

SIMPLIFYING VFBV STRUCTURE AND RULES.

Removing urban and rural brigade distinctions to bring VFBV into line with CFA risk based brigade classification

Prepared by VFBV CEO May 2013

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explain changes proposed to simplify VFBV structure and Rules by removing some of the distinctions between urban and rural brigades, within VFBV current internal workings, that no longer align with the way brigades are classified or operate within CFA.

The paper has been developed based on discussion at VFBV State Council and is now circulated for further discussion and consideration at District Council level, in advance of a proposed notice of motion to be put to the VFBV Annual General Meeting to be held in September 2013.

VFBV Rules create the foundation for VFBV structure and process. Changes to the VFBV Rules require formal decision at a VFBV General Meeting of members. The aim is for such changes to be considered and decision made at the forthcoming September 2013 VFBV Annual General Meeting. For this to happen, a notice of the changes will need to be notified to all members before mid-August 2013.

This discussion paper seeks to explain the background and logic underpinning the proposed changes so that VFBV members can have discussion at District Council and provide feedback by end July in advance of the notice of motion to be prepared for consideration at the September Annual General Meeting.

BACKGROUND

When the Victorian Urban Fire Brigades Association (VUFBA) and Victorian Rural Fire Brigades Association (VRFBA) were brought together to form VFBV as the single body to represent CFA volunteers, internal structural arrangements maintained separate references to rural and urban brigades respectively. The rural/urban brigade distinction required the establishment of a number of internal VFBV arrangements. These arrangements were made to assist with the transition to a single unified body.

Apart from the recent changes to the way CFA classifies brigades, VFBV has evolved to a point where the logic for maintaining the VFBV internal urban/rural stream arrangements has changed.

Additionally CFA's recent move to a risk based brigade classification has triggered a change to the CFA Act and changes to CFA brigade records, removing the distinction and separate reference to 'urban' and 'rural' brigades. The CFA Act no longer distinguishes between urban and rural brigades and as of January 2013, CFA records will not distinguish between rural and urban brigade classifications.

Some changes have already been made to VFBV Rules to accommodate the wish of several VFBV District Councils to move from electing one 'urban' and one 'rural' delegate to State Council, to elect the two 'best people' for the task. There has also been much discussion within VFBV and

externally over the past few years about the logic of, and confusion caused by VFBV maintaining President, Vice President plus Vice President Urban and Vice President Rural positions/titles.

From a broader VFBV perspective, there has been much discussion in recent years that it might be time to address other aspects of VFBV Constitution, structure and processes to remove any distinctions between urban and rural brigades that prevent VFBV operating as a wholly unified organisation.

The broad approach discussed in this paper has been developed after detailed discussion at State Council. Feedback is now sought on a few alternative options regarding how best to set things up for the future.

VFBV Board view is that maintenance of a balanced focus on matters affecting brigades across regional and rural Victoria through to inner urban locations is a core responsibility of VFBV Board and a core foundation underpinning VFBV's statement of purpose. It is our role in the CFA Act to consider matters affecting all CFA volunteers. This fundamental requirement could be included as part of VFBV statement of purpose and Board role and then monitored regularly as part of the way we do business rather than needing complex constitutional and structural prescription throughout numerous clauses in VFBV Rules.

DISCUSSION

The first step toward aligning VFBV's approach with the recent CFA Act brigade classification changes (ie. removal of urban and rural classification) and simplifying VFBV Rules to move to a single stream/representation organisation requires one fundamental issue to be addressed. This is a decision about whether or not there is still a need for the VFBV Rules and structure to prescribe separate processes and specific representation provisions for brigades with different risk profiles.

One school of thought is that the distinction between different brigade risk profiles can be removed completely. Another approach would be to change the previous *urban brigade* versus *rural brigade* references to somehow reference the new CFA risk based classification. The latter approach would likely involve referring to '*brigades with predominantly structure risk profiles*' and '*brigades with predominantly bushfire risk profiles*'.

If VFBV structure and rules are to continue a distinction between '*brigades with predominantly structure risk profiles*' and '*brigades with predominantly bushfire risk profiles*', the process of allocating some brigades to either one category or the other is not necessarily going to be clear cut.

