



# VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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## Last Chance: Cold Climate Jackets

Brigade and Group orders for fully funded Cold Climate Jackets were due by the 28th February. Order forms and information were sent to all Brigade Captains and Secretaries and all Group Officers and Group Secretaries in December 2018. Hard copies were also posted in January. **Any Brigades/Groups that have not yet returned their order forms are requested to do so ASAP** or risk missing out.

For Brigades or Groups that do not wish to receive any further jackets, please return the forms so any unwanted jackets can be allocated to other Brigades/Groups. There is a section on the order form to indicate you do not wish to order any Jackets.

## Thank you for members' strong show of support

VFBV's Brigade affiliations in 2018-19 were maintained at a high 95%, demonstrating yet again strong support for the important work VFBV does on behalf of all CFA volunteers. This month VFBV will be sending out notices for 2019-20 Brigade or Group VFBV affiliation and VFBV Welfare Fund Subscriptions. These will be posted out to Brigade and Group secretaries with a due date of 30 June 2019.

VFBV is established under the CFA Act to represent CFA volunteers on all matters affecting their welfare and efficiency. Without doubt it is more important than ever that volunteers have a strong, united, independent and respected voice. Affiliating with VFBV demonstrates unity and support for the important

work VFBV does on behalf of all CFA volunteers. It also helps build volunteer influence and entitles your brigade or group to participate in VFBV forums and decision-making.

The VFBV Welfare Fund has been helping volunteers since 1913 and provides small grants of up to \$5,000 to assist volunteer members and long serving ex members. The grants support members and their families experiencing personal financial hardship/crisis by providing welfare grants, on a needs-assessed basis, that may help alleviate stress impacting their ability to maintain involvement as a volunteer.

More information about the Welfare Fund can be found on the VFBV website or by contacting your local VFBV State Councillor.

Once again I need to express my deep admiration for the hundreds and hundreds of CFA volunteers from around the state who dropped everything to provide vital surge capacity to those communities in need, including our friends from interstate.

There's never really enough that can be said about how amazing and admirable our volunteers are. They provide such a huge contribution to the safety and response capacity of CFA and the protection of Victoria.

And as always, we thank the families of volunteers who put up with the disruption and the absences – you are also a major part of why the CFA can succeed.

I also want to thank employers. Some volunteers are self-employed and make personal sacrifices to join strike teams deployed across the state, and many have wonderful employers who are also part of Victoria's response in their willingness to support the emergency services members who work for them – we

thank them for being so understanding and generous.

A lot of people have lost property, pets and livestock in the fires – but importantly, a lot of them have been saved as well, as a direct result of Victoria's volunteer and career firefighters providing their highly trained and professional response capabilities.

We are still in a very dangerous time of the year, with significant damage potential from the fires already burning and plenty of risk of further fire activity as we have many areas of bush that are still in peak dryness and with high fuel loads. I have received report after report of new fire starts being controlled very quickly and dozens of houses being saved directly because of our firefighters' efforts. It is the work of CFA volunteers and our valued colleagues that have avoided greater losses and spared many residents from great loss. As with

## THANK-YOU AND WELL DONE

by Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

every fire there will be opportunities to investigate what learnings can be gained and that will happen in due course.

We all know how traumatising fires can be. We understand and sympathise with people who are facing the mountain of challenges that come when fire has ripped through their communities. They deserve our compassion and empathy, and we grieve alongside them.

Victorians are a resilient people, and there's a reason CFA is one of the most respected fire service models in the world and once again our response to these fires have proven why.

Take care of yourselves,



keep safe and know that we and the people of Victoria are proud of you and have your back. Well done and keep up the good work, there is still much to do.

## CEO succession plan activated

By Nev Jones, President VFBV

In February VFBV CEO Andrew Ford advised the VFBV Board of his desire to step down as VFBV CEO as of end April 2019.

While this is sad news for VFBV, I am sure you will share with me in recognising that Andrew has made an outstanding contribution to VFBV, CFA volunteers and the community over many years, and truly deserves our support as he chooses to pursue other career and family objectives.

Andrew was appointed to VFBV CEO in February 2007 and prior to that held various senior management positions as a CFA employee during a 15 year career commencing in 1992, and involving appointments as CFA Manager Corporate Planning and General Manager CFA Westernport Area.

Through Andrew's leadership, VFBV operates as a highly professional organisation and we have a well-established succession strategy in place. As a result of this the VFBV Board has appointed experienced CFA volunteer and VFBV Executive Officer Adam Barnett as the new VFBV CEO from 1 May 2019.

The Board is grateful that Andrew has agreed to continue his outstanding commitment to CFA volunteers and stay on with VFBV in a part-time strategic advisory role. Andrew will focus his energy and expertise on helping VFBV navigate the complex and challenging period ahead that will almost certainly see the Victorian State Government push ahead with its plans to create Fire Rescue Victoria.

As members know, this involves plans to separate operational paid staff out of CFA and discontinue Victoria's world-renowned model of integrating volunteers and paid staff working as one unified team. VFBV has been very clear that it poses significant risks to the sustainability and effectiveness of CFA.

Andrew and Adam will work with the government and other decision-makers to achieve the strongest possible CFA despite the significant



downsides of a very flawed fire service reform proposition.

In addition to continuing part time with VFBV, Andrew will be pursuing some other career interests and taking the opportunity to establish a better family/work balance following what has been a very demanding role as VFBV CEO over the past 12 years.

Adam Barnett will transition into the VFBV CEO role from 1 May 2019. Adam is well known throughout both VFBV and CFA and is a highly experienced and well-regarded operator. Adam has acted as VFBV CEO on numerous occasions and brings 13 years CFA experience to the role.

