



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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44th Junior Championships

Tatura has won its fourth successive VFBV State Junior Championship with an impressive performance, coming 1st in 10 of the 18 events and creating a new record time in the Y Coupling 4 Competitors, Under 17 Years.

The Tatura team had a significant lead in the final Grand Aggregate with 103 points, from Melton A on 37 points and Harvey A (W.A.) on 34 points. Tatura also won both the Dry and Wet Aggregates, as well as both the Under 14 Years Aggregate and the Under 17 Years Aggregate.

Other strong performances came from Harvey and Melton – Melton with 4 teams, were 2nd in the Dry Aggregate, 2nd and 3rd in the Under 14 Years Aggregate, and 2nd in the Grand Aggregate. Harvey, which travelled from WA with two teams, was

PROP FUNDING

Despite significant work and progress on the design of an electrical safety mobile trailer prop back in 2014/15 CFA, funding for the prop lapsed and is no longer available, leaving the project completely un-funded.

VFBV is advocating for these mobile props to be fully funded and reprioritised. Electrical Safety and especially skills maintenance for Low Voltage Fuse Removal has been identified as a state-wide gap for quite some time, and the VFBV/CFA Joint Training Committee believes the electrical safety mobile props would significantly improve capability and member access to this vital training and knowledge. The trailers were designed by a working group of subject matter experts drawn from both volunteer and career staff ranks, many of whom were licensed electricians.

VFBV will be seeking support of CFA's new Operational Training Department in pursuit of these much needed props.

40 KPH SPEED LIMITS

VFBV continues to advocate for a 40 kph speed limit for vehicles passing any stationary emergency service vehicle displaying its red and blue flashing lights.

VFBV has long pointed out that firefighters attending incidents on or near roads are put at a significant health and safety risk by passing vehicles. For many years, we have called for 40 kph speed limits similar to those for roadside workers, along with strong public campaigns to educate motorists on the dangers.

The VFBV/CFA Joint Operations Committee continues to advocate for new road rules that will protect all emergency service personnel when working on the side of roads and has been very pleased with CFA's renewed support for this long awaited initiative.

VFBV MULTI-AGENCY YOUTH NETWORK UPDATE

VFBV's multi-agency Youth Network continues to build, with another eight field visits planned across the State over the next couple of months to bring together District Council Executives, Youth Champions and young members looking to become involved. Youth panels have now been established in almost every district across the State, demonstrating the enthusiasm and interest amongst young volunteers across the sector. Encouragingly, members from other volunteer agencies are being accepted by members with open arms, and are actively contributing to the panels.

Two field meetings were recently held between VFBV Youth Network members and the Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC). The first meeting brought together young CFA volunteers from four regional Districts and the second meeting was held in an outer metropolitan District.

Our young volunteers showed a high level of maturity and expressed a broad range of issues that were reflective of other young volunteers across the organisation. Their views were balanced and fair, and VEOHRC were interested and engaged throughout the conversation and welcomed the valuable input of our young members. VEOHRC assured our young volunteers that the issues raised would inform the VEOHRC Review into Equity & Diversity, and the Commission was very grateful for the time and energy of all the participants. VFBV continues to support and assist this extremely important review.

second in the Under 17 Years Aggregate, and 3rd in the Dry, Wet and Grand Aggregates.

The Championships were again held in Tatura and attracted more than 700 junior

competitors aged between 11 and 16 years old, with 78 teams from across the state, including 2 from Harvey, WA.

More details appear on page 11 of this edition.



Travel reimbursement

After reports of differences in how volunteer travel reimbursements are paid and authorised in different CFA Regions and Districts, the VFBV/CFA Joint Volunteerism Committee has asked CFA to develop a State-wide Business Rule that will

standardise and clarify arrangements, and CFA has agreed to progress a policy review.

VFBV's long held policy is that no volunteer should be out of pocket due to their volunteering. The Committee continues to advocate for improved access to CFA vehicles, including corporate pool vehicles, for travel to training or other CFA related activities.

Should an appropriate vehicle not be available, then volunteers should have access to travel reimbursement, which is currently set at \$0.72 per km.

OUR INSPIRING YOUNG CFA VOLUNTEERS

By Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

I want to take this opportunity to reflect on some of the amazing aspects of our wonderful CFA.

A few weeks ago the VFBV State Junior Fire Brigades Championships were held at Tatura, and a big thank you and well done to the local organising committee, officials and supporters who made this event happen.

There is enough just in the organising, set up and running of this event to be proud of but on top of this there is a fact that what we see in the young CFA volunteers attending this event is tomorrow's CFA, future community leaders and our successors.

