

# NEW MEU FLEET KEPT BUSY



**CFA's new fleet of eight mobile engagement units (MEUs) have been busy helping CFA members to meet the community in all parts of the State.**

Assisting with flood recovery in the north-west, to informing tourists about fire safety along the Great Ocean Road, CFA members have immediately put the MEUs into action.

Based on a Ford Transit van, the MEUs have their own independent power source, so can operate just about anywhere, and in the first month of summer our members put that to the test.

The MEU is designed to stand out at a community event or field day. The design is intentionally different to our fire trucks and corporate vehicles because the MEU has a different role.

The MEUs can be used to engage community members about a range of topics including recruitment and fundraising, and information about upcoming fuel reduction works or fire safety.

Koondrook Fire Brigade held a community 'thank you' day in response to last year's flood events, and brigade Captain **Ben Watts** (pictured)

was pleased to use one of the MEUs.

"We were lucky enough to secure the North West MEU for its first-ever public outing and it proved to be a drawcard at getting the attention of members of the public," Captain Ben said.

"We had lots of positive conversations and gave out community information.

"I especially liked being able to play our own tailored media and recruitment video through the TV. Also, the power is fully self contained which meant we could park it where we would get the best volume of passing traffic – we weren't constrained by where we could plug into 240 volts."

The new vans are more practical than the two large bus-sized MEUs CFA had in the past, which could be operated by only a few people and were too large for certain situations. Having the eight regionally-based MEUs also means more members will be able to attend local events in more places.

With the solar system equipment plugged in and the equipment on standby ready to go, the MEUs can be set up and packed away in minutes. The 200amp/hour battery will hold enough power supply to run the inbuilt equipment for several hours, and the solar panels will generate power to recharge the battery. There is no need to carry fuel, no setting up a generator and, importantly when you are talking with people, no noise.

The vehicle can be driven on a standard car licence. It is diesel powered with an automatic gearbox and a similar length to a dual cab ute, and no formal training is needed before using it.

All CFA members can request to use an MEU. A booking request system is available through Members Online.

Community generosity after the 2019-20 Black Summer fire campaign provided CFA with the funds to develop and maintain these eight new resources.

# CFA Volunteer Recruitment Campaign launched

by Acting CFA Chief Officer Garry Cook

This month we launched the CFA Volunteer Recruitment Campaign which involved a targeted media and advertising push across the state.

We kicked off the campaign during National Volunteer Week (15 – 21 May 2023).

Since then, you may have seen advertisements in regional newspapers and other associated news stories, calling on community members to lend their local CFA brigades a hand.

Volunteers and staff made a significant contribution to this campaign by providing feedback around their specific recruitment priorities, which allowed our teams to refine the messaging in different parts of the state.

To assist the campaign launch several case studies were found to show the many ways people can and do volunteer across Victoria.

Many brigades were looking for volunteers that could

respond during the weekdays, other brigades were after younger volunteers.

One example was a couple that made a tree changer eight years ago, work from home and have a workplace that allows them to respond during the day. Another was a volunteer from Melbourne with a holiday house in Gippsland and helps out with social media remotely or the Noble Park Brigade that has many bilingual volunteers that help them communicate about fire safety in their community.

We're letting people know that there are many different roles in CFA, from operational firefighters to important support or community education positions.

Volunteers are the backbone of Victoria's emergency response network, supporting communities day and night, responding to a range of emergencies including fire, flood and other natural disasters.

If you know anyone who would be a great asset to CFA, encourage them to give it a go.

We're asking anyone inter-



ested in finding out more to express their interest online at [www.cfa.vic.gov.au/volunteer](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/volunteer) and their local brigade will contact them regarding next steps.

We know the greatest effectiveness is when brigades recruit locally and this campaign should assist. Don't forget that CFA staff are available to support brigades in your recruitment efforts.

Members seeking support or advice to continue local recruitment efforts can contact their relevant District representative or the CFA media and communications team on [cfamedia@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:cfamedia@cfa.vic.gov.au).

## DIVERSITY THE KEY

**Diversity is the key to success at Noble Park Fire Brigade with more than 15 languages spoken by its members.**

Captain **Matt Pond** said the community is one of Australia's most diverse and the they strive hard to reflect the community in their brigade.

During a recent safer homes smoke alarm installation program, brigade members met several non-English speaking residents.

The members who speak numerous languages were able to translate and discuss the need for working smoke alarms and residential fire safety while CFA members installed new smoke alarms to help make homes safer.

