



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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VFBV BOARD VACANCIES

Invitation to apply: Board Members of
 Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV)

INVITATION OPEN TO ALL CFA VOLUNTEERS TO APPLY

Closing date for written applications is 1 August 2022

VFBV advances the interests of all Victorian fire brigade volunteers and advocates on their behalf to CFA and other key stakeholders. The VFBV Board drives policy development based on volunteer input and is involved in management of issues of central importance to all CFA volunteers.

Vacancies for Four Board Members will arise when the terms of Nev Jones AFSM, Andy Cusack AFSM, Bill Maltby and Greg Walcott expire on 1st October 2022; all members are eligible for re-appointment.

The term of appointment will be to 1st October 2024 (two years) and applications are invited from interested volunteers to be considered for these vacancies.

The role of a VFBV Board Member involves contributing to VFBV direction, policy determination and monitoring the performance and governance of the Association. Also actively contributing to policy discussion at Board Meetings, networking with others about policies and issues management, and not only making decisions but being prepared to actively advocate for the benefit of all CFA volunteers and ultimately the Victorian community.

A Board Member Role Statement including the key selection criteria is available from the VFBV office or from the VFBV website. This is an honorary position; no honorarium is paid.

If you are motivated by the prospect of making a difference for CFA volunteers, then send your written application addressing the key selection criteria in the role statement, plus an outline of your CFA activity including the names of two referees.

Applications must be lodged with VFBV by Monday 1st August 2022 to:

VFBV, 9/24 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East 3151
 Tel: 9886 1141; Fax: 9886 1618
 Email: vfbv@vfbv.com.au

AFFILIATION

Thank you for members' continued strong show of support! 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.

2022/23 renewal notices should have arrived to your secretary for your Brigade/Group's VFBV Affiliation and Welfare Fund subscriptions.

Those who pay their VFBV affiliations before 31 July 2022 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 Powder-safe and we sincerely thank them for their continued generous support.

We also 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 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.

Safety Compliance

CFA has recently provided VFBV with a comprehensive status update on LVFR (Low Voltage Fuse Removal) and SWaH (Safe Working at Heights) Training from the Safety Compliance Project Team that manages these projects. It is clear to VFBV that CFA is well behind the intended training target with both these courses although there is an understanding that the pandemic has created training delivery issues.

VFBV has continued advocacy that there needs to be a transparent and acceptable RPL process in place for members that already practise these skills in industry, especially in bolstering the training delivery aspect with TAs. VFBV is aware that CFA has a small pool of TAs and Instructors for these courses and are encouraging CFA to

In this month's edition of Fire Wise there is enclosed the VFBV Quarterly Supplement, which like each quarter - contains 16 pages of crucial updates on the current issues and topics that VFBV and your fellow volunteers are pursuing on behalf of all CFA volunteers.

When people ask me why VFBV is pursuing a particular topic, and not something they feel is more important, my answer is always very simple. Not every issue will be screamed from the rooftops. Some require finesse, tact and precision. But more importantly, let's have a chat about how you, your brigade or group have contributed to your local District Council discussion to help build peer support for the idea or initiative you want pursued?

Our forums rely on fellow volunteers contributing to the discussions and debate and learning from each other to help move things along. The worst thing we can do is just turn up when there is a problem we need others help on. The relationships, the trust and the goodwill are built over time by toiling away with a unity of spirit and a common purpose to make things better. Your surrounding brigades and groups will remember the support and assistance you offered to them in their time of need when it comes time to help you with a problem you may be experiencing.

And if this pre-work hasn't been done, how can we best support you to begin contributing to the discussions before you need someone else's help?

You see, nothing VFBV pursues comes from some

build the capacity within the volunteer cohort. VFBV has also expressed concern that unrealistic and in many cases, unachievable pre-requisites are creating unnecessary blockers for suitably qualified Trainers and Assessors to achieve endorsement to deliver these programs. CFA has committed to review the pre-requisites with a hope to engage and recruit a pool of experienced and suitably qualified TAs to assist in the delivery of LVFR and SWaH.

VFBV encourages any TAs or members who would like to become TAs in either LVFR or SWaH, with industry backgrounds to express their interest with CFA. Expression of Interest can be emailed to LVFR.SWH.ProjectTeam@cfa.vic.gov.au

VFBV is also continuing to advocate strongly for an increase in resources to develop required doctrine and training in relation the increasing risk in electric vehicles and alternative power supplies, this includes reviewing current research, working with industry stakeholders and subject matter experts as well as partner agencies including AFAC. VFBV will continue to advocate on this and look forward to reporting on positive outcomes soon.

secret backroom hidden from sight. Rather, issues come from volunteers attending and contributing to local discussions via the myriad of consultative forums available to thrash out and progress issues of common concern and interest.

Every brigade and group are invited to contribute via your District Council. And each District Council office holder is elected by their catchment brigades and groups. In addition to this, every brigade and group can nominate any volunteer to contribute via a VFBV/CFA Joint Committee. And any volunteer is welcome to provide feedback on a policy or initiative that is undergoing consultation. You don't get much more open than that.

