

SUCCESSFUL VESEP PROJECTS ...

– continued from front page

EQUIPMENT

Anakie Group (field hygiene trailer), Barraport-Gredgwin (thermal imaging camera), Benayeo (quick fill trailer), Bullioh (thermal imaging camera), Bungador (thermal imaging camera), Cobrico (safety equipment), Creightons Creek (IT training equipment), Dadswells Bridge (thermal imaging camera), Dinyarrak (equipment), District 11 Headquarters (equipment), District 12 Headquarters (portable generator), District 2 DPC (field hygiene trailer), District 23 DPC (hose testing trailer), District 9 DPC (hose testing trailer), Ecklin & District (safety equipment), Everton (thermal imaging camera),

Gerangamete (thermal imaging camera), Glengarry (thermal imaging camera), Kadnook (quick fill trailer), Kaniva (local command equipment upgrade), Karabeal (thermal imaging camera), Kelvin View (equipment), Milawa (operational safety equipment), Mirranatwa (thermal imaging camera), Mollongghip (Engel fridge), Natimuk (rescue equipment), Nullawarre (thermal imaging camera), Patchewollock (thermal imaging camera), Red Hill (tandem axle trailer pump), South Lillimur (equipment), Strathdownie Group (water bore), Weerite (remote lighting), Willung South (thermal imaging camera, tools), Yalca & Yielima (quick fill pump).

A spate of fires that took off in Patchewollock, Raywood, Markwood and more recently Goomalibee and Charlton this month serve as a reminder that regardless of the condition's fires can and do escalate quickly requiring significant responses.

I want to thank volunteers and staff for their preparedness efforts and dedicated response to local communities already this season. Please remember to manage your fatigue and look after yourself, your families and your teams.

As mentioned last month, the Elevated Seasonal Response Initiative (ESRI), funded by the Victorian Government, has been developed

DEDICATED RESPONSE TO FIRES THAT ESCALATED QUICKLY

by CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan

to strengthen our firefighting capabilities this season, providing additional mobile and static water resources and diesel fuel support in drought affected areas and regional townships.

This has been an extensive project, and I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone involved in getting it up and running. Thanks to those who have worked locally to strategically source sites for the resources to be based, that will best support our response and reduce the time and distance spent travelling for water supplies. As a result, we proudly have 19 nominated operating bases located across Victoria ready to go from Monday 5 January.

Deputy Chief Officer Garry Cook also recently joined agency counterparts at Avalon Airport to launch Victoria's aerial firefighting fleet of 54 aircraft for the fire season, including two new fixed wing aircraft with infrared capabilities which can capture higher quality images than ever before.

While in December, you will have received communications about the Contemporary Volunteer Membership Model Options Paper and I invite you to have your say on this major piece of work that will help shape the foundations for a flexible, clear and modern volunteer membership at CFA now and into the future.

The paper seeks your feedback on 13 recommended options that have come directly from brigade member observations over the past several years about some of the unintentional barriers in the current mode that limit opportunities for volunteering. Your voice is crucial here and responses can be submitted up until the end of March.

Elsewhere in the state, we saw Horsham's CBD light up at the end of November as CFA members from across western Victoria marched in a special torchlight procession marking the brigade's 150th anniversary.

As we head into the new year, it is hard to believe that



December 19 marked 10 years since the devastating bushfires which destroyed 116 houses in the coastal towns of Wye River and Separation Creek. Although a substantial part of the town was impacted, including the homes of four of our very own, the evacuation process has been highly praised. I know the brigade still marvel at the orderly evacuation and no loss of life today. Our thoughts are with community members this summer during their reflections of the anniversary.

Stay safe and take care this fire season.

YOUR FEEDBACK WILL SHAPE CFA'S FUTURE MEMBERSHIP MODEL

CFA volunteers have always shaped the organisation's strength, identity and capability. Now, members are being asked to help shape an important piece of work that will determine how people join, stay and contribute at CFA - both now and for years to come.

The Contemporary Volunteer Membership Model (CVMM) Options Paper has now been released for feedback on Members Online (members.cfa.vic.gov.au) and YourSay CFA (yoursay.cfa.vic.gov.au). Hard copies of the Options Paper are on the way to your brigade, so look out for them.

It outlines 13 recommended options which are based on years of feedback from volunteers and are designed to make CFA's membership model clearer, more flexible and more supportive of the way volunteers live, work and contribute.

In some cases, the options seek to embed local initiatives already in place. The options

also link strongly with other work underway to improve the volunteer recruitment and onboarding process.