The 31 volunteers inspected over 170 properties and installed a new 10-year lithium smoke alarm free of charge in homes that did not have working smoke alarms.

Matt has been a CFA member for 19 years and Captain for the past two-and-a-half years. He says the diversity and language skills also help with emergency call outs and has helped with recruitment of more members.

"These people thought they wouldn't be able to join the brigade because their English wasn't good enough," he said.

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## Tony's Trek success

**After 18 months of planning and 50 days of walking, volunteer Chair of the Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) and Inspector-General for Emergency Management Victoria Tony Pearce completed the final steps of his 1500km journey known as Tony's Trek when he entered the Melbourne Cricket Ground on 10 May greeted by a guard of honour.**

During his almost 40 years in the sector Tony has seen many colleagues suffer from trauma due to their role in emergency services/management. This trauma can often result in mental health injury and have lasting impacts throughout their career and retirement.

In supporting ESF's work in improving mental health outcomes for Victoria's 139,000 emergency workers, both paid and volunteer, in frontline and support roles, he decided to commit to a solo ultra-distance walk to raise awareness of the tremendous work these people do. He also wanted to raise funds to support the Foundation's introduction of innovative early intervention programs to help prevent the onset of serious mental ill health.

On 10 March Tony commenced his journey at the State Control Centre and walked from Melbourne to Mallacoota, back to Bruthen over the Alpine Range through Mt Hotham to Wodonga, and back to Melbourne taking in areas affected by the 2019-20 Black Summer fires. Throughout the duration, more than 140 walking companions, many of them CFA firefighters, and 46 escort vehicle drivers joined Tony. The trek concluded on 10 May.

Tony said: "When the journey ahead looked too long, focusing on taking one step at a time helped me achieve the goal of 1500km. Recovery from mental health injury is a personal journey that also involves taking one step at a time."

This huge achievement raised much needed funds for the ESF and has only been possible with the generous support of the emergency management community, local and corporate businesses, and very many Victorians.

ESF will use funds raised from Tony's Trek to deliver two pioneering, evidence-informed prevention focused initiatives to benefit emergency workers no matter whether they are at the frontline or in important support roles before, during or after emergencies.



## VFBV BOARD VACANCIES

**Invitation to ALL CFA Volunteers to apply**

**Closing date for written applications is 28 August 2023**

VFBV advances the interests of all Victorian fire brigade volunteers and VFBV BOARD POSITIONS

Vacancies on VFBV Board will arise when the terms of four VFBV Board members expire on 1 October 2023. Of the four members whose terms are expiring, two are eligible for reappointment. VFBV invites applications from any CFA volunteer who is motivated by the prospect of making a difference and believes they have the skills to contribute to the VFBV Board.

The role of a board member involves contributing to VFBV direction, policy determination and monitoring the performance and governance of the Association. This includes actively contributing to policy discussion, consulting with CFA volunteers and contributing to the identification and management of strategic issues.

VFBV is seeking applications from gender and culturally diverse candidates in addition to a diverse range of skills and experience including applications from diverse brigade types and classifications.

Members should familiarise themselves with the VFBV Board member role statement and key selection criteria available from the VFBV website or via the office at (03) 9886 1141. Applications close on Monday **28 August 2023** and must be lodged to VFBV, 9/24 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East 3151; email [vfbv@vfbv.com.au](mailto:vfbv@vfbv.com.au); telephone 9886 1141; fax: 9886 1618.

## CFA BOARD POSITIONS

The CFA Act recognises that it is important that the CFA Board has strong volunteer expertise, knowledge and an understanding of CFA volunteers. To support this, four of the skills-based CFA Board members are appointed by the Minister for Emergency Services from a panel of names submitted by VFBV. This year, the terms of two volunteer nominees will expire in December 2023, with both members eligible for re-appointment. One is for a volunteer from brigades predominantly serving rural communities, and the other being for a volunteer from brigades predominantly serving urban communities.

CFA volunteers who believe they have the skills, experience and capacity to make a contribution to the Board of CFA are invited to apply. In addition to volunteer experience and knowledge, nomination will have regard to any of the following - knowledge of or experience in; commercial; technical; operational; legal or financial matters; expertise in fire or emergency management; land management; or any other field relevant to the performance of the functions of the CFA.

VFBV is seeking applications from gender and culturally diverse candidates in addition to a diverse range of skills and experience including applications from diverse brigade types and classifications.

Members should familiarise themselves with the CFA Board Charter and further information on the application process is available from the VFBV website or via the office at (03) 9886 1141.

Applications close on Monday 26th June 2023.