The trick is to bring a generosity of spirit to the discussions and forums that honours all those volunteers who came before us. The idea that glues us together is we serve our communities best by building strong, safe, sustainable and resilient communities that are better prepared and equipped to deal with the inevitable natural disasters that will present themselves time after time after time. This means not only discussing 'problems' or issues, but acknowledging the successes and improvements and contributing to solutions. It's how we stay constructive and build a culture of civic pride and active citizenry.

And one of the easiest and most efficient ways that each volunteer can contribute to the discussion on what are the most important issues (and not) to our brigades is through our annual VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey. A survey designed by volunteers, for volunteers, with the questions, the themes and the measures all selected and designed by your fellow volunteers.

This year the survey quietly celebrated its 10th year anniversary. In a sector that changes direction and strategies more often than the seasons change in Melbourne, this demonstrates the dedication, commitment and foresight of all our senior volunteers who run and govern your volunteer association. An initiative that has stood the test of time and has slowly but surely built respect, recognition and results across the sector.

And while a survey in of itself does little to solve individual problems, it does serve as a strong evidence base and lightning rod to measure and advocate on areas of priority chosen by volunteers. Running each year's survey is frankly the easy part. It is using the information, protecting its integrity, explaining what the results mean to decision makers, and relentlessly advocating, influencing and building momentum on initiatives to address the various challenges and issues that are highlighted that is the real work behind the survey.

And while a cohort of people as large as the CFA volunteer family can never be expected to agree unanimously on everything, we don't all have to. But how

amazing is it that those decisions on what is being pursued and what isn't is not made by faceless bureaucrats or senior managers, but rather by those very same volunteers participating and contributing to the discussions. Including of course the many of you who work tirelessly every day to represent their fellow volunteers. Every single VFBV office holder is a volunteer themselves, and is elected by their peers, making VFBV a living and breathing democracy that is at its best when it is having the sometimes-difficult conversations. We don't get to control the timeline - but we never give up and we never stop trying no matter how dejected we sometimes feel about the slow progress.

It was Winston Churchill who said that democracy is the worst form of government until you consider the others. And democracy is not an end point in of itself. It requires constant work and is a process not an event. It is sometimes difficult, uncomfortable and challenging. People participating, contributing and responding to the aspirations of the group are critical, but so too is displaying dignity, respect and appreciation for those putting themselves out there to take on roles that make them a focal point of attention.

In this edition of the Quarterly Supplement, you will find the initial summary results of the most recent VFBV Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey. The survey was conducted between late November 2021 and February 2022 and attracted close to 2,700 CFA volunteers, many of whom not only provided their responses to the questions but contributed also to a treasure trove of qualitative comments across the themes.

Thank-you to each and every volunteer who took the time to participate and contribute to this work. You are making a difference.

This year's results are encouraging, and show a marked improvement across four of the seven themes. In particular, was a statistically significant improvement in volunteer's attitudes to how they feel volunteers are effectively consulted and involved in decision making at CFA corporate level. This measure improved from a worst ever VolWELresult of 4.2 in the previous survey, to 3.6 for the current survey.

And while a VolWEL of 3.6 still indicates a critical need for priority action, we must acknowledge the efforts made over the last 12 months to improve how CFA goes about consulting and engaging with its volunteers. From little seeds grow mighty trees.

And for those that think surveys of this kind are a complete waste of time, I can only convey to you in the strongest possible terms that this has been one of the key priority focus areas for VFBV in many of its discussions with Government, EMV and CFA alike. The constant declining satisfaction of the previous year's surveys have been one of the central discussion points with the new CFA leadership, and priority focus over several of the survey themes has been pursued

Unity and generosity of spirit

by Adam Barnett, VFBV Chief Executive Officer



over the last two years in particular to try and drive a paradigm shift in how consultation is approached.

And while I am far from satisfied that the issues are fixed and resolved - I am deeply encouraged by these early results. And while we can despair that too many of the result areas still indicate significant to critical gaps, we should take comfort that in this year's results, 21 of the 33 key result areas saw an improvement over the year before which indicates a strong and positive sign that things are improving. We should recognise this and use it to propel the momentum for more positive change.

And while I have passed on my thanks and acknowledgment to CFA CEO Natalie MacDonald and Chief Officer Jason Heffernan for the work and efforts they and their leadership teams have undertaken over the last little while in collaboration with VFBV, I reserve my greatest thanks and respect to each of the individual volunteers who have tirelessly committed (and recommitted) to contributing and participating in the survey and the work underway to turn those results into meaningful action. Without you - those conversations could not even start.

And while we still have a way to go, I urge all readers to consider being part of the positive change journey we are pursuing. It's not easy, and it's by no means fast - but change is happening. My desire is for volunteers to lead that change through active thought leadership as well as tangible action and contribution. We are at our best when we are coming together with a unity of purpose and a generosity of spirit to fix issues, not just complain about them. We cannot achieve change on our own, and to those that are already contributing - thank-you! And to those that have a desire to contribute more, please get involved.

Given my reference to Churchill already, I will leave with a quote attributed to him from 1954: "My hope is that the generous instincts of unity will not depart from us...so that we become the prey of the little folk who exist in every country and who frolic alongside the juggernaut car of war to see what fun or notoriety they can extract from the proceedings."

To me this reflects a simple acknowledgment that unity is not just required of us to steer a country through war, but that unity is also critically important to steer those very same people through a new found peace. I'm excited by the opportunities, and I hope you are too.

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