



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



State Championship results

At this year's 134th Annual Urban State Championships, Maryvale won its 16th State Championship Grand Aggregate at Bendigo with 88 points.

Maryvale's win was closely contested by Kangaroo Flat with both teams on almost equal points at the start of the final day of competition, however Maryvale sealed its win with two first placings to Kangaroo Flat's one win in the Hose & Reel Eights.

With early historical records dating back to 1882 only recording brigade names and not competitors, it is believed that this year for possibly the first time, a female competitor has competed in a winning team in the A Section Hose & Reel 8s event.

Kate Dargaville and her team-mates Jackson, Thomas, Jamie, James, Craig, Lachie, Jack and David representing Kangaroo Flat were successful. Of special note is four members of the team are all from the same family, with coach David Dargaville joined by daughter Kate and sons Jackson and Thomas, all leaving an enviable legacy.

Tatura easily won the B Section aggregate with 75 points, with a couple of the brigade's

junior competitors now moving into the senior team – both juniors having been members of the Tatura team winning successive Junior State Championship titles for the past four years. Pakenham convincingly won the C Section Aggregate with 84 points, from Hoppers Crossing 53 points and Eaglehawk B 51 points.

Aggregate winners at the 61st Senior State Rural Championship at Wodonga were Division 1 Beazley's Bridge A with 52 points, from second placed Greta A with 42 points (winner of last year's Division 1). Division 2 was won by Chiltern A with 56 points with Dunrobin/Nangeela C second with 38 points; and Sedgwick A won Division 3 with 32 points from Pearce Dale B with 22 points.

At this year's 39th Junior State Rural Championships, Stuart Mill won its first Championship with Eldorado A a close second. Stuart Mill A won the 11-13 Years Aggregate with Eldorado A winning the 11-15 Years Aggregate – but Stuart Mill A won the overall Junior Grand Aggregate on 82 points, with Eldorado A second on 74 points.

Below: Some of the action from the Junior State Rural Championships at Wodonga.



BRIGADE DELEGATE TRAINING

VFBV District Councils can now book their local VFBV Delegate Development Program course. This two day course will be held on weekends and has been mapped to national competencies from the Australian Public Safety units, and has been themed as "VFBV Delegate Development Program: Engaging Diversity."

It has been designed on the premise that if we want to attract, encourage and support a diverse range of leaders and delegates now and into the future, what kind of skills will our current leaders need to have to do that effectively?

This course will provide delegates with tools and techniques to improve and develop their issues resolution, communication skills, problem solving, decision making, teamwork, relationship and network building, strategic thinking and leadership. The objective is to increase the level of engagement between District Councils, brigades/groups and individuals, and help delegates be more involved, not just with their own issues but issues on a broader scale.

The course is available to all current and aspiring VFBV Brigade/Group delegates and office holders, with approximately 20 places available per district. As an option, members who successfully complete the course and associated assessments will be eligible to enrol to have their training recognised on their training records through a RPL process, that VFBV will support individual candidates with. Alternatively, members can simply do the course to enhance or develop their skills as a brigade delegate.

VFBV District Councils are currently registering available dates, and will shortly be contacting their brigades with full details.

To nominate for the course or ask a question, contact your local District Council executive member, or VFBV Support Officer for more details.

Thank you CFA volunteers: you give me great hope

By Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

Like my reflections in the last edition of Fire Wise, this month I want to continue my reflection on the great enthusiasm and dedication shown by hundreds of CFA volunteers and the CFA staff who made the recent VFBV State Championships held in Bendigo and Wodonga, so inspiring and such a great symbol of our CFA spirit and hope.

And the great truth is that what we see at the VFBV State Championships is just a brief portrait and window into the amazing things our CFA members do in their local communities every day of the year. Communities from all corners of Victoria, well known townships and places many have never heard of.

The events treated those who attended to a picture of thriving young volunteer participation, just under 800 junior volunteer participants in total; almost 2000 competitors altogether at the State championships and many more who participated just as eagerly in local support, training and District events throughout the year. Hundreds of volunteers, long serving CFA Brigade and Group leaders, mentors and support

teams working alongside the competitors and in the background.

Generations of volunteers knowing the value the championships provide to recruiting new members, honing their teamwork and practical skills. They represent tomorrow's dedicated CFA volunteers, future volunteer leaders and the next generation of CFA, building community connections, social fabric and today's local capacity.

Emergency Management Commissioner Lapsley wrote to me following his attendance thanking VFBV for the commitment and professionalism that made these events the success they are and recognising the commitment and leadership that is displayed. Talking with Craig and CFA newly appointed Chief Officer Steve Warrington and many others I am encouraged by a deep recognition that many of today's most skilled and dedicated volunteers and EM Sector leaders (including both Craig and Steve) cut their teeth as junior championship competitors.

As an example, one volunteer brigade has five of their past six Captains having started their CFA volunteering as junior members running at local fire brigade championships. Literally hundreds of CFA's most experienced operational volunteers started their volunteering in the same way. There is justifiably a huge emphasis currently on encouraging all of us to embrace greater diversity in CFA including a need to encourage more women in CFA. The signs are positive for the future if we look at the young people coming through the brigade teams at the recent championships – just under 40% of the junior competitors were young women.

Talking of this, you will notice an advertisement in this edition of Fire Wise for VFBV Board positions. I encourage anyone who believes they can contribute at VFBV Board level to apply. Talking with Samantha Rothman, one of our last VFBV Board appointments there are

many people out in our volunteer pool who underestimate the value that they could bring to the Board table. I know many very wise older people but I also know some extremely impressive young people. And gender is not a determinant of brainpower of leadership. So please make the Board selection panels job as hard as you can and serve up a fantastic pool of applicants!

