



# VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

Address: 9/24 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East, 3151  
 Email: vfbv@vfbv.com.au  
 Telephone: 9886 1141  
 Chief Executive Officer: Adam Barnett

Post: PO Box 453, Mt Waverley, 3149  
 Website: www.vfbv.com.au  
 Fax: 9886 1618  
 State President: Nev Jones AFSM



## NOMINATIONS FOR TRUST FUND

The VFBV Board is calling for nominations to the CFA and Brigades Donations Trust Fund. The purpose of the Trust Fund is to raise and receive money and donations of goods and services from the public for distribution to Brigades, to assist with costs of purchasing and maintaining firefighting equipment, facilities, training and resources and administrative expenses of Brigades which are associated with their firefighting functions.

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 term of two years. One member has advised they will not be re-applying; all other members are eligible for re-appointment.

The Trust Fund committee meets quarterly, either via teleconference or at CFA HQ, with the appointments to come into effect as from the Trust's AGM which is normally held July/August.

Nominations close Friday 11th June 2021 and can be mailed to VFBV office, 9/24 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East 3151 or emailed to vfbv@vfbv.com

## State championships a great success

The inaugural combining of Urban Senior events and Rural events, Seniors & Juniors, was an outstanding success according to feedback from those attending last month at Mooroopna. This was the first occasion in competition history that Urban and Rural events had been conducted at the same venue, at the same time, running alongside each other on their own traditional competition tracks.

The State Urban Junior Championship held at Mooroopna the week before, was also a successful weekend with nearly 300 Junior members from 41 teams competing to be the 2021 State Urban Junior Champions, which was won by Melton by a significant margin. The following weekend also winning by significant margins were Kangaroo Flat at the Urban Seniors and Beazley's Bridge at the Rural Seniors, with Strathmerton being named the Champions at the Rural Juniors. See full results of the 2021 State Championships on pages 10-12 of this edition of Fire Wise, or refer to VFBV's webpage.

VFBV passes on its appreciation to everyone involved, particularly the State Championship Committee which consists of CFA management,

## Central Highlands road names

CFA has recently engaged with VFBV to consult on naming conventions for the road network at Central Highlands Training Campus. The final names will be chosen by the CFA Chief officer and CEO.

This is an encouraging opportunity to recognise and honour the dedication of key CFA people by naming a road after them. VFBV is seeking nominations of inspirational women, men, operational and non-operational members who have made a significant contribution to CFA and/or CFA training.

We encourage everyone to think about those within their

members of both VFBV Rural and Urban State Committees and staff for their work and efforts in the preparation and management of both weekends, added to which was the additional workload in ensuring the events complied with all COVID Safe requirements.

Our congratulations to everyone involved – well done. We also pass on our appreciation to the Greater Shepparton City Council for their continued support of our Championships, this being the ninth occasion that our Championships have been held in the Shire.

No doubt the State Championship Committee and VFBV's two competition committees will over the coming months, consider any improvements for next year. Feedback from Brigades and competitors would be welcomed by VFBV and can be mailed to the VFBV office or emailed to vfbv@vfbv.com.au

## Recognition of prior learning

VFBV delegates on the Joint Training Committee are assisting CFA in the development of RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) packages for both Prepare, Test and Maintain Response Equipment – PUAEQU001 and Operate Pumps - PUA FIR309. Prepare, Test and Maintain Response Equipment is currently available for nomination through LMS with Operate Pumps still being worked through however pre-nominations are available through LMS.

VFBV delegates have been requesting RPL packages to be made available to Volunteers for some time and are happy this has finally eventuated but are less than impressed about the circumstance that has finally prompted CFA to develop these packages.

## RCH SUPPORT

Congratulations once again to CFA members for their incredible contribution and support to the Royal Chil-

networks who may have profoundly provided a large amount of time and energy into CFA Training in particular and would be worthy of such a nomination. Nominations are being sought via District Councils and the CFA/VFBV Joint Training Committee.

Nominations are requested to include background information to assist with the shortlisting process.

## Vaccine, Champs and Road Safety

by Adam Barnett, VIVL Chief Executive Officer

The Australian Government's national COVID-19 vaccination rollout is underway, and I am pleased to confirm that CFA and SES volunteers are eligible for access to vaccination under phase 1B of the program that commenced rollout last week.

1B vaccinations are being made available to specific groups of people based on recommendations by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, and from a VFBV perspective, I wish to personally thank the Federal Health Minister the Hon Greg Hunt MP for engaging with VFBV and allowing us the opportunity for input.

Phase 1B vaccinations include critical and high-risk personnel including defence, police, emergency and fire services as well as remaining health care workers who were not covered under phase 1A and includes members of the general population considered higher risk such as people aged 70 and over, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, aged care/disability workers and licensed meat processing workers.

Vaccinations under the 1B phase for emergency management personnel are limited due to supply and are being coordinated at a State level. Vaccinations are only available by appointment only, and you will need to confirm your eligibility when making an appointment. The CFA Chief Officer has released a guidance note to guide members to help make an informed decision about preferred priority order, noting that vaccination is not mandatory.

I would also remind members that phases 2A and 2B which covers the balance of the adult population are projected to commence later this year from as early as

May/June and ramping up significantly during Q3 of this year, so I urge members to review the Chief's advice when conducting your own self-assessment on access. Members involved in CFA Emergency Medical Response (EMR) and Road Accident Rescue (RAR) have been recommended as priority 1.

The Victorian Department of Health has established two high-volume vaccination centres located in Melbourne, but members are also able to access 1B through eligible GP's. Details on how to access each are available via the CFA and VFBV websites.