For individual members, the options explore **dual and multi-brigade memberships, seasonal/reserve status, clearer pathways into specialist roles, cadet opportunities, and improved support for members moving between brigades.** They also look at how long-serving members can stay connected through **life membership.**

For brigades, the proposed enhancements aim to **create efficiencies, strengthen recruitment and retention, and help brigades build the capability** both at the local and organisational level.

Your feedback is wanted.

Entering the 2025/26 fire season, it is appreciated how busy this time for all of you. Many are feeling strained by the volume of consultations underway. The outcomes of this project and your feedback will inform their current membership model, whilst creating opportunities for future members. For this reason, it is hoped the paper may inspire some discussion amongst members in between your training and response activities over the summer period, and you can find some time to share your thoughts.

Individual members and Volunteer Leaders (such as Brigade and Group management teams, DPCs and other



representative bodies) are being encouraged to share their perspectives on which options should progress, which need refinement, and what risks or implementation challenges should be consid-

ered.

Consultation will run over an extended period, with opportunities through the season and into Autumn to dive more deeply into conversations.

BE HEARD, BE INVOLVED

- Visit YourSay CFA via the QR Code (left) to learn more and provide feedback.

- Visit Members Online – "Contemporary Volunteer Membership Model (CVMM)"

- Speak to your local VFBV

representative.

- Email us a written submission to cvmm@cfa.vic.gov.au

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CFA THANKS BRYAN

A retirement event was held at District 27 Headquarters recently to honour the service of Assistant Chief Officer Bryan Russell. He will retire early next month after an incredible 47 years of dedicated service to CFA and the Victorian community.

Bryan's CFA journey began in August 1978 as a Junior member of Shepparton Fire Brigade. His passion for community service and firefighting grew from family involvement as he served with distinction at Lilydale and Yarra Junction brigades before transitioning to a career as a firefighter with CFA in 1989.

From his early days on the fireground to senior leadership positions in CFA, Bryan has made an indelible impact. His career highlights include working as a career firefighter across stations in District 8, management positions as the Manager Operational Communications, Assistant Chief Fire Officer in District 11, Regional Commander for Gippsland Emergency Management Region and Acting Deputy Chief Officer for South East Region. Most recently, Bryan has provided strategic leadership as Assistant Chief Fire Officer for District 27.

Throughout his career, he has exemplified the qualities that set a benchmark for leadership in the emergency management sector. Known for his strategic thinking and thoughtful, considered approach, he is well-respected by colleagues and partner agencies across CFA South East Region. His ability to foster collaboration and maintain strong relationships with staff, volunteers, community and stakeholders alike is a testament to his leadership attributes, personal character and unwavering commitment to the safety and resilience of

Victorian communities. Bryan's last day with CFA will be 8 January 2026, at which time he will finally enjoy his first summer at home after 47 years, rather than being away with the fire brigade!

At Bryan's request, those in attendance at the event donned Hawaiian shirts, a dare sparked by District staff asking what he would wear in his last month before retirement. In true Bryan spirit, and after proudly wearing the CFA uniform for 47 years, he was ready, willing and able for the more casual attire.

On behalf of CFA, all extend sincere gratitude and heartfelt congratulations to Bryan for his unwavering commitment, leadership, and service. His legacy will continue to inspire generations of CFA members.

Retiring ACFO Bryan Russell with a farewell gift in appreciation of his time with CFA.

Thank you, Bryan, for 47 remarkable years with CFA. Wishing you all the best in retirement.



Election changes

Please contact *Fire Wise* if you are receiving this edition and no longer hold Captain or Secretary, Group Officer or Group Secretary positions. This will help to keep our database up-to-date when distributing the publication.


As we send a complimentary copy of *Fire Wise* each edition to the Brigade Captain and Brigade Secretary, as well as Group Officer and Group Secretary, this will continue to be sent to the same persons unless advise of any change.

The details required of a person newly elected to any of these position are name,

full address and email, as well as the title of office they hold.


Please help *Fire Wise* continue its distribution to the right people by informing us of these changes as soon as possible.

All changes should be communicated by email to gordon@fire-wise.com.au or by telephone to 0402 051 412.



VFBV VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

2025/26 Annual Survey



We want to know your views on your CFA experience, good and bad.

Our annual survey gives you the opportunity to provide feedback confidentially, but in a form that allows us to use your feedback to effect real change.

Tell us about CFA Training, your brigade, how well consultation is working, and whether you feel adequately recognised and respected by CFA and the Victorian Government.

Last year, more than 2,000 volunteers participated. Make your opinion count and take the survey today.

Scan the QR code or visit <https://www.vfbv.com.au/cfa>

