



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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VOLUNTEER WORKWEAR: HAVE YOUR SAY

VFBV has been advised that the CFA Chief Officer has released CFA's survey on Volunteer Workwear.

CFA's proposal for volunteer workwear consists of a baseball cap, half zip jumper, polo shirt, cargo pants, belt and epaulettes. A Frequently Asked Questions is available by following the link below.

As per previous updates, VFBV has not been involved in the design of these garments – however we urge members to participate in the survey and have their say. According to the email sent out by the Chief on Friday 30th November, the survey will be open for six weeks.

You can participate in the survey by going to: <https://caonline.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?paId=volunteerWorkwear>

Workwear has been a contentious issue for several years now – so members are urged to

have their say. While VFBV has strongly advocated through our Uniform Working Party for workwear to have no impact on Uniforms and for CFA to consult with volunteers on workwear design – it is important members are aware we are not part of the decision-making process and CFA will be the ultimate decision maker. We have no representation on the Committee or Project panel dealing with this issue, therefore, it is critical that volunteers get involved and provide your feedback on CFA's proposed designs.

If you have an opinion on workwear – good – bad or indifferent – please complete the survey and make sure your opinion is known. We encourage all members to participate.

Access to CFA Doctor

VFBV has raised with CFA the problems that volunteers are experiencing when being directed by CFA to attend the CFA Doctor. Some of the issues highlighted were the difficulty and impost on members attending the Doctor's Melbourne office and the subsequent cost to volunteers in terms of lost earnings, transport, accommodation and other incidental costs.

In our experience, many volunteers are not aware that they are entitled to reimbursement for these costs. VFBV requested that when CFA direct a volunteer to attend the CFA doctor, they must be made aware of their access to these reimbursements.

The VFBV/CFA HR Committee have also requested CFA consider either the CFA doctor making scheduled Regional visits or an arrangement with multiple providers strategically located throughout the State to minimise volunteers having to travel to the city.

CFA agreed to consider these requests and will report back on progress at the next meeting.

Training certificates

Delegates to the Joint VFBV/CFA Training Committee reported to CFA at their September meeting that some Districts appear to have stopped the practice of automatically sending out Training Certificates to members after they have completed a CFA Training course.

Whilst CFA initially refuted this was occurring, further investigation revealed that some CFA Districts had unilaterally taken the position that they will no longer issue certificates to members automatically and require members to either specifically request one through the District Office, or print their own from the new Learning Management System (LMS).

VFBV expressed disappointment about this change and advocated that volunteers should be recognised by CFA with the issuing of a formal certificate, especially given that they are giving up substantial amounts of their own time to attend training courses.

VFBV State Council formally requested that CFA request all Districts resume the practice of automatically issuing training certificates to members after the successful completion of each course. State Council also requested that CFA backdate any certificates that have not been issued and send these onto Brigades as soon as possible.

CFA have now reported that Districts have been instructed to resume the practice of issuing certificates, and CFA HQ has arranged for the entire backlog of certificates to be printed and dispatched

Annual brigade review delays

VFBV was disappointed to learn of further delays with the roll-out of the new Annual Brigade Review.

CFA has advised that roll out is now delayed due to unresolved issues being held up by UFU consultation requirements.

CFA has been reporting very positive volunteer feedback from Brigade's piloting the new annual brigade review that will supplement the annual Section 29 and provides important planning and brigade support services to help brigade's meet their performance standards and long-term viability.

VFBV has expressed deep concern that once again it appears a UFU veto provision is preventing rollout of a fundamental volunteer support and brigade capacity building initiative.

CFA has recognised the frustration with delays caused by the UFU consultation barriers but has to date been unable to find a way to break the impasse due to current CFA practice that these reviews are conducted by OO's and OM's whose work is covered by the UFU Operational EBA.

VFBV is hoping common sense will prevail and the impasse can be resolved ensuring this vital volunteer and Brigade support initiative can be rolled out without delay.

to Brigade's for presentation. The Committee has thanked CFA for its quick response and delivering a good outcome for members.

Long term OM/OO vacancies

The VFBV/CFA Joint Operations Committee continues to strongly advocate for CFA to address the long-term vacancies in the current Operations Managers and Operations Officers pool.

These long-term vacancies and the high number of temporary arrangements that results in OM and OO's frequently changing continues to cause Brigades and Groups significant upheaval. Lack of continuity in these roles impacts significantly on strategic planning and support for Brigades and catchments.

Restrictive industrial arrangements that limit or prevent lateral entry of suitably qualified persons to these positions continues to be a significant barrier to these roles being filled. The Committee will continue to monitor.

District OH&S meetings

The VFBV/CFA HR Committee continues to follow up on reports that CFA District OH&S meetings are being cancelled or rescheduled –

CFA CHAMPS REVIEW

CFA is currently consulting with the Urban and Rural State Championship Committee's on a CFA proposal to run the 2020 Urban Senior Championships and the Rural (Junior & Senior) Championships on the same weekend at the same location.

