



# VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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## COLD CLIMATE JACKETS

We are pleased to announce that the bid for additional Cold Climate Jackets through this year's Volunteer Emergency Service Equipment Program has been successful.

We thank CFA for its support for the bid. Though the final amount approved was less than hoped – it is envisaged that the allocated funding will cover up-to an additional 1900 jackets State wide.

VFBV has offered to run the ordering process so that Brigades and Groups can be assured of having the opportunity to order specific sizes relevant to their membership profile.

Order forms are available via the VFBV website, and paper copies have been posted to all Brigade/Group secretaries in the January VFBV Mailout. Completed order forms are due back by 28 February 2019, so please follow-up with your Brigade/Group secretary ASAP.

VFBV will continue to advocate for additional funding to further increase allocations.

Delivery of the new Jackets are expected late June early July ready for the winter season.

## Integrated Brigade Forum

VFBV was recently invited to attend an Integrated Brigades Forum hosted by Frankston Fire Brigade.

Integrated brigades from across the South East region were invited to discuss various topics directly associated with the Integrated Model and the challenges they may face in the future.

The event was well attended by integrated brigades across Districts 8 and 27 and raised issues such as volunteer involvement and consultation, staff and volunteers working together, training, funding, administration and what opportunities/challenges may be faced in the future.

Brigade members attending provided a lot of constructive input and discussion, with participants expressing a desire to hold regular events in the future.

VFBV will continue to advocate and support the integrated model and ensure all decision makers are aware of their obligations to consult with CFA volunteers on all matters that affect them before decisions are made in accordance with the Volunteer Charter and CFA Act.

## A NEW YEAR. WHAT WILL 2019 BRING?

by Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

As I write this column in advance to prepare ahead for the 'Fire Wise' print deadlines that fall over the Christmas break, I wonder what lies ahead for 2019, for the weeks ahead and for the remainder of Summer.

I look to the coming days and week with that warm feeling of excitement and the anticipation of spending time with family and friends, hopefully kicking back and recharging the soul and body for another year ahead.

I look to the weeks ahead wishing that we, as the bigger CFA family and the broader community, enjoy a quiet summer and I nervously hope that the recent rain might work to reduce the fire risk for this summer and not just increase it later in the season.

By the time you are reading this I hope that you have had the chance to take a breather, enjoy what matters in life and recharge the batteries after what has been a busy and often frustrating year.

Whatever happens and whatever your beliefs, the Christmas period, time with family, and the power of nature can provide a powerful recalibration for many of us about what is truly important in life, what we can influence and what we cant; what is worth worrying about and what isn't; what we believe in and what our values are; and how we will choose to live and be in the year and years ahead. Too deep you might say but I mean it.

I am committed to starting 2019 with fresh legs, fresh energy and a constructive dialogue about things within our scope of influence with anyone who will have an impact on the decisions and outcomes. There will be some very big challenges and probably some big disappointments to come in this year ahead but I, and VFBV, will never give up our efforts in seeking to maintain constructive and respectful relationships with decision makers; ensuring volunteer views are known and communicated; and attempting to shape and sustain a CFA that maintains

and strengthens volunteer morale and retention to deliver outcomes that are in the best interests of community safety and the State of Victoria.

As I reported in my last column, I have written to our new Minister, the Hon. Lisa Neville MP congratulating her on her appointment and work is well progressed with her office to lock in some specific times to for meetings with VFBV in January and beyond.

Time moves too quickly as it is, so I don't want to jump into the new year without a brief reflection on the year just gone.

I look back on 2018 and once again feel enormously proud of the incredible work CFA volunteers do and the invaluable contribution to communities across Victoria. My most important reflection for 2018, as has been the case for many many years, is one of admiration, gratitude and respect for CFA volunteers. I cannot express enough how strongly I regard the incredible contribution, dedication and selflessness of all CFA volunteers and the appreciation I have for those who support the work we do.

CFA brigades are far more than just a fire service and CFA volunteers are far more valuable and fundamental to communities than most people realise. Never lose sight of the value you provide to your local communities and to Victoria as a whole.

Thank you for what you do and thank you to your families and employers for supporting your contribution to society. I sincerely hope that you understand how important the work you do is and how much it is appreciated by the community. Well done on another great year of service.

Of course I, like many others look back on 2018, and recent years, with a huge degree of discomfort. Discomfort because of the fact that CFA volunteers have not always felt respected or listened to and discomfort with the reality that despite a huge effort we were not able to convince some decision makers about the flaws in the proposed CFA restructure plan, that is now clearly still on the table. Discomfort with the reality that some changes will have a potentially devastating impact on Victoria's firefighting capacity.

I also look back on the year with a sense of pride and satisfaction that despite the challenging times, VFBV has



given volunteers a strong voice and a strong voice when many other voices have been silenced, absent or unheard. I look back on the year with a very clear conscience that VFBV sought tirelessly to educate decision makers about our concerns for the future of CFA and a clear conscience that VFBV operated with integrity, dignity and professionalism.

