



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



2022 STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

This year's State Firefighter Championships saw both the Melton and Springhurst brigades come out on top at the Championships held in Moorooopna during March.

Melton first had success as runaway winners at the State Urban Junior Championship held on the weekend of 19 and 20 March. This weekend saw over 200 competitors from 37 teams competing.

The following weekend, 26 and 27 March, Melton again won by a significant margin to take out the State Urban Senior Championship. While Springhurst won both the State Rural Senior and Junior Championships on the same weekend.

The second weekend saw close to 600 competitors take part from 120 teams. Full results of the 2022 State Championships can be found on pages 10 to 12 of this edition of Fire Wise or from the VFBV website.

2022 also saw the return of the Torchlight Procession through the streets of Shepparton on Saturday 26th March in conjunction with the Illuminate Shepparton festival for the first time since 2019.

The State Championships would not be possible without the support of more than 300 judges and officials who volunteer their time over the two weekends. VFBV also passes on its appreciation to competitors, coaches, supporters and staff. Special thanks to the State Championships Committee, which consists of CFA management, members of VFBV's Rural and Urban State Competition Committees, volunteers and staff for their hard work and efforts in the preparation and management of the two weekends of competition.

We also pass on our appreciation to the Greater Shepparton City Council for their continued support of the Championships, with this year marking the 10th time our Championships have been held in either Shepparton or Moorooopna since 1975.

VFBV's two competition committees will be meeting in the coming months to review the championships in preparation for the 2023 State Championships, if any brigades and competitors would like to provide any feedback they can do so by emailing championships@vfbv.com.au

AFFILIATION

Thank you for members' continued strong show of support!

Again in 2021-22 CFA Brigades and Groups have showed that it is more important than ever that volunteers have a strong, united, independent and credible voice. More than 93% of Brigades demonstrated strong support for VFBV's important work representing and advocating for all CFA volunteers. Thank-you to all brigades and groups who affiliated last year.

In the coming weeks VFBV will be posting out the 2022/23 renewal notices for your Brigade/Group's VFBV Affiliation and Welfare Fund subscriptions. These will be mailed out to Brigade and Group secretaries with a due date of 30 June 2022.

To thank Brigades and Groups for their support, those who pay their VFBV affiliations before 30th June will automatically be entered into a draw to win one of four equipment prizes valued at approximately \$4,000.

The prizes have for the third year running been donated by GAAM Emergency Products and Powdersafe and we sincerely thank them for their continued generous support. For further details of the prizes on offer, see the flyer

included with your renewal notices.

As well as affiliating, we strongly encourage Brigades to subscribe to the VFBV Welfare Fund.

The Welfare Fund is an exclusive benefit to affiliated members and VFBV fund all the administration and operating cost ensuring 100% of funds received go directly to CFA volunteers experiencing personal hardship.

The VFBV Welfare Fund provides small grants of up to \$5,000 to assist volunteer members and long serving ex members. The grants support members and their families experiencing personal financial hardship/crisis by providing welfare grants, on a needs-assessed basis, that may help alleviate stress impacting their ability to maintain involvement as a volunteer.

District Council's continue to promote opportunities for members to contribute to the vital work that VFBV performs on behalf of all CFA volunteers.

Advocacy, support and the provision of trusted and credible advice are all strengthened when members work together and share a unity of purpose. Become involved today.

April typically signifies the end of the fire danger period, with a rolling back of local restrictions as the weather justifies. And while this season has been comparatively mild, I want to acknowledge how tired so many of you are.

Everything in 2021/22 just feels harder doesn't it?

Change management is hard at the best of times. Throw in a pandemic along with sector and organisational reform, and we have the perfect storm. And given this season's weather – this storm is both figurative and literal.

With so much going on, I am going to use this month's column to flag some key initiatives to keep an eye out for.

VESEP GRANTS

This year's Volunteer Emergency Service Equipment Program is now open.

The program is in its 22nd year and first started as the CSESP Program (Community Safety Emergency Support Program) in 2000 and was designed in close consultation with VFBV and volunteers.

Key to its success is locally driven priority setting, endorsement by District Planning Committee's, operational support and endorsement by CFA Regional Management and a State-wide Steering Committee that reports directly to Government and includes VFBV and volunteer representatives who work together to monitor the program and ensure the programs integrity and transparency.

The program offers five categories; Volunteer amenities \$<5K; Minor works \$<120K; Operational equipment; Specialist appliances and Field Command Vehicles (FCV's); and Tankers.

As usual, VFBV has published a help pack that offers practical suggestions and complements the EMV and CFA Guidelines and application forms. An electronic copy of our Help Pack is available via the VFBV website, or we can post you a paper copy by calling the office on (03) 9886 1141 or speaking with your local VFBV State Councillor or VFBV Support Officer.

Applications close on the 31st May 2022, with a ministerial announcement expected in September. Reach out if you need help with your application.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

The annual CFA Memorial Service is commemorated on the first Sunday closest to International Firefighter's Day and St Florian's day which both fall on May 4th.

This year's annual memorial will therefore be held on Sunday 1st May. The service is being held in a regional location this year, and will take place in Churchill (Gippsland).

VITAL AND VALUED

by Adam Barnett, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

The annual service is a time for us to come together either in person or in spirit and remember and honour the 80 CFA firefighters (including 11 from pre-1944) who have selflessly given their lives to protect the lives of other Victorians.

