

## VOLUNTEER WEEK

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Through our VFBV network we gather the views of volunteers starting at brigade level, represent their interests up through the VFBV District and State Councils and to the Board through to CFA management and joint consultative committees, to other emergency and volunteer organisations, and to the Government and Victorian public.

VFBV is a critical feedback loop connecting brigades to each other and to CFA's organisational structure. Our network of VFBV volunteer leaders ensure there is a united, coordinated and comprehensive view of what volunteers need, what they think of new initiatives and changes, and how those changes can impact at the ground and community level. They provide genuine, connected and credible advice on what CFA volunteers are thinking and what they need to be safe, supported and more effective. They also play a critical role in keeping brigades advised about what's happening at CFA and how that impacts them.

They are champions of the CFA Volunteer Charter, and face the challenging and often frustrating task to hold others to account for the commitments they've made there.

Our representatives dedicate a lot of additional time and effort, invisible to most of us except maybe their families, to undertake that consultation and coordination role. They regularly deal with the urgent requests and frustrations of brigades and do their utmost to ensure they get resolved with CFA as quickly as possible. As such they are on the front line as a key conduit and coordination point for you, and for every CFA brigade and group.

Some might wonder why they do it given the workload and the sometimes thankless task of consulting and coordinating on behalf of others – but like every CFA volunteer they are committed to having the most efficient and effective fire service and the safest and most resilient communities possible. Even more, they are committed to ensuring that their fellow volunteers are looked after and that there is a realistic touchstone for local views 'on the ground', when at times CFA policies or priorities might seem a touch unrealistic or impractical with day-to-day brigade experiences.

As volunteers start working higher in the CFA structure, such as at Brigade, Group,

District or State level, there are even more commitments and more energy put into making CFA the world-respected organisation it is today.

I am always impressed and humbled by the professionalism, the dedication and the sheer resilience of our VFBV representatives, given the issues that face CFA as an organisation and the sheer number of brigades and people they deal with in the course of their work. To maintain positive attitudes and a professional outlook when the majority of issues they are approached with are from volunteers having a negative experience – requires immense personal conviction and dedication and very strong personal values and empathy for their fellow volunteers.

So, on a very personal note, where no words will ever be enough - let me say a huge public thank-you for the work that my fellow VFBV representatives do. Many of them will feel embarrassed to be so publicly singled out for thanks, but now probably more than ever its important I thank and acknowledge the incredibly important work they do on behalf of all CFA volunteers.

To you our delegates I say thank-you and well done! Many will never know your full achievements or sacrifices in making CFA a better place – but rest assured the work you do is appreciated, valued and respected, and makes the world of difference to tens of thousands of volunteers and their communities across the State.

And while every CFA volunteer deserves thanks and recognition for the work they do – giving up their personal time for training, dropping everything to respond to emergencies and undertaking the myriad of activities from station-keeping to community education that contribute to safer Victorian communities, I save this last thank-you for those of you that always put others first.

From the bottom of my heart, and on behalf of the entire VFBV family and network – thank-you! It is a privilege and honour to work alongside you towards our vision for Strong Volunteerism, Embraced to Build Community Resilience for a Safer Victoria.

Adam Barnett  
Chief Executive Officer  
Volunteer Fire Brigades  
Victoria

## TRIBUTE PAID TO FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS AT MEMORIAL SERVICE

**The firefighters who lost their lives while serving their communities were remembered and honoured on 5 May at the CFA Annual State Memorial Service held at Healesville. More than 250 people attended the service to pay tribute to the 79 firefighters who have lost their lives in the line of duty.**

The service began with the Welcome to Country by the Wurundjeri Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Aboriginal Corporation, followed by the presentation and placing of the Colours.

Readings were provided by CFA Board Member **Lynda Hamilton**; VFBV Board Member **Jan Cleary**; Emergency Management Commissioner **Andrew Crisp** APM; VFBV State Councillor and Captain of Dromana Fire Brigade **Timothy Desmond** JP; Captain of Toolangi Fire Brigade **Dawn Hartog**; and Executive Director Volunteers and Strategy **John Haynes**.

This year's memorial service also looked back on the 1939 fires which led to the establishment of CFA, the

1943 Tarrawingee fire where 10 firefighters lost their lives and the devastating fires of 1969 where two volunteers perished.

