



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



REMINDER: COLD CLIMATE JACKETS

Brigades and Groups are reminded that they have until 28 February 2019 to return Cold Climate Jacket Order Forms to VFBV.

VFBV has mailed copies of the order form to all Brigade/Group Secretaries during January and the order forms are also available for download on the VFBV website www.vfbv.com.au

VFBV worked with CFA to obtain funding for the additional Cold Climate Jackets through the Volunteer Emergency Service Equipment Program and it is envisaged that this funding will provide up to an additional 1900 jackets state wide.

As previously advised, VFBV will continue to advocate for additional funding to further increase the allocation of Cold Climate Jackets to brigades.

Delivery of the jackets is expected late June/early July to be ready for the winter season.

2020 State Champs

As previously advised, CFA and VFBV are working towards conducting the 2020 State Rural Championships (Juniors & Seniors) and the State Urban Senior Championship at the same venue on the same two day weekend.

The Rural and Urban Championships will retain their own individual events, and be conducted as separate competitions but conducted concurrently alongside each other on the traditional Rural and Urban competition tracks.

The chairs and members of both the VFBV State Rural & Urban Competition Committees have met on several occasions with CFA to discuss the proposal put forward by CFA, and both Committees have now agreed to a combined weekend as a means of increasing participation and a way forward to enhance and improve our State Championships.

Rob Waterson AFSM, chair of the Urban Competition & Rules Committee, says 'we need to embrace this new concept and all work together to ensure our Championships remain viable and sustainable into the future.'

Gerry Neyenhuis, chair of the State Rural Competition Committee, agrees, and says

LOW VOLTAGE FUSE REMOVAL

VFBV has received several inquiries from Brigades regarding the seemingly stalled rollout of Low Voltage Fuse Removal Courses across the state.

CFA has advised VFBV that the process hasn't stalled but has slowed down over the Christmas/ New Year period, this is due to Federation University Trainers not being available over the Holiday season.

Due to Electrical Safety Victoria requirements, only endorsed personnel are able to conduct this training, in some instances CFA Instructors will be accompanied by an endorsed Electrical Safety trainer.

VFBV was happy to learn that LVFR training has already been delivered in six Districts across the state with a further seven courses booked in for the early this year. Electrical Safety Awareness Course is available online through the Training Hub and may be a pre-requisite for the course in your District depending on how your course delivery has been structured.

If Brigades are not sure when LVFR training is expected to reach their area VFBV suggest you contact your local VFBV State Councillor or District Training Department for an update.

'will be a major showcase for CFA, and display the skills, efficiency and teamwork of competitors, all attributes of today's firefighters.'

CFA, VFBV and members of the Rural & Urban Committees met at the Mooroopna Recreation Reserve last month and agreed the grounds well able to conduct both State Championships side by side, and in consultation with the Greater Shepparton City Council, agreed to the weekend of 28th & 29th March 2020.

A District Committee has already been formed, including CFA management, mem-

bers of both the Rural & Urban Committees, VFBV members and staff. The District Committee will work over the coming year in the planning, preparation and management of the 2020 combined event and liaise and work with the Greater Shepparton City Council, which is very supportive of the 2020 State Championships being held at Mooroopna.

Any feedback or views from Brigades or members, can be directed to the VFBV Rural and Urban State Competition Committees by contacting Jenni Laing at j.laing@vfbv.com.au.

A TIME TO REMEMBER AND RESPECT

by Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

At a personal level it doesn't take hot February weather to remind me of the 2009 fires; the conditions leading up to them, that morning of the 7 Feb 2009, the days of firefighting, the recovery effort, nor the dreadful pain as we heard news of the loss of life, livelihood and property.

I remember telling my children on the morning of 7 Feb as I went up to the brigade ready for deployment to 'sit quietly and take it in because I think today is probably going to be a terrible day in history'. I know exactly where I was when I said this and it still jolts me when I think about how awfully profound that conversation was.

Like many CFA members and affected community people I don't need a 10 year milestone to remind me of the extent and impact of the tragic losses, the impact on individuals, families and communities nor the anxiety I have about the possibility of experiencing anything like that again and the worry I have about how we would go if it does happen.

The 2009 fires were a dreadful period in history, and I know they live in many of us every day. It is difficult to articulate a mix of feelings and a 'knowing' something we probably wish we didn't know.

At the same time, it is a 'knowing' that is real and vitally important not to ignore, because what we now know and what we learned from that experience must inform how we plan and lead for the future.

It is important that we use this milestone to quietly stop and reflect on the tragedy and it is also important that we remember the enormous effort that prevented even further loss, the constructive things, lessons and incredible human spirit that emerged from that tragedy.

It's hard to know what to say or do at this time and it is

impossible to get it right for everyone. Each of us will deal with the memory and the 'knowing' in our own way and my biggest hope is that no one is doing this alone. This is a time for quiet reflection and a time to remember each single life impacted, each family impacted, each community impacted. The quantum of loss was devastating and the impact on communities is still profound.

My thoughts and prayers are with every person who suffered loss, every firefighter or emergency worker who did what they could to help and every person feeling pain any time and particularly now as the events of 2009 and Black Saturday will raise in profile as the 10-year commemorations take place.

And in addition to remembering the losses and the personal impacts we should proudly remember the incredible effort and resilience as people put lives and communities back together. However hard the memory is, we must use this time as a stark reminder that fires like this do happen and could happen again.

