



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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Survey Closing soon

- CFA provides enough training opportunities in formats, at times and at locations that make it easy for me to participate?
- Volunteers are effectively consulted and involved in decision making at my brigade level?
- Overall how satisfied are you with the way volunteers are treated by CFA?

Are these statements important to you? How well is CFA performing in these areas? Tell us by taking part in the 2017 VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey.

The VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey allows VFBV to capture the views of CFA volunteers and track what the key issues are. It is also the sixth time that the survey has been offered to CFA volunteers which means trends in volunteer opinion can be tracked over the years.

To complete the survey, visit the VFBV website www.vfbv.com.au or if you would prefer a paper copy of the survey, call the VFBV office on (03) 9886 1141.

For the second year, the survey is also being offered to volunteers from across the emergency management sector in Victoria (Emergency Management Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey) and to fire service volunteers from across Australia.

The 2017 VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey closes this month – so make sure your voice is heard and complete the survey today.

Diesel exhaust emissions

Earlier this year, CFA agreed to a VFBV request to carry out atmospheric monitoring to assess the potential exposure of members to diesel exhaust gases and diesel particulate matter at Fire Stations following a typical “turn-out” event.

The aim of the monitoring was to measure the exposure of members to diesel particulate matter, measure carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxide concentrations and then assess these measurements against Safework Australia exposure standards and subsequently assess any potential adverse health impacts of the results.

CFA commissioned an independent certified Occupational Health & Safety Hygienist to conduct the monitoring. Three locations were selected by local volunteers as representing a range of “typical” one to two bay stations for initial tests. Results indicate the average concentrations of diesel particulates measured at all locations were well below the guideline figures specified by the NSW Minerals Council and the proposed 8 hour time weighted average exposure standard supported by the Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists. Carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide levels were also well below the eight hour time weighted average levels.

The hygienist reports concluded that members should not suffer any adverse long-term or short-term health effects due to exposure to diesel particulates and levels were not considered to pose a risk of adverse health affects under the conditions of monitoring. No further control measures were considered necessary to reduce the levels of diesel engine exhaust emissions at two of the three locations.

However at the third location, short-term exhaust emissions carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide levels were all elevated following the trucks egress from the station which indicate there is a possibility of short-term transient effects such as eye and upper respiratory tract irritation. A significant contributor appears to be an older-type vehicle, re-enforcing VFBV's long advocacy for reduction of the tanker fleet age.

In the short-term, Brigades are reminded to minimise the time spent in engine rooms while engines are running or

have recently run, and move vehicles out of engine bays onto external areas/aprons if available - as quickly as possible.

The Joint HR, Welfare and OH&S Committee will continue to advocate for wider testing, and monitor additional control measures that may be necessary at some locations to reduce exhaust levels. This may include the provision of mechanical ventilation to more effectively ventilate engine bays. Early indications are that extraction-type ventilation in smaller sheds would not be effective, with better results being achieved by mechanical ventilation sourced from the rear of sheds which would force exhaust gases out of the larger front engine bay doors. The Committee will continue to investigate and monitor.

NEW VFBV BOARD MEMBERS

At the recent AGM, VFBV State Council officially thanked retiring Board Members, Hans van Hammond, Jill Parker and Gerry Neyenhuis (who remains as State Councillor for District 7).

Samantha Rothman and Mick Nunweek were reappointed for a further two year term, and Graeme Jilbert was reappointed for a term of 12 months as a State Council Delegate.

Three new Board Members were warmly welcomed to the VFBV Board with terms commencing 1 October 2017.

Kate Boschetti (right): Kate joins the VFBV Board with extensive experience from the commercial sector, and recently completed her MBA. Kate is a member of Wodonga West Fire Brigade and a member of the BMT.

Kate has worked actively to increase female participation by addressing barriers to their participation. Kate's is a two year appointment.



Jan Cleary (left): Jan is a member of the Mossi Tambo Rural and Lakes Entrance Urban Fire Brigades. She was the first CFA female Group Officer to be appointed.

Jan has also been a rep on the CFA District Planning Committee and is a Deputy Coordinator in the Peer Team for District 11.

Jan is an active local community member. Jan's is a two year appointment.



Robert Auchterlonie (right):

Rob has been a VFBV State Councillor for District 9 since 2008. Rob is a farmer who is a member of Dumbalk Fire Brigade.

Rob has been a Peer for 22 years and is a Peer Support Coordinator for his District.

Rob is appointed to the VFBV Board for 12 months as one of the State Council delegates.



12 months on: you can start today

This time last year, present and past CFA members were being encouraged to participate in the Independent Review into Equity and Diversity being conducted by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC).

A review similar to the one undertaken with Victoria Police the previous year. Although VEOHRC completed their review a few months ago, the release of the report continues to be

delayed due to court proceedings by the United Firefighters Union.

