



# VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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## State Rural Championships

The State Rural Championships held last month in Bendigo were highly successful with an estimated 2,000 people in attendance, with well above 500 members and juniors competing over the two days of competition. The Championships were conducted at the Tom Flood Sports Centre, where the famous annual Bendigo International Madison cycling race was held in March, which provided an ideal location for competitors and spectators alike.

VFBV congratulates the District 2 Championship Committee led by chair Brendan Dreischler, for its significant work and effort in hosting the Championship, and thanks all Committee members for their contribution. We also pass on our sincere appreciation to the City of Greater Bendigo for its support to the District 2 committee and its contribution to our State Championships. The Bendigo Council have been particularly supportive of the State Championships, with not only the Rural Championships last month, but also the Urban Championships in March, being the third successive Urban Championships held in Bendigo.

Greta repeated its win of last year in being named the Champion Brigade winning the Division 1 Aggregate, with Dunrobin/Nangeela coming first place in Division 2 and Mandurang was first placed in Division 3. Greta won four of the six senior events and ran a new record time in the Tanker Hose Reel & Ladder event.

Springhurst won its second Junior Championship title, being first placed in the 11-15 Years Aggregate and second in the 11-13 Years Aggregate. There were two new record times, one by Springhurst in the 11-13 Years Hydrant & Tanker, and the other by Mandurang in the 11-13 Years Low Down Pump & Ladder.

Full results of the 2019 State Rural Championship are on pages 10 and 11 of this edition.

## SOP 6.06 feedback

As reported in the last edition of Fire Wise, CFA has commenced consultation on proposed changes to SOP 6.06 Practical and Hot Fire Training. CFA is proposing this SOP replace the existing SOP 6.06 called Hot Fire Training -PAD Briefs.

As this proposed SOP includes significant changes from its predecessor, VFBV is requesting that all Brigades, Groups and members discuss and assess the possible implications and potential barriers that these changes may create when conducting training. Members are encouraged to discuss at upcoming District Council meetings with active feedback and involvement from interested Brigades, Groups and members.

VFBV requests that all con-

## YOU COULD WIN!!

Brigades or Groups that pay VFBV affiliations before 30 June 2019 will automatically go into the draw for a chance to win one of four great prizes!

The 2019/20 Affiliation notices for your Brigade/Group's VFBV affiliation and VFBV Welfare Fund Subscriptions are with your Secretary now with a due date of 30 June 2019. As a gesture of appreciation to Brigades and Groups that pay VFBV affiliation prior to 30th June, VFBV will automatically place your Brigade or Group into a draw for a chance to win one of these great prizes, kindly donated by GAAM Emergency Products and Powdersafe Pty. Ltd.

For further details, checkout the "You Could Win" flyer included with your 2019/20 VFBV Affiliation Notice sent out to your Secretary in February.

cerns and feedback be directed to VFBV Support Officer Chris Dent so that VFBV can provide CFA with a consolidated, informed position based directly on your feedback. Feedback is due by Friday 14th June 2019, but earlier if possible.

VFBV Support Officer Chris Dent can be reached via c.dent@vfbv.com.au

## Elevated work platform trials

Volunteers have highlighted to CFA the significant safety issue when working at incidents that require the rescuers to operate above ground level. An Elevated Work Platform (EWP) is being trialled by brigades for use during rescues that require stable above-ground access at incidents, such as when rescuing a person trapped in a rolled over large truck cabin.

The trial is the direct result of active requests from rescue brigades which had identified the requirement as a key safety and efficiency measure for rescue operations and pursued it via the Joint VFBV/CFA Equipment & Infrastructure Committee. CFA has provided in-principle support and agreed to trial the equipment to evaluate options. Casterton Fire Brigade first trialled a portable lightweight Elevated Work Platform, with Werribee and Ballarat Brigades now part of a wider trial.

Members are reporting positive results from the trials. Given the limited storage capacity on appliances, the trial is now assessing the best options that will take up the least amount of room. We will keep you apprised of progress.

## Nominations for Trust Fund

The VFBV Board is calling for nominations to the CFA and Brigades Donations Trust Fund.

Following nominations, five new or reappointed members will be appointed by the VFBV Board to serve as VFBV trustees on the Trust Fund for a 12 month term. The Trust Fund committee meets quarterly, either via teleconference or at CFA HQ.

Nominations close Friday 21st June 2019 and can be mailed to VFBV office 9/24 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East 3151 or emailed to vfbv@vfbv.com

## Building Safer Communities

by Adam Barnett, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

As another year's fire season winds down, it is undeniable that our fire season is consistently starting earlier and running later. With the longer duration comes a larger commitment and I want to formally acknowledge the exceptional work you have done over the season. In a difficult environment and with an air of uncertainty hanging over our sector, you have my utmost admiration for the professionalism and work ethic exhibited by all members who have contributed over the season.

This year we have seen record summer temperatures and have responded to over 3,300 grassfire/bushfire incidents, with 62,590 member responses. Incredibly, and proof of your exceptional skill and work, over 98% of these incidents have been contained to less than five hectares – a significant achievement and a strong endorsement of the effectiveness of our fire service, your training and your expertise. So well done – and thank-you.