### State Championships

This year's State Championships were hugely successful, and I want to congratulate all participating brigades and members on their performance.

For the first time in our history, all four State Championships (Rural & Urban Juniors and Rural and Urban Seniors) were held in the same location (Mooroopna) on sequential weekends. And while numbers were significantly down from previous year's due to COVID restrictions, across the two weekends we had 161 teams comprising of 992 individual competitors. And while the events were closed to the general public due to restrictions, and interstate teams from both WA and NSW were unable to attend - the atmosphere was terrific.

This year's Victorian/Western Australia Challenge which is traditionally held each year at the end of the Urban Seniors Championship was conducted virtually this year, with Victoria filming its team run, with WA due to similarly film their run back in WA. Despite calls for a 'do-over' and proving the honour system is alive and well, sadly, Victoria's run was a miss, therefore WA will retain its title from its win back in 2019, where it was won with a time of 27:49 seconds.

I was very pleased to observe bi-partisan support with Mr Paul Edbrooke MP representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Mr Tim Smith MP representing the coalition as the Shadow Minister for Emergency Services, as well as local MP's The Hon. Wendy Lovell MP and independent Ms Suzanna Sheed MP. It was wonderful to catch up with each and observe their support and encouragement of CFA volunteers and juniors.

I also want to extend my thanks to CFA and acknowledge their renewed and strengthened commitment to the Championships. The CFA corporate marquee was very well attended, and almost all directorates were present and offering member services and information to attendees. There was also a terrific show of support by the CFA Executive and leadership, including CFA Board members Beth Davidson, Dawn Hartog and Peter Shaw, CFA CEO Natalie MacDonald, Chief Officer Jason Heffernan, as

well as good attendance from Executive Directors, Deputy Chief Officers, DMO's and CFA staff. I also thank Commissioner Andrew Crisp for his continued support and attendance.

Special thanks also to the Assistant Chief Officers and Commanders who attended over the weekends and I thank them for their continued dedication and loyalty to CFA and CFA volunteers. With all the controversy surrounding fire services reform, it is incredibly important to recognise those of our seconded officers who continue to go above and beyond for their brigades, groups, and members. VFBV is very grateful and appreciative of the work you do. Thank-you, and please know we are proud of you and continue to welcome and embrace you as part of the CFA family.

Lastly, but my no means least, may I also thank the City of Greater Shepparton, the 220 VFBV volunteer judges and officials, our competition committees, volunteers and staff who all worked tirelessly to make this year's Championships happen.

For those in the know, it was extremely difficult and time consuming to not only attain the necessary event approvals, and satisfy the ever-changing health and COVID restrictions, but to pull it off and run the two weekends so smoothly and without incident is a credit to everyone involved. Special thanks to Host Committee Chair Alan Davies and his team of volunteers and staff, as well as DCO Peter O'Keefe and his team in the Volunteerism directorate, with a special call-out to Melanie Caser, Volunteers Program Leader for all her and her teams exceptional work done behind the scenes.

Thank-you also to my team and all the dedicated volunteers that toil away each year to make these events such a success.

### 0.00% BAC

Sadly, just prior to print deadline, we have been very much disappointed to again discover significant legislative reform pushed through Parliament during lockdown and without volunteer, or it appears emergency service agency consultation, planning or engagement.

Changes to Victoria's Road Safety Act was announced via the Government Gazette dated Tuesday 30 March and proclaimed to come into effect just one day later on the 1 April 2021.

Among amendments was section 40 of the Act, where "large vehicle" was changed to "heavy vehicle" having the effect of introducing a 0.00% blood alcohol concentration for any person driving a vehicle over 4.5 tonne GVM. This restriction, had previously only applied to vehicles greater than 15 tonnes.

With the new rule now applying for all vehicles over 4.5 tonne - in the CFA context this now picks up almost the entire fleet of fire appliances, not to mention impacts to the private sector, the transport industry and all interstate drivers where rules between



states differ quite significantly. For example, across the border in NSW and SA the limit is 0.05 with NSW having a BAC of 0.02% for vehicles greater than 13.9 tonnes and SA a limit of zero for vehicles over 15 tonnes.

Inexplicably, there was no notice or public education campaign to educate the public about these significant changes prior to their proclamation, and even CFA confirmation was not provided some 16 hours until after the changes came into effect on April 1st. This is a significant departure from standard practice.

VFBV has escalated this matter to the Minister seeking an explanation but has yet to receive one.

To be clear, no-one is debating the merits (or not) of this change, and frankly it would be insulting to insinuate otherwise given CFA volunteers commitment to public safety. However, to introduce significant change without notice, without public education of the changes and without resourcing support for the change management journey required to mitigate its impacts on what is essentially a 24/7 on-call workforce like CFA and SES - is frankly unconscionable.

While State Council is due to discuss this matter next week, District Councils are eager to hear from brigades as to what support you require from Government and CFA to mitigate any impacts of these changes and to support and resource brigades to increase their driver capability to account for the increased regulatory burden of these changes.

In the interim, the VFBV Board is advocating for an immediate increase to volunteer heavy vehicle license upgrades and driver training to increase the available driver pool. It is simply unacceptable for volunteers to have to continue putting their hands in their own pockets or conducting fundraising activities to pay or subsidise the cost of upgrading their licenses. The public would be shocked to learn that the Government does not fully cover the cost of equipping volunteers with the appropriate licenses and training to drive the very fire trucks we are expected to use. But it would appear this simple moral obligation continues to be ignored. This needs to be addressed immediately and we will likely need your help to ensure the appropriate Ministers and officials are held accountable and the funding gap is fixed as a matter of urgency.