I receive a constant flow of messages from volunteers and supporters of CFA expressing gratitude for the efforts VFBV and our CFA volunteers over the past year and thankful that there has been a mechanism for volunteers to have a voice even when that voice is speaking against the odds.

I hear daily from volunteers who feel quite deflated about the future and I have sadly had to farewell too many experienced and long serving volunteers.

As I have asked before, rather than throw in the towel just yet, we need to keep focussing on what we do best – serving our communities. Until the last knife is taken to CFA let's continue to work to demonstrate the professionalism, capacity and importance of the existing CFA model, continue to show just how progressive CFA is and how vital the current arrangements are for the combined needs of local service delivery and major emergencies.

A wise volunteer reminds me often that "CFA brigades and the CFA model has seen many bureaucrats, politicians and policies come and go – in the end the truth will prevail and even the most ignorant and fiercest detractors come to realise how valuable the CFA model is. I agree with this and hope that the light comes on early enough for those who will ultimately decide the fate of CFA so that we can minimise harm to the attributes and elements of CFA that cannot afford to be lost.

If you are reading this, it is 2019. Happy New Year. Let's work to shape the best possible outcomes for CFA into the future.

## PUMPER TANKER PROTOTYPE

The Joint Equipment and Infrastructure Committee is seeking volunteer input into the next generation Pumper-Tanker Prototype being developed by CFA.

The Committee has requested CFA use the same process that was used to develop the new Medium Pumper several years ago, that showcased what is possible with a proactive and collaborative approach to consultation and equipment design.

Recently a small VFBV sub-committee of volunteer subject matter experts was formed and have met face to face with CFA engineers and designers to workshop the criteria and specifications shortlist for the next prototype Pumper Tanker. The committee is now proactively asking for volunteer input into the design of the appliance.

The desire is to build a prototype appliance that will combine the latest safety features available with today's trucking fleet with the best firefighting equipment available while balancing the needs of the unique operating environment these appliances are designed for.

It is expected that once designed the Prototype Pumper Tanker will be showcased across the state by way of a roadshow for further feedback before final design development and roll-out.

Any suggestions or feedback can be provided to your local State Councillors, Committee members or VFBV Support Officer Mark Dryden at [m.dryden@vfbv.com.au](mailto:m.dryden@vfbv.com.au).

## 2019 VFBV STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

An increased number of teams so far are entered for the 2019 State Urban Championship next March in Bendigo, including teams from both WA and NSW. A consistent number of teams are entered for the State Urban Junior Championship in Kerang next February.

Entry forms for the 2019 State Rural Championships in April at Bendigo, will be distributed to Brigades and available on VFBV's website early February 2019.

As advised in last month's edition, CFA has proposed combining the State Urban Senior and State Rural Championships in 2020, to be conducted alongside each other on the same weekend at the same location.

VFBV's Rural and Urban state competition committees continue discussions with CFA to work through some of the issues of a combined event, including the timing; location; support for the local Committee; sponsorship; and additional equipment

## Feedback on Bag Radios

The Joint Communications and Technology Committee is seeking feedback regarding the use, design and practicality of the current CFA bag radio.

The Existing Tait radios are approaching the end of their life and the Committee wish to provide CFA with informed and detailed options for the replacement radio to be used in a transportable form.

Some of the questions the Committee are interested in are the number of times the radio was used via 240-volt power, whether the restraint system employed is suitable and practical and if there are other features that may make the radio smaller and more usable.

Feedback can be provided to your local State Councillor's, Committee members or VFBV Support Officer Peter Sharman at [p.sharman@vfbv.com.au](mailto:p.sharman@vfbv.com.au).

## THERMAL IMAGING TRAINING

VFBV representatives on the Joint Training Committee were pleased to receive an update by CFA that our request for a streamlined training package to cater for Thermal Imaging Cameras in the non-structure environment appears to be progressing well.

Delegates have advocated for this improved training required.

CFA has committed to providing additional support, both financial and administrative, with the intent to not only enhance and improve the State Championships, but build as a showcase of CFA to the community by increasing participation and attendance.

VFBV's state competition committees see this as a positive move, and would welcome any views or feedback from Brigades or competitors.

after receiving reports from members that have had difficulty getting operational approval to place TICs on vehicles due to members being unable to access appropriate training.

The Committee requested a streamlined package to enhance operational efficiency by developing and implementing an operator awareness and bushfire themed Thermal Imaging Camera course to complement the current Structural course.

CFA has seen a large boost in TICs across the state thanks to the VESEP and other grants programs available to Brigades. By providing a course for the non-structural environment, it is hoped this will assist Brigades access training relevant to their risk profile as well as overcome issues with the current course

that only covers a structural theme and has strict pre-requisites to be completed.

VFBV has requested this course development be prioritised due to the significant operational efficiencies thermal imaging cameras have shown to provide firefighters especially during blackout operations in the non-structure environment.

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