



# VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

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## Scanner/listening set update

Due to the high number of changes including radio channel mapping and talk groups and fire ground channel reconfigurations across many Districts, CFA has agreed to a request by the VFBV/CFA Joint Communications & Technology Committee to provide a patch file that members can download and apply to their scanners.

This will save members having to manually update their sets. CFA Comms are working on the update file, and as soon as it is ready, we will let you know, and will also provide a copy for download on our website.

## Champs just weeks away

The State Urban Junior Championship will be conducted at Warrnambool over the weekend of 24 and 25 February 2018, with so far 68 teams from 45 brigades entered to compete including two teams from Kellerberrin, WA.

Altogether it is expected there will be up to 600 CFA junior members competing in the 18 events being held at Warrnambool.

VFBV reminds all Judges and Officials of the need for them to have applied for a Working With Children check prior to the Championships.

If not already organised, members can apply at [workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) or to apply or update your details over the phone, please contact the VFBV office on 9886 1141.

## Training incidents safety reminder

Each quarter, the VFBV/CFA Joint HR, Welfare and OH&S Committee monitors current injury and safety reports for trends.

Last quarter the Committee studied reported training incidents and near miss trends across regions and by the primary causations.

Injuries and near misses during training activities remains CFA's highest reported injury activity. Training injury trends involve injuries to members' knees, backs, fingers and legs. These injuries typically involve the impacts and/or contributing factors such as: Sprains/Stains, Handling of Hose lines and Branches, Slips, Trips & Falls, and Breathing apparatus drills.

The use of hose lines and branches is the most common piece of equipment involved which includes injuries from bowling hose resulting in being struck by the coupling or the branch when the line is charged. Approximately 62% of reporting training related

OUTAGE: On Thursday 7 December a small network configuration change to the Regional Radio Network was made by the network's operator. One of these changes made use of a proprietary standard that is not part of the official P25 standard. This caused all Uniden Digital Scanners to fall silent, as they could not decode the stream. The cause of the issue was identified on Monday 11 December, and in discussions with CFA, CFA confirmed that it had requested an urgent rollback of the changes to the network that had been applied and it was expecting rollback to occur on the Tuesday.

On Tuesday 12 December, the changes were successfully rolled back, and services were all restored to normal. CFA has agreed to include a software update and bundle it with the previously mentioned patch file - that will include support for the proprietary standard that was attempting to be rolled out. This will ensure scanners will not be affected by this problem again in the future. We will advise as soon as it is available.

## BRIGADE OWNED VEHICLE POLICY

The VFBV/CFA Joint Equipment & Infrastructure Committee continues to strongly advocate for implementation of changes to CFA's Brigade Owned Vehicle Policies that were developed by a VFBV/CFA joint working party and endorsed by CFA several years ago.

The Committee believes the importance and reliance of Brigade Owned Vehicles and their impact and contribution on CFA's operational capacity is not fully recognised or supported by current arrangements to the level commensurate with their vital importance and contribution to the State's capacity.

The intent of the new policy was to provide greater support for Brigade Owned Vehicles, provide clarity and confidence in insurance coverage, streamlined registration processes as well as standardising maintenance arrangements and support subsidies which vary greatly across the State. The Committee has requested CFA advise of the new policies status and progress.

## VEHICLE RESOURCE TRACKING SYSTEM UPDATE

CFA has advised that the first batch of modems for installation into FCV's has arrived, and fit has commenced to install the modems into nominated FCV's. District OM's have identified 439 vehicles across the State that will require installation, which involves adding an additional antenna and radio component to each vehicle. CFA has agreed to our request that fit out/installation technicians will visit each identified Brigade and carry out the works on-site. This ensures Brigades don't have to drop off the vehicle anywhere and vehicles can remain in station and in service while the work is being performed. CFA have also confirmed that the works are fully funded by CFA at State level - and there will be no cost to Brigades.

The VFBV/CFA Joint Communications & Technology Committee has also reviewed CFA's draft Resource Tracking Business Rule, and has provided feedback on the original version in October 2017, and additional feedback on a revised version on the 12th December. Members were generally comfortable with the proposed drafts, suggesting minor amendments to ensure: a requirement for CFA to advise all members on what will get tracked and how; inclusion in future new member and Induction programs so members are aware of what is reported; suggestions to ensure the data is maintained securely and safeguards in place to ensure the data is not misused; and explicit protections and safeguards in the business rule to protect members privacy and ensure that the data cannot be collected or used for disciplinary purposes. CFA has advised that it has supported and incorporated this feedback into its final version which it is expecting to submit to the CFA Executive Leadership for approval. CFA is hopeful that with roll-out and installation progressing on schedule, it will have an opportunity to start trialling the new resource tracking capability over the course of the current fire season.

incidents do not occur at training campuses but at localised less formal activities. CFA advise the training department are progressively working on improvements to raise awareness of training risks and training protocols.

On behalf of the Committee, members are reminded to perform dynamic risk assessments of all planned training activities, and encourage Brigades to appoint dedicated safety officers during activities to maintain a focus on safety during

exercises. Pre training briefings to explain common injuries and preventions are highly effective at ensuring all activities maintain an active focus on safety. Thinking about safety isn't just for those that organise training. Think about it when you are participating in it. Think about what you can do to ensure your activities and actions are safe - not just to you, but those around you. If you see something that isn't right, or could be dangerous - speak up. It's everyone's responsibility.

## CFA's capacity to mobilise

by Andrew Ford, VFBV Chief Executive Officer

February already! If you are like me, you will be wondering where the last few months have gone.

Naturally most people have been focussed on some demanding weather and fire situations and as we work our way through the summer fire season all efforts to date have demonstrated the great capacity of CFA and Victoria's emergency sector to perform when the pressure is on.

