



# VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

Address: 9/24 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East, 3151  
 Email: [vfbv@vfbv.com.au](mailto:vfbv@vfbv.com.au)  
 Telephone: 9886 1141  
 Chief Executive Officer: Andrew Ford

Post: PO Box 453, Mt Waverley, 3149  
 Website: [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au)  
 Fax: 9886 1618  
 State President: Nev Jones AFSM



## CHAMPIONSHIPS IN FULL SWING

While the 2016 VFBV Rural Championships are under way at Colac as we go to press (see page 11 of this edition of 'Fire Wise' for more), we can also report the Urban Senior Championships at Mildura were a great success.

Maryvale won the title of Champion Brigade, from Kangaroo Flat and Melton. Werribee were victorious in B Class, from Paterson River and Sale. And C Class honours went to Whittlesea, with Stanhope second and Knox Group (pictured, in action) in third place.

Congratulations to the Mildura Committee on a successful urban championships, and we know the team behind the scenes at Colac have done a great job for a big weekend of rural competition.

For detailed results from both Championships see [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au)



## FIRE SERVICES REVIEW RESPONSE HITS THE MARK

By Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

VFBV supports the Government's response to the Fire Services Review and we have commended Minister Garrett for taking the time to make a sensible and considered response. We have also welcomed the invitation to work with Government on the issues requiring further consideration.

Over all, our reaction to the Government's response to the review's recommendations is positive and I believe this provides a good foundation for us to work constructively with Government and the CFA. I have said publicly that in the main the Government's response to the Fire Services Review is on the mark, and for the issues requiring more work, VFBV looks forward to working with Government, the agencies and other stakeholders.

I think most CFA volunteers will also be pleased overall with the Government's response. A key theme throughout the review is a recognition of the enormous front line and collective capacity of Victoria's fire services. There is a very strong theme of needing to ensure

there is a culture and collective respect of the skills, knowledge and professionalism of Victorian firefighters, volunteer and paid staff alike, regardless of pay status. The report calls to improve leadership and to address a concerning culture that has tolerated; treating people differently based on pay status; bullying and harassment; poor front line worker and management relationships; and a them and us approach.

There is a strong call for everyone in the sector to focus more energy on working as one. There is strong recognition of the need for CFA to have more flexibility in the way it deploys resources to support local brigades and community circumstances, and there is an identified need to improve leadership from agency executive level through to Brigade level and across the sector's collective leadership.

The review recognises the strengths of the existing fire services and says that effort should be focussed on ensuring the separate fire services share common effort, reduce duplication and work as one. The report explicitly advises against any contemplation of amalgamating the MFB and CFA, reporting that this would have a negative rather than constructive impact.

The report acknowledges the extensive and essential capacity of CFA's volunteer Brigades and the fundamental value of sustaining and building strong integration in those communities where paid staff are required to supplement volunteer capacity. The report identifies the essential nature of CFA's volunteer Brigade surge capacity for major and concurrent events.

There are 20 recommendations, and the Government has identified actions to address 18 of these. Several recommendations are earmarked for further discussion/work and the Government has committed to work with VFBV and others on the detail of these.

Based on some commonly

discussed issues during the review, many volunteers will be particularly interested in the following recommendations and government response;

- **Recommendation 9**, concerning consideration of a Firefighters' Registration Board – Government response is to initiate national consultation on this over the next five years. The report detail suggests this would need to be open to volunteers and paid firefighters alike and would provide an opportunity to facilitate lateral entry and recognise skills, irrespective of whether they are paid or volunteer.

- **Recommendation 18**, concerning deploying Leading Firefighters or Station Officers to provide administrative, technical, community engagement and operational support to volunteer Brigades. The Government has supported the intent of finding ways to support volunteer Brigades, but has noted the best means to deliver that support requires further consideration.

- **Recommendation 17**, includes recommendation that CFA review the process for selecting Brigade Captains. Government response suggests a selection process be developed to enhance the current approach to focus on ensuring the necessary leadership and technical skills needed for the role. This work has a timeframe of the next two years.

- **Recommendation 5**, includes developing best practice models for initiation and planning for the establishment of integrated Brigades and the selection of leaders of integrated Brigades, drawing on successful processes adopted to date. Government response is that CFA is to lead a short review to identify best practices.
- **There are also recommendations concerning training; health & wellbeing; developing leadership; and better engagement with volunteers and representative bodies.**

VFBV will seek to be very closely involved with work on



these and the actions proposed for all other recommendations.

Of interest is an acknowledgement to include VFBV on EMV's Fire Services Interoperability Committee. This is consistent with VFBV's previous requests to EMC Craig Lapsley and also an issue covered in our submission to the review. VFBV has previously expressed dissatisfaction to the EMC about not being included in this important forum.

There are several recommendations relating to culture in the fire services and issues specifically relating to bullying and harassment. VFBV has already welcomed the CFA-commissioned Equity and Diversity Review being conducted by VEOHRC.

At a more strategic level, there are recommendations involving consideration of possible future service delivery models, a review of CFA and MFB legislation, and a review of the legislation giving powers to EMV, but no specific direction set down as yet. VFBV will certainly be taking a keen interest to ensure these important issues progress in a positive way.

