



# VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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## MEDIUM TANKER SURVEY

Results from our recent Medium Tanker Survey are now with a small volunteer working party who are going through the results and analysing the feedback. The working party will report back to a future Joint Equipment and Infrastructure Committee meeting, including making recommendations based on field feedback and requests for future builds.

Preliminary results reveal widespread high satisfaction ratings with most aspects of the current Medium Tanker Build. The areas with lower levels of satisfaction suggesting room for greatest improvement are communication with the rear deck, deck area stowage and hydrant/standpipe access and layout.

Detailed results from the survey, and associated recommendations will be made available as soon as the working party has completed its analysis. Thank-you to all members who contributed to the survey – sharing their extensive knowledge and experience.

## HAVE YOUR SAY

Through a state-wide network of twenty-one District Councils and elected volunteer representatives, VFBV maintains direct links with grass roots volunteers over their issues, needs and concerns. In addition to any local issues raised, VFBV District Councils are currently seeking targeted feedback and comment on the following topics and issues:

**1. Proposed CFA Business Rule - Traditional, Social and Digital Media:** Members are requested to please review and provide feedback on the draft business rule that is available for download on the VFBV website. Paper copies may also be requested via the VFBV office on (03) 9886 1141. Feedback is requested no later than Monday 20th August 2018 - but much earlier if possible. Electronic feedback can be sent to VFBV Support Officer Mark Dryden at [m.dryden@vfbv.com.au](mailto:m.dryden@vfbv.com.au)

**2. Proposed CFA Integrity Framework:** Members are requested to please review and provide feedback on the draft framework available for download on the VFBV website. Paper copies may also be requested via the VFBV office. Feedback is requested no later than Monday 20th August 2018 - but much earlier if possible. Electronic feedback can be sent to VFBV Policy Support Officer Christine Fryer at [c.fryer@vfbv.com.au](mailto:c.fryer@vfbv.com.au)

**3. 2018 VFBV Volunteer Welfare & Efficiency Survey:** Preregistration is now open. The 7th annual, VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey will open on Friday 31 August 2018 and run until 22 October 2018. The survey continues to be an important and reliable method to capture the views of volunteers and track what has been achieved and is improving, as well as addressing areas that are the cause of dissatisfaction for volunteers. Preregister and get an electronic reminder the day the survey opens by going to: <https://www.vfbv.com.au/cfa>

**4. Torch & Kit Bag Survey:** VFBV has received a District Council request to advocate that for reasons of health and safety - that torches be mandated as forming part of CFA's minimum Personal Protective Clothing and supplied by CFA. They survey is open to Brigades, Groups and Individuals. The survey can be filled out online via our website, or a paper copy is available. Survey closes Sunday 30th September 2018.

## SHARING SOME REFLECTIONS

by Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

I have recently been fortunate enough to spend a few weeks out of the busy loop travelling through Europe and visiting family with my wife. It gave me a great opportunity to recharge the batteries, mend some old bruises and reflect. Certainly, I needed a holiday and I am grateful for Adam Barnett who took over as CEO and along with the rest of VFBV leadership did a tremendous job as always.

I know I needed the rest and I am sure there are many volunteers feeling the same. I don't think any of us have enjoyed the games being played with Victoria's Fire Services over the past few years and I certainly have been very disillusioned with the way volunteers have been treated and the way many people who stood up to support us have been (and in some cases still are) being treated.

My first reflection is simple – make sure you are looking after yourself and your loved ones. If you are tired or feeling fed up with the way things are, take a step back recharge and come back to the task energized and focused. But don't give up. A rest will give renewed energy for the challenges yet to come and we still have some serious work to do if we are to ensure CFA continues as an organisation we love and respect.

I went away hoping there would be some magic and perhaps the Victorian State Government would abandon its flawed plan to dismantle CFA. Returning, I see the same games are still at play, perhaps more by stealth and back room deals than in public.

Although some of you may have been lulled into hoping it isn't the case, the risk of CFA being torn up for some secret deal or political or industrial agenda is still a problem as real and large as ever, probably with the key determinant now being more dependent on who wins Victorian State election later this year.

So, this is my second reflection and I have to say it is a sad one - the problems we were dealing with last year and back at Easter time this year as legislation to carve up CFA was considered and defeated by the Victorian par-

liament, have not gone away, and they aren't likely to go away unless there is a distinct policy change.

My third reflection came as I looked back from countries I have just visited, that had recently experienced war, corrupt process or lived under dictatorships to our own state of Victoria.

When I think about what has been going on in Victoria regarding the CFA carve up, secret deals, sackings/bullying out of good people, payback and intimidation I can't believe this is actually our country; our modern supposedly transparent government process at work.

If we were observing the dodgy decision making; the secret deals; the dismissal of an ever-growing list of good people just because they tried to call out foul play; inappropriate industrial interference; and the political spin and false information being thrown about to drag down the reputation of CFA, and CFA volunteers, just to serve some other hidden political agenda, we would probably say it looked like another world corruption or a broken democracy.

This reflection troubles me and I feel we need to find a way to call out the poor behaviors even louder.

On a positive note comes a fourth reflection, and it comes on the back of watching and listening to various reports about our ex Fire and Emergency Services Minister Jane Garrett's recent pre-selection. Like many of you I watched and read the media coverage around the attack and retribution attempted to be dish out on Jane just because she had the courage, integrity and values to stand strong for truth and fairness on the CFA issue.

I can't believe these attacks were not called out as unacceptable by some people in positions of leadership.

