



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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16/17 year old operational firefighters

The deadline for submissions has been extended, with a new closing date set for 15 May 2020.

With the law classifying any member under the age of 18 as a child, members are requested to discuss and make submission on whether the minimum age for operational activities should be changed or if there are further steps that can be taken to protect and improve the safety of children participating in CFA activities.

Brigades, Groups and members are encouraged to discuss at their local District Council meetings, and all members including juniors, parents, fellow brigade members and leaders are encouraged to consider making submission so that all perspectives can be understood and considered.

Information on how to make a submission can be found on the VFBV website, or by contacting your local State Councillor, VFBV Support Officer or District Council Executive member.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP UNDER 18

CFA requires all parents and guardians of any person under the age of 18 who is competing in this year's State Championships to provide parental consent and supply relevant personal and medical information of their child, utilising the secure online platform CareMonkey.

Parents and Guardians of any member under 18-years-old participating should have been sent a link by CFA via email which will take them to the required CareMonkey online form to complete.

Simply click on the link, create a profile (if you don't have one already) and fill out the form. FAQs are available on Brigades Online.

If you have not received the link please contact CFA via championships@cfa.vic.gov.au ASAP.

RESPONSE TO RECOVERY

by Adam Barnett, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

Two significant milestones were reached over the last two weeks. On the 19th February, after 90 days of sustained activity – the Tambo complex fire was declared contained. Just eight days later and following 98 days of active fire activity - the Snowy complex fire was also declared contained on the 27th February.

Incredibly, this marks the first time during the current fire season that Victorian fire crews are not responding to broad acre out of control fires. Despite many hundreds of local personnel (including international and defence force crews) remaining deployed managing contained fires and new starts, these events signal what is hopefully a permanent downward trend in the current fire season.

And while there is still much work ahead of us, I want to echo the many heartfelt well wishes that are coming from many grateful and humbled Victorians. The tireless and selfless efforts of so many of you and our fellow emergency service partners over what has been such a prolonged period of high operational activity is most deserving of praise and thanks. Your commitment to your communities and public safety is exemplary.

As operational tempo begins to fall, our efforts and priority will continue to swing

to recovery operations.

As I explain to others, this is one of the key areas that differentiate emergency management volunteers and is part of what makes you so special.

Not only are you amongst the first ones moving into communities during periods of response but long after the fire front has passed - you are also amongst the ones remaining in these communities to lead and support the sustained recovery operations that are needed to help rebuild those very same communities impacted.

In this vein, there are two important initiatives I want to highlight this month.

The first is the joint recovery task force that is being formed by VFBV District Councils 8 and 13 (see page 6 of this edition). This initiative is being led by VFBV State Councillor Bill Watson AFSM and is modelled on the recovery taskforces we assembled following Black Saturday back in 2009.

The taskforce will be deploying over the coming months to undertake community-based recovery projects in areas recently affected by this season's fires and will also target any CFA volunteers whose own properties have been impacted. The task force will only deploy by invitation from a local community, brigade, resident or member and priority will be given to supporting local communities by ensuring any additional resourcing, tools or equipment required is drawn from local businesses, thereby boosting and supporting the local economy.

The activities undertaken will be unglamorous but of great import and benefit to local communities, members and residents.

It will involve tough and exhausting work, mostly conducted over weekends and the aim is for the taskforce to be as self-sufficient as possible with self-catering and camp style accommodation. Tasks chosen are aimed to cover cracks left by insurance and government support and picking up those areas in between; it might be felling trees and cutting them up, general maintenance, fencing, clearing up and other jobs not covered by insurance. It's about helping fellow community members, firefighters and others in their time of need and helping them move on.

Expressions of interest are being sought for experienced and endorsed chainsaw operators, drivers and safety officers, as well as labourers, able bodied helpers and personnel willing to assist. Members are encouraged to discuss their involvement with their Captains and BMTs prior to committing and all personnel must be current CFA members.

CFA is supporting the taskforce and arrangements and I want to recognise and thank them for supporting this initiative. These kinds of initiatives are often a little outside the box and can sometimes challenge our process and systems and I want to congratulate the local CFA manage-



ment for enthusiastically getting behind it and supporting a fantastic community based and focussed initiative.

Bill is coordinating resources being drawn from District 8 and VFBV State Councillor Rod Stebbing is the lead for District 13.

If you'd like to help, please contact an executive member from either District Council 8 or 13 or visit the VFBV website for further details.

The second initiative I want to highlight is to remind members that we are ramping up our efforts to identify any CFA volunteers who have lost their homes, stock, fencing, outbuildings, machinery or anything else that will impact on that members livelihood.

Connecting members up with grants and recovery services is a priority as well as topping up or providing additional grants to bridge any gaps from our welfare fund or our volunteer support and recovery trust. If you have been impacted, or you know someone who has been, please get in touch with your local VFBV Support Officer or District Council as soon as possible so we can assist you immediately.