Talking to people over the Tatura weekend, the smart leaders knew the value of engaging young people in CFA, in their communities and in the broader sense of social connection, belonging and self-worth. Young girls and boys, men and women from a huge range of cultural and community backgrounds, bright eyed and full of spirit, having fun, learning skills, and already with strong foundations of community service and engagement.

The smart people know that this is one of the many great examples of how CFA volunteers pass on the baton, pass on the sense of commitment and pass on the connection with the big CFA family.

A challenge for us is that there will always be some people who miss it altogether and either don't bother to wonder how the huge network of CFA brigades are always there when needed, or marvel in surprise when they realise what a huge army of highly trained volunteers turn up to just get on with the job when it needs to be done.

For people who have been around CFA for a long time, it is easy to take for granted that the names on the shirts came from every corner of Victoria and that there were dozens and dozens of communities represented.

It is easy to take for granted

that these young competitors demonstrated some terrific practical fireman ship skills and it is easy to take for granted that many of these young volunteers are already on the path to becoming dedicated volunteers with CFA, with other services, or across many. And because it is how CFA does things, it is easy to accept that these young people trained for months, that they had support teams and families who encouraged and supported them and that there is a huge amount of work done back in the local brigade to encourage, motivate and keep them involved. But we mustn't take this for granted.

And we mustn't forget to be incredibly proud of all of the good things that CFA is, has always been and will hopefully still be long into the future. Like watching a sunset, we need to continually stop and appreciate what we have and consciously watch out for it and look after it.

Plenty of wise folk talk about how Victoria's emergency management capability could not exist without volunteers and about the vital importance of CFA volunteers. And there is plenty said about the need to build resilient communities, build communities who share responsibility for their own wellbeing and safety; and build community participation.

There is also plenty said about engaging young people in this journey. Imagine we were starting from scratch and someone said they could activate dozens of young people, from towns and suburbs across Victoria, to come together and be directly involved in building tomorrow's community leaders, tomorrow's community networks and tomorrow's volunteers.

Imagine if they said they could do this in such a way that it wasn't just written down in a fancy strategy document but was going to be practical, tangible, ongoing and driven by the local com-



munities themselves. What an initiative? where do we invest? would be the likely reaction.

I know I will see the same beauty and incredible spirit at our forthcoming VFBV State Urban Senior Championships on the long weekend in March and our VFBV State Rural Championships to be held in April. So, well done to the people who made the Tatura VFBV State Junior Urban Fire Brigades happen. Well done to all of CFA's young volunteers and thank you for your time and energy. Well done to all CFA volunteers, young and old, newcomers and those that have served for decades. Well done to all of the CFA people, family support, employers and everyone who helps foster and encourage tomorrow's CFA.

And particularly to the bright eyed optimistic young volunteers I saw on the track at Tatura, thank you for reminding us of the beauty of CFA and of what we have inherited from those who created and continuously evolved this marvellous community legacy.

I have chosen to reflect on the Tatura event simply because it sticks in my mind as a recent event but this doesn't for a minute detract from the other examples of the wonderful CFA spirit that some of us are lucky enough to see regularly at brigade level, other events, incidents etc.

The same spirit, bond and CFA family was very evident at the funeral I attended for long serving and highly respected CFA officer Mark Reid.

Mark worked with many brigades and volunteers across all parts of Victoria, he understood and deeply valued the CFA volunteer based ethos. I had the good fortune of working closely with Mark, he was a respected leader and good friend to many CFA people, he will be sadly missed.

FIRST AID TRAINING

Delegates on the VFBV/CFA Joint Training Committee say early results from CFA's new First Aid Training arrangements with St John appear to be positive.

There has been great acceptance of the out-of-session course work that cuts down the course duration and allows students to do some of the work at home and in their own time.

Adjustments for postal delays are now being factored into future courses, based on feedback from recent courses.

PUMPING PIT RECOMMISSIONING

VFBV has been strongly advocating for CFA to commit to a remediation and recommissioning program for pumping pits, whose use was temporarily suspended back in February 2015.

There are approximately 91 pumping pits in use across the state. Of vital importance is the need for pumping pits to be safe, and for there to be an efficient and timely program to clean, monitor water quality and ultimately recommission them for use.

For many Brigades, pumping pits form the only safe, controlled and viable option for brigades to train in drafting and other related pump operations and skills maintenance.

CFA has now issued a Work Instruction on the Management of Pumping Pits, and have implemented an approved recommissioning process. CFA has advised that the ultimate decision to recommission and fund the cost of these works rests with the Region. Water testing costs between \$300/\$400, with the cost of cleaning and refilling to be approximately \$1,000.

VFBV/CFA Joint Training Committee delegates have raised concern that due to Regional budget limitations, these costs will be pushed back to Brigades. CFA's advice to these concerns is that Brigades should go through the Chain of Command and ultimately to Assistant Chief Officers who hold oversight of the Regions.

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