The extent of propaganda, secret deals and intimidation of people who dared to speak up since Jane's departure as Emergency Services Minister in my view is the worst I have witnessed in my 35 years involvement with any Government.

My reflection is an admiration for Jane's integrity and values and courage plus a flip side reflection of how much the display of these attributes by Jane exposes and calls out those who don't have them.

Finally, I reflect on what we will say if CFA is dismantled, or if we give up and walk away or withdraw; or if we stop trying to voice an argument. What we will say if one day when CFA is needed most - some of its core capability, that exists because of the current arrangements,



isn't there.

It won't be good enough, even if we can pin point the culprit, to make them stand in the witness box and accept responsibility – it will be too late. I reflect that although I am tired, like many of you are, of the feeling of trying to hold back a machine hell bent on rolling CFA over, it is important that we maintain our energy and our voice and our values.

The organisation we have built and loved is about partnering with our communities, putting them first and making sure we are there for them in times of emergency. Our intent is a pure and moral one, and our commitment to our communities is unshakeable.

Imagine what would have happened on Black Saturday or Ash Wednesday without a well prepared, motivated and well led army of volunteers working as one with our paid staff, instrumentalities and other emergency services in protecting Victoria.

I remind myself about the fundamental principle that we shouldn't let the stubborn might and secret deals of people in power destroy our spirit or wear down our energy to stand for what is right.

Ask yourself – what can you do? Who can you speak to? What influence can you exert?

To help ensure that the policy platform that will determine the future for CFA is right and sustainable and beyond political interference. Everyone can do something as an individual and combined our efforts will make a difference – as long as we act rather than sit and hope someone else will fix it.

I want to close by extending sympathy to the individuals, families and communities who have been affected by the recent tragic fires across the world, particularly to those who have lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods.

In my travels on the other side of the world, I watched in horror as the power of mother nature tore through parts of Greece and more recently through California. The fires in Greece in particular, are a stark reminder to us that major fires will happen and a reminder of the sad fact that these infrequent but major fires ultimately have the most devastating consequence to people, to communities and to society.

It was a poignant reminder for me about how important the work we do is, and why it is just too important that we don't give up on it.

Stay safe and be proud of what you are doing to build a safer Victoria.

## Volunteer Uniforms & Work Wear

Following the unexplained withdrawal of an expected tender for volunteer workwear that was due to be released to market in September last year, and reports that CFA has terminated its contractual arrangements with the current dress uniform supplier, is concerning.

VFBV believes that CFA has been secretly working on changes to volunteer uniforms to satisfy a union proposal for all items of PPC, station wear and uniforms to only be made available to operational career staff, and visually distinguishable from items worn by volunteers and PTA staff. This would contradict claims and assurances that the proposed 2016 CFA/UFU EBA was to have no impact on volunteers.

State Council has written to the Chief Officer expressing its deep frustration at the lack of information from CFA as to where it is at, the very slow progress given we have been advised that CFA received \$3 million from the State Government in August last year from the volunteer support package to provide workwear to CFA volunteers, and seeking clarity on any changes being proposed and why. State Council has requested CFA re-engage with the Uniform Working Party as a matter of priority. We will keep you informed.

## Low voltage fuse removal

The Joint VFBV/CFA Training Committee has reviewed and provided feedback on the draft training package developed by CFA that now incorporates electrical safety awareness materials paired along with low voltage fuse removal skill sets.

Delegates have requested CFA establish as a high priority a process to ensure RPL mechanisms are in place for members who are qualified electricians and hold the relevant qualifications.

The Committee has also requested that provision be made to upskill the maximum number of trainers and assessors, including volunteers to support a wide and sustainable roll-out across the State to address the serious lack of training in low voltage fuse removal over the last five years.

## Operate Breathing Apparatus

Volunteer delegates to the Joint Training Committee have raised their concern about the insufficient number of breathing apparatus courses being provided across the State.

Combined with the roll-out of the revised Structural Fire-fighting course, volunteers are reporting great difficulty in being able to acquire Breathing Apparatus with the Search and Rescue component required for internal attack due to insufficient number of courses being run and the lack of modularised structural firefighting courses. Analysis of what courses are being provided has again revealed great variances between Districts both in the courses offered, but also the competencies awarded and the duration of each course.

VFBV has requested urgent attention by CFA to ensure adequate numbers of courses are provided by each District to satisfy requirements. DCO Training has agreed to review and address the issues raised, and committed to it as a high priority.

## Pager Message Changes

Back in 2013, CFA agreed to modify the format of pager messages that would see the 10 digit incident number moved from the front of the message – to the end.

This was a result of strong volunteer feedback when CFA moved from the old four-line EAS Pager to the now two-line Alpha Legend

paggers. The logic; moving any non-essential info out of the first two lines would help people see more important incident information without having to scroll.

CFA advised it has found a way to make this change, and is now evaluating any non-intended consequences of the change before it is implemented. Progress on this long-awaited request may finally be imminent.

## Service Delivery Support

Volunteer delegates to the Joint Operations Committee have advocated for improved and strengthened systems to support Brigades experiencing service delivery pressures.

The Chief Officer has confirmed his expectation that Operations Managers were to personally contact any Brigade falling below 89% SDS to discuss treatments and support options and ensure

that targeted supported was being provided by the Operations Officers in tandem with the Catchment and Volunteer Support Team.

Delegates requested that CFA establish formal processes to monitor and ensure this targeted support is in fact occurring, and to drive accountability for the treatment and support options identified.

## 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/cfavol](http://www.facebook.com/cfavol) and you can follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/vfbv](https://twitter.com/vfbv) or on Instagram @volunteer\_fire\_brigades\_vic