Adam will hit the ground running with regard to the continued day-to-day leadership of VFBV, the strategic challenges presenting to us and the important ground work we must always do to support, engage with and advocate for CFA volunteers and the work volunteers do to protect Victorian communities.

VFBV's strength comes not just from our leadership positions but from you our members, and I take this opportunity to express my ongoing gratitude to all of you for the contribution you make to ensuring the voice of volunteers is respected and heard.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to represent volunteers on all matters that affect them so that on behalf of all Victorians we sustain strong volunteerism and the strongest possible CFA for the benefit of our communities.

## FEM ADVOCACY

VFBV has continued discussions with the regulator on how best to support CFA Brigades through the implementation of the new Plumbing Regulations that were bought in late last year. Amongst the changes were new limitations that prevent CFA members servicing fire hose reels, with the regulations only providing for licensed plumbers to conduct this service.

VFBV has joined other stakeholders in working with the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) to properly scope the impacts of these changes and discuss appropriate arrangements to minimise the impact on CFA Brigades. There are more than 300 Brigades and more than 1,500 CFA volunteers trained and accredited to provide this service. CFA Fire Equipment Maintenance (FEM) services raise hundreds of thousands of dollars across the state for Brigades to purchase essential appliances and equipment for emergency response.

Discussions have been positive. All stakeholders have exhibited respect for the role CFA volunteers play in providing this service to communities and sympathy for the unintended consequences arising from the new Regulations. We have provided comment and recommendations to the regulator and are now awaiting final confirmation from the VBA's deliberations on these proposals. VFBV will continue to advocate for a common-sense approach that would ensure CFA volunteers can continue to provide this valued and essential service to communities across Victoria.

In October last year CFA publicly announced the results of its tender process for its Leadership Development programs, advising that the Australian Institute of Management (AIM) had been successful in obtaining a five year contract to deliver these courses across the sector.

procurement process to final implementation.

We will keep you informed as we learn more.

## Leadership Training

While VFBV was disappointed that volunteers had not been consulted during this process, and with the loss of the highly respected Fireline Leadership program it is set to replace, CFA has worked hard with the Joint VFBV/CFA Training Committee to restore trust and confidence in its new programs.

A small working party of subject matter experts and volunteer representatives has been assembled and is working with CFA and AIM to gain an understanding on the new proposed program.

We are told the program is based on the new Leadership Capability Development Framework for Fire and Emergency Services that was reviewed by CFA in 2017 and consists of Team member and Team leader training based around three themes; model ethics; self-awareness; and strategic thinking. CFA is expecting to release a pilot program this month.

VFBV has requested that the working party continue to be actively involved in reviewing the pilot, and that an opportunity for broader consultation and feedback is developed. We will keep you updated with progress as it is available.

## Melton wins 2019 Junior State Champs

An impressive performance saw Melton win its first State Junior Championship by a significant lead - coming first place with 90 points over second placed Harvey WA on 39 points and Tatura third on 27 points.

The Championship was held in Kerang on 23-24 February. It was hosted by the Kerang Fire Brigade, which did a sensational job welcoming Brigades and competitors and running a very slick and smooth competition.

Feedback has been very positive of the success of the weekend, which attracted nearly 500 junior competitors, with 63 teams from across the state including Harvey and Kellerberrin from Western Australia. Hundreds more CFA volunteers and staff, including members of the general public enjoyed seeing the future firefighters of CFA on display.

Melton A was the clear winners of the Under 14 Years age group winning six of the nine events and the team also won three events in the Under 17 Years age group, taking a clear sweep of all the aggregates, in winning the Dry, Wet, Under 14 Years, Under 17 Years and the Grand Aggregates.

Other strong performances came from Harvey, Tatura and Kangaroo Flat.

For full details and results turn to page 11 of this edition of 'Fire Wise.'

## Workwear

CFA has advised us that it is now collating all the responses received to the CFA Workwear Survey run late last year. More than 3,300 volunteers participated in the survey, validating VFBV's long advocacy that volunteers have a desire and expectation that they be consulted and involved in decisions affecting them.

CFA has asked to meet with the Uniform Working Party and is due to sit down with the Committee in early March to provide the results of the survey and discuss feedback.

It is VFBV's desire that the results of the survey then be made public and that CFA adjust the workwear proposal based on volunteer feedback and suggestion. We would then like to see CFA proceed to conduct a timely and transparent process to finalise the specifications, moving as quickly as possible through a tender and

## Wire rope barrier success

For many years VFBV has advocated on behalf of volunteers the importance of early and close engagement with CFA Brigades on any plans to install wire rope barriers along roadways. Early consultation and engagement allow Brigades to clearly understand what is proposed and allows volunteers to work with VicRoads staff to mitigate any impacts on local firefighting operations, including access/egress to bushland and sufficient turnaround points large enough to accommodate emergency vehicles.

Late last year VFBV officials sat down with VicRoads senior management on behalf of the VFBV Community Safety Committee, and discussed the importance of engaging with the local Brigades and volunteers, and some practical tips on how to do it effectively and constructively. We are pleased to report that following these discussions, we have had reports from several Brigades that have recently been approached by VicRoads, which then worked closely with the Brigade to alleviate and in some cases resolve concerns with planned works.

The Joint VFBV/CFA Community Safety Committee has requested that CFA work with VicRoads to plot out and map all current planned works across the State so that Brigades can identify works that may impact on their Brigade areas. As soon as this information is available, we will work with CFA to ensure it is well communicated and a process for Brigades to be identified and involved in planning is made available.