You can download a copy of the Fire Services Review report and the Government's response from our website [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au).

The Fire Services Review website includes copies of all public submissions including VFBV, CFA and EMV submissions.

## VESEP GRANTS OPEN NOW

Applications are now open for Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) grants, with \$12.8 million available to volunteer emergency services organisations.

Brigades and Groups can apply for VESEP grants of up to \$100,000 for operational equipment and small capital works.

This is a welcome announcement from Minister for Emergency Services, Jane Garrett, and a sign of the Government's recognition of the professionalism and essential services provided by Victoria's emergency management volunteers.

VFBV worked with the State Government on the design of VESEP, helping to make it as simple and practical as possible, and we continue to work with CFA so Brigades and Groups can achieve the best outcome.

VESEP contributes two dollars in grant

money for every one dollar raised locally by the Brigade, and last year 202 Brigades and Groups were successful with their applications.

This year's VESEP grants will favour applications for:

- **Operational Equipment** such as chainsaws, quick fill pumps, generators, inflatable rescue boats, and rescue and safety equipment.

- **Vehicles and appliances** such as vehicles, lighting and storm trailers, light/medium tankers, big fill trucks, watercraft and rescue trucks.

- **Minor Facility Improvements**, refurbishments and amenities such as: kitchens/change rooms

Talk to your State Councillor for advice and visit [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au) for an Application Help Pack and case studies from successful applications in past rounds.

## YOUNG VOLTS WANTED

To improve VFBV's engagement and representation of younger members, we are establishing a VFBV Youth Network.

This is not a once-off forum, but an ongoing framework and process to engage young people in VFBV, CFA and Emergency Management sector discussions, on an ongoing and structured basis.

As a result, VFBV is hosting an Emergency Management sector multi-agency youth network.

VFBV is committed to the Youth Network, and this is a chance for younger volunteers to get on board at an exciting new stage in our evolution.

See our advertisement on page 6 of this edition of 'Fire Wise' for our call for Expressions of Interest and stay tuned to [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au) for updates.

## Fatigue management

The VFBV/CFA Joint Operations Committee has been highlighting District and Regional variances in fatigue management procedures for some time, and has made use of a new case study based on a recent large incident to support its case.

The Committee has asked CFA to develop a standard set of guidelines for the State, outlining crew changeovers, appropriate rest periods and long haul strike team travel arrangements, including the use of coaches and/or fresh drivers to return appliances to their home locations.

## Digital scanners

Brigades have now been notified of their successful orders for digital scanners under Tier 2 of the subsidy scheme.

Brigades have until 15 May to pay for their scanners. All of the subsidised scanners have now been allocated, but you can order additional units at cost price – still well under retail – under Tier 3 of the program, which is open until 30 June 2016. Tier 3 order forms are available at [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au)

Thousands of scanners have already been delivered under the VESEP funded scheme negotiated by VFBV and CFA.

## Recognition of medical quals

The problem of gaining CFA recognition of the first aid skills of volunteers who are medical practitioners, paramedics and nurses is moving towards resolution.

The VFBV/CFA Joint Training Committee has been pressing for a solution for a number of years and has now been advised that CFA proposes the creation of a new enterprise (CFA) competency (not a nationally recognized competency unit) which will be called "Eligible to provide first aid in the workplace".

The competency will be used to record those members who have evidence of formal and current qualifications and will satisfy the CFA skills profile requirements for first aid for those members. CFA is seeking the support of key stakeholders before applying for official approval. VFBV will keep members updated on progress.

## CANCER LAW: DON'T STOP NOW

We expect that proposed presumptive legislation – the Firefighters' Cancer Law – will be in Parliament soon, but we are concerned the legislation may contain a barrier to volunteers accessing compensation, in the form of an arbitrary 'incident threshold' – possibly requiring 150 incidents in any five-year period before they become eligible.

The arbitrary nature of the 'incident threshold' is seen by volunteers as simply a way to drastically reduce the number of volunteers who will become eligible.

VFBV has written to your Brigade with details – you are encouraged to raise the concerns with Government MPs serving your area as soon as possible.

Many VFBV District Councils are distributing shop window posters to Brigades that call for the public's support, and there is more information at [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au)

## VFBV WELFARE & EFFICIENCY SURVEY

The VFBV Volunteer Welfare & Efficiency Survey is coming soon. Have your say on issues of importance chosen by volunteers, in a forum that continues to grow in recognition and influence.

The annual survey that has already established itself with the sector's decision makers is expanding again this year, to include volunteers from right across the Emergency Management sector.

If you took part last year and provided an email address, you are already registered; otherwise provide your name, Brigade and email address to [vfbv@vfbv.com.au](mailto:vfbv@vfbv.com.au) or call (03) 9886 1141 to request a printed copy of the survey.

## THE LATEST NEWS

Get the latest in our email newsletter or VFBV's popular Two Minute Briefing from the VFBV/CFA Joint Committees. Register at [www.vfbv.com.au](http://www.vfbv.com.au) – click on the VFBV Newsletter box.

Join the discussion on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/cfaval](http://www.facebook.com/cfaval) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/vfbv](http://www.twitter.com/vfbv) or on Instagram @volunteer\_fire\_brigades\_vic