CFA Acting Chief Executive Officer and Chief Officer **Gavin Freeman** AFSM and Captain of Healesville Fire Brigade **Graeme Bates** performed the Roll of Honour. Hoddles Creek Junior Fire Brigade and The Basin Junior Fire Brigade assisted in the laying of the wreaths.

Gavin said the service was a time for solace and reflection of members who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

The CFA Annual State Memorial service is held on the Sunday closest to International Firefighters' Day and St Florian's Day (4 May). St Florian is the Patron Saint of Firefighters.



Captain Graham Bates (Healesville) and Acting Chief Officer Gavin Freeman perform the Roll of Honour.

Image by Uniform Photography

## Duncan's amazing service

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Duncan was a fair and caring leader who gained respect from his members and did everything possible to ensure members had access to the training, equipment and vehicles required to make them the best firefighting brigade they could be.

In fact Longwarry Brigade became a very professional brigade under his astute leadership.

During Duncan's leadership wife Betty, who passed away several years ago, served as Communications Officer at Longwarry Fire Brigade for 30 years.

"I was lucky to have Betty because I could get away to fires without getting in trouble," Duncan said. After standing down as Captain in 1994 Duncan took on the Communications Officer role for four years (1996-2000).

Duncan was elected to Deputy Group Officer upon the formation of Drouin and District Group in 1964. He was awarded the Queen's Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. And in 1991 CFA honoured Duncan as a life

## FIRE SERVICES REFORM BILL

Comments by Acting Chief Officer/CEO  
Gavin Freeman

It has been a big few weeks for the CFA with the State Government introducing the Fire Services Reform bill. If passed, this will see the creation of a new organisation, Fire Rescue Victoria.

CFA career firefighters and some support staff will transfer to Fire Rescue Victoria and CFA will become focussed on volunteer firefighting with volunteers providing the core of our service delivery.

This will become one of the most significant changes to our organisation in decades. I am confident that it will be a great opportunity to improve fire services to the whole community and move CFA into the future.

The government has indicated that the implementation will take about 12 months. The CFA leadership team and I are committed to delivering a smooth transition through this period with open communication and engagement across the organisation.

To that end, DCO Stephanie Rotarangi is leading CFA's planning and preparation work. She will be overseeing a comprehensive outreach program to ensure all our members are informed and listened-to as the work progresses.

Feedback and input from all members will be vital in ensuring CFA is best positioned to improve on its standing in the community as a world class fire and emergency service.

You can already find some early information and 'frequently asked questions' on



the CFA intranet page dedicated to reform. We look forward to expanding upon the available information as we work through the details of the changes.

Importantly a second piece of legislation has also been proposed to support presumptive cancer compensation in specific cases. The process of seeking compensation can be lengthy and stressful so I welcome the certainty it will bring to our firefighters who have been harmed in the line of duty.

In other news I attended a sod turn ceremony at the site of the new Victorian Emergency Services Memorial site earlier this month. The new memorial will be located at Treasury Gardens in the Melbourne CBD and will include the names of the 79 fallen CFA members as well as those from MFB, VICSES, Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV), Ambulance Victoria, Life Saving Victoria and Marine Search and Rescue (MSAR).

When construction is completed later this year, the new memorial site will host some of CFA's annual memorial services on St Florian's Day – the Patron Saint of Firefighters. It will be fitting and accessible tribute to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to the community.

Finally on a personal note, it has been an honour to serve as the Acting Chief Executive Officer and Chief Officer for the past two months while CO/CEO Steve Warrington took a well-deserved break.

By the time of publication, CO/CEO Warrington will be back in the chair, re-energised and ready to lead the CFA with his usual expertise and passion.

member.

Duncan is the first person to receive an 80 year service medal and he was genuinely humbled at the medal presentation. "I'm honoured, too right; I'm honoured," Duncan said.

"I enjoyed every minute of my life when I was in the fire brigade."

Son **Peter** is still actively involved in CFA as a member of Warragul Fire Brigade. Peter himself has now managed 48 years of service.

He described how inspiring and proud he is of his father's service with CFA. "He was a very good leader; he inspired the troops and he led by example," Peter said.

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