the large numbers of highly trained volunteer firefighters required for peak load and surge capacity associated with major state-level emergencies, including bushfires.

Snapshot: 20 February 2013



## Australasian champs

Expressions of Interest are open until 1 March, for the championships at Carterton, New Zealand, on 17 to 19 November 2017.

Send Brigade name and contact details to j.laing@vfbv.com.au or call 9886 1141

## PAGER FAULT REPORTS

The VFBV/CFA Joint Communications & Technology Committee has some encouraging news on the reporting and resolving of problems with the current generation of pagers.

The Joint Committee receives detailed reporting on the number of EAS Pager observation reports submitted, including the types of issues, the time taken to investigate, and the results.

Since implementing this reporting cycle, the Joint Committee has seen a significant reduction in the time taken to resolve issues and the quality of reporting. The three most common faults are; not receiving messages, physical damage to the pager and lost or stolen pagers.

It's important for volunteers to lodge EAS fault reports on any problems with pagers, which helps to identify network performance issues as well as monitoring the status of the pagers. The Joint Committee has requested that CFA investigate and prioritise the introduction of Electronic Observation Reports in addition to the current system, which would provide more timely feedback to the member.

CFA has agreed to investigate.

## AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS

VFBV District 5 President and former CFA Board Member Don Robertson is one of six CFA members awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) on Australia Day 2017.

Also awarded the AFSM for distinguished service were; Anthony Archer, Henry Barton, William Bowery, Paul King and Graham Petrie.

Seven CFA volunteers were awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM): Alan Stafford, Alexander Carmody, Athol Graham, Thomas Heaney, Ivan Lee, Neville Oddie and John Robinson.

The honours are well earned recognition of many years of service to the community, and our congratulations go to all of the recipients.

## MORE FOR ONLINE SUBSCRIBERS

More than 1,000 VFBV subscribers now receive this page via direct email. You can sign up to receive this information, VFBV's popular Two Minute Briefing from the VFBV/CFA Joint Committees and other information direct to your personal email.

Register at [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au) by clicking on the VFBV Newsletter box.

Our Facebook page is at [www.facebook.com/cfaval](http://www.facebook.com/cfaval) and you can follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/vfbv](http://www.twitter.com/vfbv) or on Instagram @volunteer\_fire\_brigades\_vic