



## 16/17 Year Old Operational Members

State Council has supported a request from District Council #9 to investigate and obtain the views of members on the continued use of 16-and-17-year old's as operational members.

### Background

For the purposes of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 a child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years.

Current CFA policy is that the minimum age for a member to be approved as an operational member and attend fires and incidents is 16 years of age. These members require parental consent to be documented during their application process.

CFA SOP 6.02 includes the following considerations:

- 16-and-17-year old members must be endorsed by the Brigade OIC to undertake operational activities
- An adult crew member other than the Incident Controller or Crew Leader must be designated as an 'authorised accompanying operational firefighter' for every two 16-and-17-year old crew members
- A maximum of two 16-and-17-year old members may be allocated per appliance at any given time
- When an incident response involves the serious injury or fatality of a person(s), the Authorised Accompanying Operational Firefighter must take all reasonable steps to shield the 16-and-17-year old CFA member(s) from potentially traumatic situations.

CFA released an updated Operations Bulletin in May 2019 (Operations Bulletin 008/2018 v2) which includes:

- CFA is obliged to meet a range of legislative requirements focused on keeping children safe within the organisation. These include:
  - the Victorian Government Child Safe Standards mandated under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005;
  - the statutory duty of care imposed by the Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2017 (Vic);
  - the obligations of CFA as per the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Discouraging the turning out of 16-and-17-year old's to potentially traumatic situations when attending a fire or other incident as a member of our Brigades through exercising operational discretion, and

- Prohibiting the turning out of 16-and-17-year old members at long haul strike teams

### **Recent Statistics**

Preliminary CFA analysis on the activity of 16-and-17-year old members is:

- There is approx. 589 members who are currently aged between 16-and-17-year's of age
- Approx 196 of those are classified as 'operational'
- Over the least two years, 143 have recorded responding to actual operational activity

### **Consultation**

While a formal CFA future position is not known at this time, CFA has informally indicated it is very likely to be reviewing its position in the future. To assist with early discussions, State Council has agreed to commence preliminary consultation with members to inform the development of a future VFBV position. Feedback will also inform early discussions with CFA and assist with preliminary VFBV advocacy should CFA choose to formally seek VFBV's views on a future review.

Brigades, Groups and members are encouraged to discuss at their local District Council meetings, and all members including juniors, parents, fellow brigade members and leaders are encouraged to consider making submission so that all perspectives can be understood and considered.

To help members provide structured feedback and/or submission, the following template has been developed to guide submission. Members are not required to use this template and may submit opinion and/or feedback in any other written form. However – use of this template will assist VFBV collate and identify common themes.

### **Timeline**

Submissions are requested by Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020.

State Council will then review and consider the feedback at their March 2020 meeting.

All personal identifying information will be removed from State level analysis and no identifying information will be provided to CFA or any other entity. All submissions will be treated as private and de-identified for analysis, with only trend, and general geographic summaries (such as District and Region) provided in results.

## 16/17 Year Old Operational Members Submission Template

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Brigade: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Email \_\_\_\_\_

CFA District: \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity are you filling out this survey?

Individual Response     Brigade Response     Group Response

For Individual Response:

Are you yourself a CFA volunteer?                      Yes                       No

Are you under 18 years of age?                      Yes                       No

Are you the parent or guardian of a current member  
under the age of 18?                      Yes                       No

If you are currently **over** the age of 18, and a member,  
did you join CFA before your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday?                      Yes                       No

**For Brigade or Group Response only:**

Rank/Position of person submitting response: \_\_\_\_\_

Has this response been endorsed by your Captain/OIC/Group Officer to be made on behalf of your  
Brigade or Group?                      Yes                       No

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1. Do you support allowing 16-and-17-year old's to be approved to undertake operational activities?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>
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What are the main reasons for your choice?

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2. Does your Brigade?  
(Tick all that apply)

Run a current Juniors Program	<input type="checkbox"/>
Previously had a Juniors Program	<input type="checkbox"/>
Currently has 16-and-17-year old operational members?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has had 16-and-17-year old operational members in the past?	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Are there any additional steps or activities that could be done to improve the safety or wellbeing of 16-and-17-year old members?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>
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What are the main reasons for your choice?

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4. Is there enough support to assist with the management of 16-and-17-year old operational members?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>
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If no, what additional support would you like to see provided?

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5. What do you think are the main **benefits** of allowing 16-and-17-year old's to be operational?

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6. What do you think are the main **risks** of allowing 16-and-17-year old's to be operational?

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7. If 16-and-17-year old's could no longer be operational, would you support raising the age of CFA Juniors to include 16 and 17 year old's in the CFA Juniors Program?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>
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What are the main reasons for your choice?

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8. If 16-and-17-year old's could no longer be operational, would your brigade need additional support to replace any lost capability?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>
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What kind of additional support would you need?

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9. If CFA did commence consultation on not allowing 16-and-17-year old operational members in the future, what additional information would you want to be able to make an informed decision?

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