It is also a time to reflect on the incredible contribution of CFA volunteers and the CFA paid staff who work alongside them; the huge number of volunteers and paid staff from a whole range of agencies; and people across all parts of the community and business world who came together to combat the fires, deal with the impacts, recover and learn so that we could be better placed to deal with future emergencies.

A lot was learned both during and following these dreadful fires. Many of our lives did change forever after February 2009 and everyone put in an amazing effort to prevent what could well have been an even more catastrophic loss.

I hate to think that there are some people who won't learn



from our experience of the 2009 fires without having to go through something like it themselves and some people who were there but have forgotten the important things to take from the 2009 fires.

I hesitate to say it here, and I will not dwell on it at this time, but I get very frustrated when I think that there are decisions being made today and plans still being hatched together that will weaken Victoria's ability to handle fires such as those we experienced in 2009. I hope you are listening decision-makers because you have been told in no uncertain terms what our concerns are and if you break CFA and its ability to deal with events like the Black Saturday fires in the future it will be on your head. My apologies readers but this must be said.

To anyone in a position of authority I ask, as you pay your respects and remember the suffering and incredible rebuilding that followed the Black Saturday fires, search into your conscience and ask how the actions and decisions you are taking today position Victoria to deal with a 2009 Black Saturday fire situation when or if it happens again in the future. It will be too late to ask yourself this in retrospect and wish you had done something different.

That is all I am going to say about the frustrations for this column because I want our thoughts and our care to be focused on those who are no longer with us, for those who lost loved ones and for the communities and people who have been impacted by the 2009 fires.

To everyone who remembers the fires referred to now as the Black Saturday fires and the other fires of the 2009 summer take care and lean on someone if you need to talk or need support.

A reminder that the Member Assistance Program is available through the support line, 24 hours a day on 1800 959 232. Trained and experienced Psychologists, Counsellors, Peers and Chaplains are available to all members and their immediate families through this free and confidential service.

2,500 CFA volunteers have their say

Who participated?

The seventh annual, VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey was conducted during the months of September and October 2018, with more than 2,500 CFA volunteers taking part.

The survey was also offered to fire service volunteers in Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania and Western Australia taking the total participants to approximately 6,000 volunteers nationwide. 2018 was the third year that the survey was offered to fire service volunteers from across Australia, with survey results and trends now being used as a catalyst for dialogue at both state and national levels.

The Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey is thought to be one of the biggest surveys of volunteer satisfaction in Australia.

CFA respondents

Analysis of the demographics of the respondents from the 2018 survey show that the respondents are representative of the wider CFA population. Some of the highlights include:

- 82% Male, 17% female (2% of respondents indicated either transgender, prefer not to say or other)
- All age groups were represented, along with volunteers who have been with CFA for less than one year through to volunteers with more than 30 years of service with CFA.
- Volunteers from every CFA district took part
- Brigade type:
 - o 61% volunteers from rural brigades
 - o 31% volunteers from urban brigades
 - o 7% volunteers from integrated brigades
 - o 1% volunteers from a CFA Coast Guard brigade

Understanding the results

The survey uses a 1 to 10 scale (to represent people's attitudes to a topic). This 1 to 10 scale is used to capture views about the Importance that a particular factor represents for the respondent, and then the respondent's view of Performance for that particular factor. 10 being high importance/performance and 1 being low importance/performance.

Determining the Gap and VolWEL Outcome

The Gap between how closely performance meets the expectation of Importance, is referred to as the Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Level (VolWEL) outcome.

The VolWEL outcome is a way to simply illustrate where things are working well or what needs attention.

A high VolWEL outcome is a sign that volunteer expectations are not being met while a low VolWEL outcome is a sign that volunteer expectations are closer to being met.

General Firefighter Project

VFBV is happy to report that the General Firefighter project is progressing well with continued consultation between brigades, VFBV Delegates and CFA.

VFBV's Delegates have been kept up to date with the course content and have been able to discuss concerns and ideas openly with the CFA project team. It is expected the Foundation Skills Drills will be released for pilot and volunteer feedback in late January/early February.

E-learning and Face-to-Face content is still being developed with expected pilot release at the end of the Fire Season. General Firefighter updates can be accessed on Brigades online or LMS and are updated monthly.

If you have any questions, please contact your local CFA training team or VFBV working party via c.dent@vfbv.com.au

VolWEL Outcome

>3.0	Critical need for priority attention	A Gap of 3.0 or more indicates that there is a critical gap between volunteer expectations and performance and volunteers are highly dissatisfied. Priority attention is needed.
2.5 - 2.9	Significant Gap - immediate attention required	A Gap between 2.5 and 2.9 indicates that there are significant issues that need to be addressed. Immediate action should be put in place to rectify areas of concern.
2.0 - 2.4	Large Gap - remedial action to be taken	A Gap between 2.0 and 2.4 indicates these issues are impacting volunteer welfare and efficiency and will be causing dissatisfaction with the volunteering experience. Action to address volunteer concerns should be implemented.
1.5 - 1.9	Mid-range Gap - need for improvement	A Gap between 1.5 and 1.9 indicates that volunteer expectations are not being met and should be addressed in both action and strategic plans, in the shorter term. Volunteers are indicating lower levels of satisfaction.
1.0 - 1.4	Small Gap - potential for improvement	A Gap between 1.0 and 1.4 indicates that longer term planning should include addressing volunteer concerns. Volunteers are reasonably satisfied.
<0.9	Meeting Expectations	A Gap of less than 1.0 indicates that on the whole, volunteer expectations are being met. This would be evidence of a high level of satisfaction throughout the volunteer population.