VFBV is keen to have the report released to deliver the transparency needed for the CFA to talk openly about bul-

lying and harassment as soon as possible. VFBV is keen to support CFA members in addressing any issues that are identified in the report.

In the meantime, we can all do our bit for diversity.

Quoting from a presentation to State Council earlier this year on improving gender diversity, given by Ariana Henderson and Sandra Robinson from Parks Victoria:

10 Actions to start making a change

- Put gender on the agenda and publicly promote it
- Know how many women you have and what roles they perform
- Identify the real barriers to recruiting, retaining and progressing women
- Review your organisations systems and processes to support women
- Review conditions, provide flexibility
- Support women to be women
- Recognise women's leadership potential
- Challenge the culture, recognize unconscious bias and
- Commit to it as men, commit to it as an organisation
- Start today

Brigade delegate professional development opportunity: Engaging Diversity

VFBV is proud to have been running 'Engaging Diversity' training programs across the State. This professional development opportunity is receiving high praise with participants who have complimented the program citing it as being fast-paced, fun and thought provoking, rewarding, and teaching vital skills.

The program provides a strong foundation for participants to develop as future leaders, or for those already in leadership roles to further develop their skills.

Designed around the theme 'engaging diversity' the program develops and enhances skills relating to communication, problem solving, teamwork, initiative, self-management and much more.

There are still opportunities to participate, so for more information or to get on a course, contact your VFBV Support Officer, State Councillor or the VFBV Office on 9886 1141.

START TODAY

by Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

At the AGM last month we welcomed three new Board Members, Kate Boschetti, Jan Cleary and Rob Auchterlonie. We congratulated Samantha Rothman, Mick Nunweek and Graeme Jilbert on their reappointment and thanked Hans van Hammond, Jill Parker and Gerry Neyenhuis for their contribution and commitment as they retired from the Board.

VFBV heads into the future with a great diversity of skills and expertise at Board level. This complements our existing dedicated statewide delegate, District Council and State Councillor teams, and we are adding to this with the progress we are making with our multi-agency youth network. As we continue to wait for the release of the VEOHRC Independent Review into Equity and Diversity, being held up in the Courts, we do not need to delay action on improving diversity.

With a catch cry of “start today” I reflect on messages provided in a presentation on improving gender diversity, given at State Council earlier this year. It is important we recognise the potential and contribution women make and, commit, in our male dominated environment, to remove barriers and empower women to become quality leaders and build confidence in themselves. We need to ask ourselves, is the lack of representation of women part of an ingrained culture? A subconscious bias?

In further support of equity and diversity initiatives, the VFBV professional development program “Engaging Diversity” is a key contributor to developing and enhancing the skills of current and future leaders to ensure that diversity is on the agenda, and skills such as communication, leadership, problem solving and strategic thinking are developed in the context of a varied and diverse volunteer workforce. Further details on the course can be found on this page.

The VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey, which is still currently open, has in previous year's results highlighted the importance that volunteers place on opportunities for women, and also to ensuring an inclusive environment when it comes to diversity. The two survey statements relating to these issues are always ranked as the most important when all the statements are compared. The comments section, unfor-



tunately, sometimes tell a different story where indications are that isolated cases of discrimination or harassment are still occurring. I am reminded of the oft quoted David Morrison – “The standard you walk past, is the standard you accept”. It is just as important to call out inappropriate behaviour when it is witnessed, as it is to not engage in the behaviour itself.

In the meantime, as we head into a potentially very high risk fire season as advised in the Southern Australia Seasonal Bushfire Outlook last month: “Conditions in Victoria appear likely to increase risk of above normal fire season, with a potentially earlier start in some parts of the State” we are still unsure as to the future structure of fire services in Victoria. As always, however, volunteers will turn their heads from conflict and ensure the safety of their community is paramount.

I commend brigades as they begin to engage with their communities with fire safety messages and fire preparation planning and meetings in what is anticipated to be a difficult and very busy season. Even though it is only October, I note that in 2015 there were over 600 fires in October and November which needed four or more brigades to attend, including one fire which had 196 brigades and the involvement of over 1300 volunteers. In 2014, there were almost 500 fires needing this level of response or higher.

The VFBV Welfare and Efficiency Survey highlights most volunteers do what they do to protect the communities they live in. Volunteering in itself is shown to improve wellbeing and resilience. Please look after yourselves, particularly if the fires start early, and I, as always, thank you for your ongoing commitment and support.

I finish this column with a quote from the Emergency Management Commissioner, Craig Lapsley. I have criticised the Commissioner in a previous column for his disparaging comments about the CFA, however, there is an area where I am pleased to say we agree:

“We are in this together - government, agencies, communities and business - and go into the summer season knowing we work best when we work collaboratively as a strong, capable sector with a focus on the best outcomes for the communities we serve.”

[<https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/above-normal-fire-season-forecast-for-victoria>]