And while the memorial is always solemn and reflective, it is also an important opportunity to reflect on our history as we pay tribute to those lost – and reflect on the importance of the work we each do in making our communities safer.

Details and how to RSVP can be found on both the VFBV and CFA websites.

AFSM NOMINATIONS

The Australian Fire Service Medal recognises distinguished service by members of fire services agencies across Australia. They are awarded twice a year, with the first awards presented in January on Australia Day, and the second round being awarded on the Queen's Birthday long weekend in June.

CFA is currently deliberating on awards to be presented for the January Australia Day awards 2023. Nominations are confidential but can be made by anyone for anybody they know who deserves to be honoured. Self-nominations are not allowed. The closing date is May 1st, so please consider nominating a fellow member you feel is deserving.

A nominators guide is available via the CFA and VFBV websites.

FIRE SERVICES IMPLEMENTATION MONITOR

The Fire Services Monitor, the Hon Niall Blair attended the State Championships on Saturday 26th March. He and his staff had a booth, where members were invited to stop by for a chat and discuss their experiences of fire services reform as part of his formal monitoring activities. With more than 3,000 volunteers attending over the weekends, it was a great opportunity for him and his office to engage with volunteers and staff.

The monitor has advised that as part of his year two assessment methodology, he is intending on conducting individual station visits across Victoria over the next three months to obtain feedback and input about the progress of the fire services reform from brigade perspectives.

These visits will include co-located brigades as well as opportunities for surrounding brigades where members will have an opportunity to provide feedback face to face, as well as an opportunity to provide written feedback should members be unable to attend in person.

We will keep you updated on locations as we are advised, and members are encouraged to provide their observations and thoughts to the monitor to ensure lessons and views are captured as part of his review.

CFA BOARD NOMINATIONS

I want to thank all members who applied for the CFA Board positions advertised

over the last three months. The VFBV Board and State Council processes are now complete.

Thank-you to all members who gave up their time and generously shared their knowledge and experience through the formal application process. Nominations are confidential and panels have now been provided to the Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon. Jaclyn Symes for consideration by the Governor in Council. Current Board terms do not expire until later in the year, so we are not expecting an announcement for a while yet.

The VFBV Board has recently discussed an annual process that would seek to encourage members to submit an expression of interest application for a Board position anytime throughout the year. This would allow more regular formal interviews to be conducted throughout the year at times more convenient and in anticipation of future vacancies.

This will ensure members don't have to rely on short notice requests and will improve our ability to respond to short Government timelines in the future. We are committed to strengthening opportunities for volunteers to be involved and will keep working on ways to reduce any barriers.

VACCINE MANDATES

I want to acknowledge the workload and tensions that have accompanied the government vaccine mandates, and the difficulties it has presented for some people at the local levels, especially those in leadership roles. Following the relaxation of public restrictions, we are receiving an increased number of enquiries on the future status of emergency service vaccination mandates.

While mandates served an important role in the early stages of the pandemic, we acknowledge that people have questions around their proportionality under current circumstances as we transition to a 'COVID normal' type setting.

VFBV is continuing to seek advice from the Health Department and will continue to raise the issues that members are raising with us. I can certainly attest that the incidence of CFA transmission from emergency response activities has been extremely low, and the fact that we mostly work outside means our risk setting is far lower than some of our fellow emergency service partners. However, it is also important to recognise that the sector is reluctant for mandates to be piece meal amongst different agencies across the sector, so these conversations are difficult.

Unfortunately, we have been unable to obtain a clear picture or roadmap that might provide the greater certainty that we are looking for, but we will certainly keep trying.

THANK-YOU

I want to thank all volunteers and staff who contributed to the running of this



year's highly successful CFA-VFBV State Firefighter Championships. Held over two weekends, Moorooopna certainly put on spectacular weather, and we were dazzled by strong performances by Melton and Springhurst in particular across both the urban and rural tracks.

There was a real positivity amongst everyone attending, with everyone I think so grateful for the opportunity to be back face to face. Our COVID-safe preparations and precautions paid off, and I am incredibly proud of everyone's discipline and sacrifices made to ensure the event was conducted as safely as possible.

CFA hosted a marvellous corporate display, with the best attendance I can remember from a wide range of directorates and units across CFA providing opportunities for members and the public to explore the various offerings from new truck and equipment designs to bushfire modelling, new PPC and work-wear displays and the popular virtual reality demonstrations. It was also great to acknowledge the attendance of members of parliament and local government from right across the political spectrum.

The Saturday night torchlight parade, featuring both rural and urban brigades was spectacular, with more than 15,000 members of the general public cheering our firefighters along as part of the Illuminate Shepparton festival. The festival featured mesmerising laser light installations, live music and incredible food. The warm reception epitomised the public respect for the professional work that CFA volunteers do every day of every year.

Thank-you especially to the more than 300 volunteer judge and track officials who volunteered their time over the entire weekends to keep the tracks running smoothly and allowing brigades to shine as they demonstrate their skills and fitness.

As you can tell from this brief update, there is plenty going on and plenty to keep us busy. As the season winds down - take care of yourselves and use the change in seasons to slip in some rest.

For everyone that contributed over the heightened fire danger period, whether on the front line or behind the scenes – thank-you and well done. As we move now to our winter campaigns and educate the public on home fire safety, please know that the incredible work you do in your communities is both vital and valued.

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](https://twitter.com/vfbv) or on Instagram @volunteer_fire_brigades_vic