While the cooler weather will hopefully bring some respite, we know first hand from the high fuel loads and ongoing drought conditions present across the state that Victoria will continue to face a heightened risk throughout the year.

The fact that the fire danger period has been extended to mid-May for some areas of Victoria is telling, and brings into sharp focus the essential need to protect and strengthen the role of CFA volunteers and the critical role they play in Victoria's Emergency Management as our communities face potentially worsening natural disasters, extended periods of drought and the effects of climate change.

I also want to acknowledge and thank Minister Lisa Neville, who personally wrote to all Brigades last month thanking them for their efforts and expressing her thanks and gratitude for the sacrifices made by members. This recognition and respect for the work you do is welcomed and is not only critical to building and sustaining a strong and sustainable volunteer culture within the sector, but is a much needed injection of goodwill and support from Government for the work that you do in protecting your communities 365 days of the year. A very welcome step change and one for which I am grateful.

### Annual Memorial

This year's CFA Memorial Service was held in Healesville on Sunday 5 May. This annual memorial is always held on the Sunday closest to International Firefighters' Day and St Florian's Day (4

May) – with St Florian being the patron saint of firefighters.

A number of significant dates from our history were reflected on during this year's service including; 80 years since the 1939 Black Friday fires which led to the establishment of CFA, the Tarrawingee fires of 1943, 50 years since the 1969 Lara fires, and 10 years since the 2009 Black Saturday fires.

The annual memorial was a time for us to come together either in person or in spirit and remember and honour the 79 CFA firefighters (including 11 from pre-1944) who have selflessly given their lives to protect the lives of other Victorians. While the service is always solemn and reflective, it is also an important opportunity to reflect on our history and pay tribute to those lost – and the importance of the work we do to make our communities safer.

### CFA CEO Paul Smith departs

Many were shocked to learn of the recent resignation of CFA CEO Dr Paul Smith, who finished with CFA at the end of April. While Paul was only appointed just over a year ago – I always found Paul to be an honest and driven leader, and someone who genuinely wanted to see CFA succeed and do well. I'm disappointed to see yet another senior leader from the sector depart, and terribly worried about a period of further instability as CFA looks for a yet another CEO on the cusp of what is likely to be major sector reform.

I wish Paul all the best in his new job and hope that he will always keep a special place in his memory for CFA and its people and will continue to be a strong advocate for us in his new job. Similarly – I congratulate the Acting Chief Officer Gavin Freeman AFSM on his appointment as Acting CEO for the next four weeks.

### National Volunteer Week

Later in the month, from 20 – 26 May, we will celebrate National Volunteer Week. This is an annual celebration to acknowledge the generous contribution of the six million volunteers across Australia, recognising the incredible impact volunteers make in our local communities, society and the world. This year marks the 30th anniversary of this national celebration.

In terms of fire services, there are over 250,000 volunteer firefighters across Australia and collectively are certainly 'making a world of difference', which also happens to be this year's theme. During these national celebrations, it is important we also recognise the people that stand behind us and support our volunteering. Employers, partners, family, loved ones and friends who also make sacrifices to support us and deserve our thanks and recognition for the important role they play in our lives.

### The Year Ahead

And finally, I want to acknowledge the significant contribution of outgoing VFBV CEO Andrew Ford. I have worked with Andrew for



close to 12 years and consider him not only a respected work colleague, but also a friend. I have witnessed first hand the professional and personal sacrifices he has made on our behalf, and while I know he does not regret any of them, I have nonetheless seen the toll they have taken and understand his reasons for wanting a change.

We are rightfully very proud of the organisation that Andrew has helped lead and I commend him on the very solid and strong foundations he leaves behind. While Andrew will continue his strong involvement and contribution to the Association in a new important strategic advisory role, I want to take this opportunity on behalf of the VFBV Board, State Council and all Association members to formally thank him most sincerely for his outstanding service and acknowledge the significant contributions he has made over the years building a safer Victoria.

I am feeling excited and privileged to be taking on the role of CEO, but I also acknowledge the gravity of representing CFA volunteers at a time of significant upheaval that has caused many of you great distress. I know there are many challenges ahead as we work to ensure we have the strongest possible CFA in the future. With the ongoing support of the VFBV Board, VFBV representatives, brigades and members, it is my role to ensure that our voice is heard, that volunteer views are known and understood, and that we always put the welfare and efficiency of volunteers along with the safety of the communities we protect first in every interaction. This is my commitment to you.

We are a resilient people, and I frequently reflect on our Association's proud history of close to 150 years partnering to build safer communities and helping to build a strong, effective and vibrant emergency service for the people of Victoria. Just like our forebears, we will face the future together. I encourage all members to continue to raise any issues with your brigade or District VFBV representative, engage with your local VFBV District Council and as always, feel free to contact myself directly. Your voice is important, now more than ever. VFBV is **your** organisation, so please stay active and engaged as we continue our work seeking the best possible outcomes for a strong and united CFA – working together to build safer and more resilient communities.