Experience tells us – many of those affected will not self-report, so we need your help. This is one of the rare times I will ask members to put their selflessness to one side, and please reach out or encourage someone else to. Disbursement of grants requires careful planning and management and we don't want anyone to miss out simply because they were too proud to ask for help.

Please, if you were impacted or you know a fellow member who was – please contact VFBV Support Officer Michelle Ryan if you are from the North East Region, or VFBV Support Officer Colin Booth if you are from the South East Region.

We need an accurate register of impacted members so that the Trustees of our VFBV Volunteer Support and Recovery Trust (formerly known as the Black Saturday Trust) & our Welfare Fund can assess demand and make arrangements for appropriate disbursement and fund raising.

The Trust alone has distributed more than \$880,000 to CFA members and their families since Black Saturday and is just one way we can continue to support those members who have been directly impacted.

Stay safe, rest when you can and continue looking out for one another. You are all doing incredible work.

Harvey wins State Urban Junior title

Harvey from WA won the Grand Aggregate title at the 2020 State Urban Junior Championship at Horsham recently, in the closest finish at a Junior state for many years.

At the start of the final event, Melton's A team were in the lead by one point on 56 points to Harvey second on 55 points - but Harvey took out third placing in this event, giving them the lead on 58 points in the Grand Aggregate. Close behind was Melton A with 56 points, and Melton B with 46 points.

VFBV congratulates Horsham Brigade and its Championship Committee on hosting a very successful Junior Championship, and thanks the Brigade members for their work and efforts and for their commitment to host the Junior State Championship again next year at Horsham. We also pass on our appreciation to the Horsham Rural City Council for their support to the Horsham Brigade and the Junior Championships.

The Championship was well attended, with an estimated 2,000 people attending and 61 entered teams from across the state including 12 junior competitors from Harvey WA, with well over 400 junior members competing in total.

We look forward now to the State Urban Senior Championship events, and the State Rural Championship Senior & Junior events, at Mooroopna on the weekend of 28th & 29th March 2020 – which will see a combined event of Rural and Urban events conducted on their own traditional tracks alongside each other for the first time in history. The weekend will be an exciting showcase of competitions and of CFA to the community, and we encourage all members to attend whether as a spectator, team supporter, competitor or just to see and participate in the great variety of

CFA activities that will be available, or see the spectacular Torchlight Procession on the Saturday evening, with Brigades marching around Victoria Park Lake Shepparton in an impressive display of CFA. Any queries in taking part in events or the Torchlight Procession can be directed to the VFBV office on 9886 1141.

Full results of the 2020 State Urban Junior Championship are on page 11 of this edition.

Stawell Club fundraiser

Following this year's significant bushfires, the Stawell Club had a special fundraising effort and generously offered to donate the funds raised to VFBV's Volunteer Support & Recovery Trust Fund to assist CFA volunteers impacted by the bushfires.

At the Official Opening of the State Junior Championship at Horsham, President Russell Jones and Secretary Barry Sertori of the Stawell Club, presented a cheque for \$13,800 to VFBV CEO Adam Barnett.

VFBV's Volunteer Support & Recovery Trust Fund (formerly the Black Saturday Trust Fund) was initially established in 2009 following the Black Saturday fires to provide assistance to CFA volunteers who had suffered loss.

The Trust Fund was established to respond to significant natural disasters impacting on CFA volunteers. It provides swift monetary grants to assist members recover from loss of home, loss of outbuildings, fencing, stock, livelihood and any other impacts resulting from large scale natural disasters.

VFBV covers all administration fees, and 100% of funds received are used for the payment of volunteer grants. Members of the public

are invited to donate via VFBV's webpage.

VFBV passed on its thanks and appreciation to the Stawell Club for its generous donation, which will be used directly in assisting our volunteers who have suffered losses following the recent bushfires.

Below: Pictured is President Russell Jones and Secretary Barry Sertori of the Stawell Club, presenting VFBV CEO Adam Barnett with a cheque for VFBV's Volunteer Support & Recovery Trust Fund.

WORKWEAR TENDER ANNOUNCED

In welcome news, the long-awaited tender for Volunteer Workwear was announced by CFA on the 21st February 2020. Tender responses are due via the Victorian Government procurement website Tenders VIC and close on the 1st April 2020.

The VFBV working party met with CFA representatives on the 22nd February to view updated prototypes and discuss next steps. It is hoped that final prototype garments will be available for public display to the membership at the State Championships in Mooroopna later this month.

This is an exciting development, and we look forward to seeing this project enter its final phases to deliver a high-quality functional garment that has evolved considerably over time based on direct member feedback and consultation. Thank you to all members who participated through the member surveys and assisted with the considerable advocacy that has been required to push this project along. It is expected the tender will be finalised by the end of July and distribution to follow shortly thereafter.