CFA members should take heart in the fact that despite the current Government's policy agenda to dismantle CFA, the community commentary has been one of appreciation and respect for the work CFA's paid staff and volunteers do every day.

Like most summer periods, hot weather and high fire risk conditions plus first hand exposure to life threatening major fires for some, has prompted thankful recognition and constant public messages appreciating that Victoria's capacity to deal with these major fires relies on CFA's capacity to mobilise its huge, highly trained and professional volunteer resources whenever and wherever it is needed.

### VEOHRC

Over the past weeks I have received many questions about what is happening to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) Independent Review into Equity and Diversity in CFA and MFB.

To recap, most people are aware that in 2017 the UFU instigated action in the Supreme Court seeking to prevent VEOHRC releasing its report publicly. The report was originally expected to be released mid 2017 but has been held up due to the UFU legal action. The Supreme Court provided a decision in early December 2017 dismissing the UFU application and confirming that the VEOHRC has acted within its powers in undertaking the work.

Following the Supreme Court dismissal of UFU's application it was anticipated the VEOHRC report would be released sometime in January 2018, however in mid-January 2018 the UFU took further legal action appealing the Supreme Court decision in the Court of Appeal.

Subsequently the report has still not been released.

Our latest understanding is that the UFU's appeal process continues and that VEOHRC is seeking to have this matter dealt with as quickly as possible.

The anxiety and frustration the delay is causing, particularly to people who participated in the review, is understood. VEOHRC is working through the UFU appeal process and a natural justice process to ensure any person whose reputation or rights may be adversely affected by a proposed adverse finding in the report is provided natural justice.

VFBV will continue to monitor the situation closely and hopefully the report is ready for release very soon.

I encourage anyone who needs support because of this

delay to visit the VEOHRC website and follow the prompts to contact VEOHRC, seek support from our VFBV network and/or discuss your concerns with your local networks.

### VFBV Volunteer Leadership Scholarship funding cut

On another matter I have also received many questions regarding the VFBV 2018 Volunteer Leadership Scholarship program. It frustrates me to say that this program has been cancelled for this year due to Government rejecting the VFBV funding bid which enabled the program to be offered to CFA volunteers and volunteers across the Victorian Emergency Sector.

VFBV received preliminary informal advice in late December 2017 that the funding for the Volunteer Leadership Scholarship was likely to be cut, and throughout January I have been seeking to convince Government officials to reconsider but have had no response. Whilst I am frustrated that there has not even been a formal advice to VFBV I do have to face the reality that the funding has been cut.

VFBV initiated this valuable volunteer leadership opportunity in 2010 and there have been 327 volunteer graduates over the eight years since the program commenced. VFBV developed and initiated the program fully funding it for many years and more recently expanding the number of CFA scholarships and offering scholarships to volunteers from SES, Coast Guard, Ambulance Victoria, Life Saving Victoria and St John through a combination of VFBV funds and a Victorian Government Valuing Volunteers Program (VVP) grant.

Despite the VFBV initiative receiving tremendous support and recognition from volunteers, agencies and members of the Ministerial Volunteer Consultative Forum and despite extremely positive support throughout this current VVP bidding and grants consideration process, the VFBV application was ultimately not supported at Ministerial level.

A combination of the Government cutting the funding for this project plus the late advice regarding funding rejection means that VFBV will not be able to run the full program nor even a scaled back program this year.

VFBV has enjoyed a long partnership with Chisholm Institute and we are now in discussions with them about how to approach future continuation of the program. VFBV will also be discussing alternative funding and fundraising strategies to ensure this program continues. Further information will be provided as soon as possible.

My apologies to all volunteers who had been anticipating the 2018 program. Formal notice will be sent to volunteers across other agencies in the coming days. I understand that the late cancellation notice will be disappointing for many, not the least being VFBV, Chisholm and



our partners Emserv who all share a commitment to this program, however until now I have held off cancelling the 2018 program optimistically hoping that common sense would prevail and the funding would be approved.

Further information will be circulated to volunteers about how we work to encourage a rethink on the Government's rejection of this important VFBV funding bid and also on the disappointing news that all VFBV 2018 Valuing Volunteer Program grant bids were rejected this year, apart from expanding our VFBV Welfare and Efficiency Survey to all Victorian emergency volunteers. Along with cutting the CFA funding to Fire Wise this does potentially signal an alarming trend.

### BeyondBlue Survey

On page 11 in this edition of Fire Wise you will see an article promoting an important initiative being undertaken by BeyondBlue. The initiative, which involves a simple, totally anonymous survey, is seeking to improve mental health and wellbeing of emergency services personnel across Australia.

I fully support the work of Beyond Blue and encourage anyone who is contacted to participate with confidence that your details will be treated confidentially and that your input will be used genuinely to improve understanding and support for emergency service personnel, volunteer and paid staff alike.

This is an important and valuable BeyondBlue initiative and in addition I am pleased to advise that VFBV has commenced discussions with BeyondBlue to explore how we can build a close partnership to improve how we support our members in the areas of mental health and wellbeing. There will be more information regarding this to follow in future VFBV communications.

### VFBV State Urban Junior Championships

Finally just a reminder for everyone to consider getting along to the VFBV State Urban Junior Championships to be held at Warrnambool on 24 and 25 February. Further details are provided elsewhere in Fire Wise.

Come and see tomorrow's CFA volunteers proudly demonstrate their skills and if you are not involved with the CFA juniors program or haven't witnessed the value the VFBV Junior Championships provide for young volunteers to develop practical skills and to be actively involved in CFA then get along and be inspired.

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