



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



UPDATE YOUR STATUS

CFA is requesting that all members please update their CFA record with their COVID-19 Vaccination status as soon as possible, as per the Chief Health Officer's directions.

ONLINE: <https://www.members.cfa.vic.gov.au>

BY PHONE: (03) 9262 8663

OPEN FOR CONSULTATION

VFBV is seeking broad feedback and comment from volunteers in order to inform and assist with VFBV formal responses to these documents. VFBV District Councils have also been invited to lead local discussion at the District level.

Visit our website vfbv.com.au for draft papers.

Fire District review Panel Methodology: Due 8 November
 CFA Behavioural Standards: Due ASAP

Child Safety Behaviour Standard: Due 6 December

Child Safety & Protection Business Rule: Due 6 December

Survey pre-registration

This year's VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey is about to open.

Scan the QR code to pre-register or start as soon as it is launched.



CULTURE REVIEW

CFA has commissioned an external review led by the former Commissioner of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Dr Helen Szoke AO into the culture and issues management processes of the CFA.

Visit the VFBV website for a copy of the discussion paper.

Members are encouraged to contribute to this review by requesting an interview with the review team. To arrange an interview, please email CFAreview@allenandclarke.com.au

Interviews can be face to face, over the phone, via video conference or part of a group.

REVIEW RELEASED

CFA has released the peer review of CFA Training that was undertaken by AFAC. VFBV thanks all members who participated in the VFBV arranged volunteer focus groups held with the review team at the Central Highlands training campus earlier in the year.

The review has made 14 recommendations on changes to improve training. The CFA Chief Officer has accepted all 14 recommendations.

The report is available from <https://tinyurl.com/vfbv-sup23>

FEM health surveillance

VFBV has supported a new Voluntary FEM (Fire Equipment Maintenance) Health Surveillance program as part of the 2019 transition to fluorine free foam (FFF) extinguishers across all appliances, fire stations and through CFA FEM services to the general public.

In late 2019, CFA communicated to all FEM brigades an amended procedure for "Fluorine Free Foam Extinguisher Servicing" via a Bulletin which covered the use and maintenance of foam extinguishers and provided direction to brigades to only use or maintain Fluorine Free Foam Extinguishers moving forward.

Prior to this time, some FEM personnel would have undertaken refilling activities on foam fire extinguishers while extinguishers contained foams with PFAS/PFOS. While Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Service

Procedures, FEM Bulletins and Chief Officer Operations Bulletins were designed to protect our people for these maintenance activities, there is still potential that some FEM members may have been exposed to PFAS/PFOS.

CFA is now offering a precautionary, voluntary Health Surveillance Program to ensure that our members have processes in place to support them should they be concerned about exposure to PFAS/ FOS containing foams.

Concerned members can register for the program using the FEM Health Surveillance Program Registration Form available from CFA and also made available via the VFBV website.

If eligible, a medical assessment will be conducted that will comprise of two components; a blood test and a medical examination that will be

APPRECIATING THOSE WHO INSPIRE

by Adam Barnett, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

All year I have tried to avoid referencing any COVID restriction milestones. Mostly because they change so quickly, and the information becomes outdated almost by the time it is printed. So it is with some caution, but also in acknowledgment of its significance that, at the time of writing – Victoria is due to properly exit lockdown #6, with the significant dropping of restrictions after hitting the 80 per cent vaccination targets.

Removal of the regional/metro border, a return to home gatherings and family visits, the removal of the nightly curfew and a transition to the full opening up of retail, hospitality, community sport, entertainment and events.

Hopefully, all this marking our first tentative steps towards the long promised COVID-normal.

And after more than 262 days of COVID shutdown measures, Victorians have more than truly earned it. But to paraphrase a famous 90s Broadway show: How do you measure a year? In sunrises, sunsets, in truths learned or bridges burned - inches, miles or perhaps in 525,600 minutes or moments with friends?

I, like many of you, am really looking forward to reconnecting with our people. Fire brigade has always been about people. There is only so much screen time one can endure with endless video conferences and speaking with the floating heads.

Enjoy reconnecting with your friends, family and your brigade peers and make sure you take the time to allow your mind to acclimate. Take it easy and give yourself some extra care. It's been a while, and as creatures of habit the changes can be a little unsettling as we all adjust. For brigades, just be mindful that not everyone will want to spring back to how things were all at the same time, so please be tolerant and flexible as people find their rhythm.

Advice and guidance on COVID safe practices for brigade/group activities and events can be found on Brigades Online, on the COVID landing page of the CFA website. We have also emailed copies of this advice to all VFBV District Councils and State Councillors who are more than happy to assist should you need some additional advice.

VACCINATION STATUS

Following up from the most recent CHO directions, could I please encourage members to record their vaccination status on their CFA member record. There is now a legal

coordinated by CFA's contracted medical provider, Modern Medical.

Members will have the option to have their medicals completed by their own doctor or by Modern Medical.