Back to the championships. During these two major events, I had a constant stream of volunteers from all over the state, some I knew well, others I had not met before, all offering their gratitude and thanks for the work VFBV is doing and offering their full support for us to keep up the efforts to preserve the very essence of CFA – volunteerism, community participation, dedication and respect. Thank you for this support it means a lot and I assure you we will not give up.

It is no secret that CFA has been enduring tough times both at the top end and also right down to grass roots and brigade level. We have had our previous Board sacked for standing up for the rights of volunteers and CFA decision making powers; we have had an outstanding CEO, Lucinda Nolan, pushed out for similar reasons and gagged from talking about her concerns; our well respected and values driven CFA Chief Officer Joe Buffone resigned, publicly stating that the proposed EBA/industrial agreement between UFU and CFA would fundamentally change his decision making approach and inhibit his ability to discharge his statutory obligations as CFA Chief Officer; Minister Jane Garret forced out and demonstrating guts and real integrity at the expense of her cabinet position; and many other senior CFA officers gone or numbed into inaction.

The latest anxiety swirls around speculation that somewhere in the depths of bureaucracy or Government there is a secret plan or deal being done with the UFU to dismantle the CFA structure to circumvent the industrial parameters now in place

ENGAGING DIVERSITY

VFBV continues its programs of encouraging and engaging diversity from the ground up. This year's VFBV Leadership Program continues to embrace and support volunteers from other agencies, with scholarships awarded to volunteers from CFA, SES, Ambulance Victoria, St John, Live Saving Victoria and the Australian Volunteer CoastGuard.

Over the last 12 months, the VFBV Multi-Agency Youth Network is growing from strength to strength with over 100 young volunteer delegates formally joining the network to represent their District, and start the journey towards establishing our very first State Youth Council with the support and encouragement of VFBV State Council.

Also over the last couple of months, brigade and group competition teams – both juniors and seniors have been on display to the Victorian community, with over 1,800 individual competitors competing at this year's VFBV State Championships. This year's State Rural Junior Championships has set a new record for female participation, with over 40% of competitors comprised of young women representing their brigade, competing in fully integrated teams, and eager to join the ranks as senior volunteer firefighters in the years to come.

And last, but by no means least, following this year's fire season VFBV is this month rolling out its new Brigade Delegate training package across the State, which has been themed as engaging diversity to complement our other programs, and provide practical skills and knowledge to volunteers taking on the VFBV Delegate role at their brigade or group level. Please refer to its dedicated story also on this page.



through the Fair Work Act amendment, or worse, possibly just as pay back for volunteers making a stand. There was naturally huge talk about this amongst all attending the championships and elsewhere throughout CFA circles. And many people are asking for answers.

Unfortunately, I do not have much to report other than to repeat what I have reported previously. VFBV has not been involved in any discussion, if there is one.

Even the person on the street knows it would be reckless for any proposal that erodes Victoria's volunteer fire and emergency service capacity to be contemplated, especially if this is driven by political or industrial motivation.

On an encouraging note, despite the message being pedalled by some and the real speculation by many senior officers within the EM Sector, both CFA Chief Officer and the Emergency Management Commissioner have assured me that they are not involved in any discussions, plans or intent to restructure, carve up or dismantle the CFA volunteer based and integrated service model.

Only a few weeks ago, in response to the current Victorian State Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and Planning (Inquiry into fire season preparedness) Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley stated under oath that there is no work that he has done toward a new model for CFA and there is nothing in his remit to Government to look at changing legislation or changing organisations (CFA and MFESB).

He stated that he is not doing any work on changing the CFA service model or boundaries or work on amalgamations between CFA and MFB.

I think we owe it to these two, as the people with legislated roles and powers, to trust that no one would contemplate a change without their careful consideration and formal advice. On the one hand I urge everyone to maintain hope and faith that our leaders, laws and systems will not fail us. Stay motivated as volunteers and for now keep focussed on working as a team, respecting one another and delivering services to the community.

On the other hand, if our laws and systems are ignored, be ready to come out very strongly if someone dumps a carve up of CFA on the table. Get your networks in place now and stay tuned so that we can keep you informed.

VFBV affiliation

VFBV's representation of CFA's volunteers continues to win growing approval and support with a new record high of 95% Brigades affiliating with VFBV and almost 90% of Brigades subscribing to the VFBV Welfare Fund in 2016/17.

After a very challenging year, it is extremely rewarding to know we have record levels of membership and support. Brigades across Victoria are more connected with VFBV than ever; our VFBV State, District and Brigade delegates are more informed and active than ever and doing a great job.

The 2017/18 affiliation notices for your Brigade/Group's VFBV affiliation and VFBV Welfare Fund Subscriptions are with your Secretary now, with a due date of 30 June 2017.

As well as affiliating with VFBV, we strongly encourage Brigades to subscribe to the VFBV Welfare Fund. It can provide small grants to assist volunteer members, their immediate family members and long serving ex-members, who are suffering significant financial hardship, with grants up to \$5,000.

VFBV and its predecessor associations established the fund in 1913. Since then the fund has helped over 1,000 volunteers. Over the last 10 years alone, the fund has provided grants worth over \$1M, with an approval rate of 100% of received applications approved by the Management Committee over the last 12 months.

For any queries about VFBV affiliation contact your State Councillor or the VFBV office on (03) 9886 1141.