The Committees are currently working through CFA's proposal and welcome any feedback from current or aspiring competition brigades/groups as they work through the proposal. Any members wishing to learn more can contact your local VFBV State Councillor to put you in touch with the relevant championship committee.

OUR WORK CONTINUES

by Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

Whilst at time of writing there are still a few electorates that are too close to call, Victorians have strongly supported the re-election of a Labor Government led by Premier Daniel Andrews on 24 November. VFBV congratulates Mr Andrews and his Labor team on what can only be described as an emphatic victory.

Since the election, many members have asked questions about what the election result means for the CFA and what are likely to be the next steps regarding previous reform proposals. We have also been asked if the election result will impact on the forthcoming summer fire season and if VFBV will continue its campaign to educate politicians on the importance of our volunteers and the integrated model we currently have.

These are big questions and the reality is all the answers may take some time to evolve as the government determines its second term priorities.

Although the ALP did not publish a formal policy about fire service reform as part of its election campaign, Premier Andrews did verbally respond to questions from journalists by suggesting he personally wanted to pursue changes. At the time of publication, VFBV was not aware of any details regarding proposed timing or approach.

VFBV has sought meetings with the Premier and Minister and communicated our advice that it would be unwise to risk causing disruption with any changes on the cusp of what is widely forecast to be an extreme and dangerous summer fire period.

In terms of VFBV's position, we will continue to advocate for a careful rethink about which service model is best for Victoria, seeking to ensure all politicians are fully informed about the impacts of previous proposals. VFBV has maintained the need for

often at very short notice.

CFA Management has committed to ensuring that these important District meetings occur and has recently followed up with all CFA Regions and Districts.

The Committee will continue to monitor.

Any members of these Committees who continue to experience cancellations should please report it to your local VFBV State Councillor so that follow-up can occur.

The Committee has requested regular reporting of issues raised through the District Committee's so that State-wide issues and trends can be appropriately managed and followed up.

an evidence-based approach and as such, will continue to advocate the proven strengths of the CFA model and what improvements will have tangible benefits and outcomes for our communities.

We know the CFA can meet growing service demands and improve performance where needed without destroying the culture and ethos of our world-class integrated system.

VFBV will continue to assert it is critically important that a proper and transparent process of community, agency, volunteer and union engagement and consultation should be part of any process to consider or develop reform policy and legislation well before any decisions are made.

Our priority will always be community safety and to this end, it is crucial that volunteers support each other through any anxiety or ill-feeling caused by the uncertainty and help everyone stay focussed on the season ahead.

For those of you who are already feeling that the effort is no longer worth it, please hold on and remember why we volunteer. The journey ahead might look disappointing and even daunting, but for now, focus on what we do best – serving our communities. There is no better demonstration of the great value of the current CFA model and it is also by far the best way to change the minds of those who might still be talking down the CFA, volunteer capacity and professionalism.

Another way volunteers can help is to continue working with your local community, politicians and other leadership networks to raise awareness about the importance and strengths of the CFA model. What we have works best for Victoria and has proven to be able to evolve to meet the needs of our growing communities for many decades.

This is well evidenced and recorded in previous enquiries and the 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission.

For those who communicate with Members of Parliament, the most important and useful thing they can do right now is to take the CFA Pledge:

"I commit that I will not support any action that alters the existing CFA legislative arrangements unless such changes are recommended by an expert and independent review based on proper, transparent and evidence-based feasibility/cost/benefit analysis involving thorough consultation with CFA volunteers"

AND

"I commit that I will not support any action, policy or legislative change likely to impact on CFA volunteers until the obligations and commitments



set out in the CFA Volunteer Charter have been explicitly and fully adhered to."

CFA volunteers and supporters of VFBV should be extremely proud of our extended family for the consistent and professional approach we have taken to speak up about policy proposals that will damage the ability of our excellent CFA to continue protecting Victoria into the future. We are united in our commitment to providing frank and fearless advice to all Members of Parliament and will always do so with the single goal of delivering the best possible outcomes for the whole of Victoria.

On behalf of the VFBV Board and myself, I wish to sincerely thank members for your ongoing support and hope that with a little more work and patience, we will still have a chance to change the minds of those who talk down the CFA and the amazing work you do.

Please pass on this thanks to your networks and thank your colleagues for the incredible work they do on the ground every day to prepare and protect our community.

VFBV will continue to work hard to represent and advocate on behalf of CFA volunteers to Premier Andrews and his team. We are very enthusiastic to start working with the Hon Lisa Neville, the new Minister for Emergency Services and look forward to building a collaborative and respectful relationship that will enable positive outcomes for our amazing volunteers and the whole Victorian community.

And finally, please have a safe and happy Christmas. To all CFA volunteers and paid staff who work with, and in support of the important work we do; to our families, employers and supporters, MP's and all our interstate friends and colleagues - thank you and well done for everything you do for our community.

I am going to head into the new year with hope of universal acknowledgement of just how good our CFA model is and ask everyone to have a think about how improvements can be made without "throwing the baby out with the bathwater?"

Merry Christmas everyone and stay safe.

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