For further information on the program and how to register, please visit the FEM Health Surveillance Program page on CFA Online, or contact fem-healthsurveillance@cfa.vic.gov.au

obligation for CFA to collect and store whether you are single dosed, double dosed, unvaccinated or are an excepted person. I appreciate in an organisation the size of CFA this is going to take some time, and with this in mind the call centre has recently extended its hours to assist members who may not be tech savvy and need some help.

Recording your status is quick and simple. The two easiest ways is either to do it yourself online via the members area <https://www.members.cfa.vic.gov.au> or you can do it over the phone by calling (03) 9262 8663.

The phone option is now available Mon - Fri between 8am to 8pm and on Saturdays and Sundays between 9am and 1pm.

EXTERNAL REVIEW

As you would recall, last month I spoke of the external review commissioned by CFA and led by the former Commissioner of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Dr Helen Szoke AO. This is an external review into the culture and issues management processes of the CFA.

I have since met with Helen and the review team from Allen & Clarke on a number of occasions and have been impressed with their approach. The team is very eager to interview and speak with any volunteers or staff that wish to contribute to their review.

The team is exploring a range of topics but is keen to hear from people on the behavioural and cultural expectations members have of the organisation, how effectively and efficiently issues are managed when they do arise, how members and leaders are supported to work through these issues, and the organisations approach to promoting diversity. These questions apply as much to our brigades and groups as they do to our Districts/Regions and headquarters.

I want to encourage all members to contribute to this work. By being an external review, you will be able to contribute privately and in a safe environment by way of one-on-one interviews or via focus groups should you prefer.

I urge anyone who has recently been involved in a discipline or conflict matter to get in touch with the team and share your experience of the process. This will be one of the most effective ways to highlight the systemic and procedural issues that members have raised with VFBV over the years. And while we will continue strongly advocating

for improvements to remedy the imbalance of power that often presents in these kinds of cases, as well as improvements to procedural fairness and the timely resolution of matters – your personal experiences and stories will be the fabric that fills out and colours in the outlines of our advocacy.

I also want to encourage members with positive stories and good experiences to come forward and speak with the review team also. I come across so many inspiring stories of how brigades and groups have worked hard to remove gender barriers or attract more diverse community members to join their brigade. These stories deserve to be told and shared so we can all learn from them. These success stories will enable the review to model recommendations around examples that have been demonstrated to work in the CFA context and will provide inspiration for others.

We have made the review team's Discussion Paper available via our website, along with their consultation schedule over the next six weeks. The review team will be visiting almost 40 locations spread across the whole State to enable an opportunity for members to meet the team one-one as close to home as possible. A list of dates and locations is on our website.

If you are interested in speaking with the review team, and want to arrange an interview please email them directly via CFA review [@allenandclarke.com.au](mailto:allenandclarke.com.au)

Interviews can be face to face, over the phone, via video conference or part of a group. Your details will remain private and confidential and I would again encourage members to reach out. This is your chance to contribute to the CFA of the future.

SPIRIT OF CFA AWARDS

Nominations for the Spirit of CFA awards are now open and need to be lodged by the 30 November 2021.

There are nine awards that you can nominate a fellow volunteer or employee for. To be eligible for this year's awards your nominee needs to have achieved an outstanding achievement or made a significant contribution to CFA and the community between 1st January 2019 – 31st March 2021. There are individual awards, as well as awards that are open for teams or groups.

Winners will be announced in May 2022, and invited to a gala presentation event to accept and celebrate their awards. Visit the VFBV website for details and how to nominate.



And while volunteers are humble and don't seek the attention from their actions they do for their communities, could I please impress on you how important it is to encourage and recognise members who are making a valuable contribution.

With COVID hitting the last two years very heavily, think about the actions taken by members in your brigade or group who have really made a difference, no matter how big or small. It can be such a confidence boost for a member just being nominated, so please think about those people who have really stepped up in some way over the last couple of years.

I can think of so many examples from the floods and storm events we had earlier this year and even back to the 2019 fire season where members have made such incredible contributions and sacrifices behind the scenes to support their communities. And I'll use a quote from left field this month drawn from Mother Teresa, who said: "There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than for bread."

So please – take the time to nominate someone that's made a difference to you or your community. We should all aim to be generous with our praise and appreciation for those people in our lives who inspire us. Including the quiet achievers. Think of those amongst us that have never been ones to shout their achievements from the rooftops, but still make an incredible impact on the people around them. People that are generous with their praise, empathy and time to encourage or support others. The introverts that hum away in the background and are just getting on with things, as well as those that lead in the spotlight.

Last but by no means least, with a fast-approaching fire season on our doorstep, please take time to enjoy the easing of restrictions. Re-energise and recuperate and enjoy reconnecting with your friends, peers and loved ones. You've deserved every minute of it. Stay safe.

MORE FOR ONLINE SUBSCRIBERS

Want to receive this information direct to your email? You can register for VFBV's e-newsletter via www.vfbv.com.au and clicking on the VFBV Newsletter Box.

Our Facebook page is at www.facebook.com/cfavol and you can follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/vfbv or on Instagram @volunteer_fire_brigades_vic