One thing is generally agreed and that is that VFBV Rules should be simplified to the greatest extent possible. If the approach to remove the various 'urban'/rural' OR 'predominantly structural risk'/predominantly bushfire risk' prescriptions is supported, the VFBV Rules could also be amended to quite simply include an overriding statement of principle that the intent of all processes and committee membership is to maintain an appropriate mix of representation, skill and focus across all CFA brigade risk profiles.

Fundamental option for discussion:

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| Option (a) | Simplify the VFBV Rules to remove clauses that prescribe a distinction between different brigade risk classifications or type altogether. |
| Option (b) | Replace 'urban brigade'/'rural brigade' distinction with 'brigades with predominantly structural risk profiles' and 'brigades with predominantly bushfire risk profiles'. |

Following from this fundamental issue there are six more detailed elements of the current VFBV Rules and structure that need to be looked at. The complexity (or simplicity) of VFBV's future structure/process arrangements for these six elements (see below) will be largely dependent on the decision made with regard to the more fundamental issue listed above.

The six issues requiring more detailed discussion are:

1. VFBV Board composition
2. VFBV Board Selection process
3. State Council Executive membership
4. State Council Executive Rural and Urban Sub Committee approach
5. President, Vice President, Vice President Urban and Vice President Rural positions/titles
6. District Council representation at State Council

A brief overview and possible options for addressing each of these six elements is discussed below.

Item 1: VFBV Board composition

Current VFBV Rules (Refer clause 4.2) state that the Board shall consist of ten members comprising:

- Four representatives appointed from urban brigades
- Four representatives appointed from rural brigades
- Two ex officio members from State Council, one being elected by and from the urban brigade representatives of State Council and one being elected by and from the rural brigade representatives of State Council.

Future options proposed for Item 1 are:

Option (a): The Association Board will comprise ten (10) members, eight (8) being by appointment and two (2) ex officio members to be appointed by State Council. With a guidance note to indicate that the desire is for there to be a mix of board membership covering all CFA brigade risk profiles.

Option (b): The Association Board will comprise ten (10) members, eight (8) being by appointment and two (2) ex officio members to be appointed by State Council. With a prescription in the VFBV Rules covering the eight (8) appointments to require four (4) to be from brigades with predominantly structural risk profile and four (4) to be from brigades with predominantly bushfire risk profile.

Under either option it is proposed to allow State Council to determine how best to manage the selection process and remove current prescriptions from the Rules. There is no change proposed to the number of VFBV Board members.

State Council have considered but not supported an option for all ten (10) Board positions to be by appointment, with a desire to retain the provision that two Board positions are ex officio nominations from State Council.

Item 2: VFBV Board Selection Process

Current VFBV Rules (Refer clause 4.4) state that four (4) Association Board Members will be appointed from urban brigades by a panel or urban members of the State Council Executive Sub Committee following advertisement and selection process and four (4) Association Board Members

will be appointed from rural brigades by a panel of rural members of the State Council Executive Sub Committee following advertisement and selection process.

Future options proposed for item 2 are:

- Option (a): Remove prescriptive reference in VFBV Rules about how the selection process will be undertaken for the eight (8) appointed positions (ie. remove reference to 'a panel of rural members...' and 'a panel of urban members ...') and simply describe that State Council Executive will manage the process.
- Option (b): As above but the State Council nominating a selection panel and State Council managing the process.

Under either of the above options the two (2) ex officio positions from State Council will be nominated by State Council. There is no change proposed to the term of Board members. There is no change proposed to appointment being by a formal advertising and selection process. Under the above options the structure of the selection panel becomes an internal process matter for State Council rather than being prescribed in the VFBV Rules.

Item 3: State Council Executive Membership

Current VFBV Rules (refer clause 7) state that State Council Executive membership will be based on an arbitrary nine (9) members selected from and elected by State Council delegates representing urban brigades and nine (9) members selected from and elected by State Council delegates representing rural brigades.

Future options proposed for item 3 are:

- Option (a): State Council Executive with 18 members but change urban/rural brigade composition prescription to become nine (9) members selected from and elected by State Council delegates representing brigades with predominantly structure risk profile and nine (9) members selected from and elected by State Council delegates representing brigades with predominantly bushfire risk profile.
- Option (b): State Council Executive based on a designated and equal number of members per CFA Region eg. 2 from each Region. Noting that VFBV Rules should perhaps not prescribe the number of CFA Regions as this may be subject to change.

Item 4: State Council Executive Urban Subcommittee and State Council Executive Rural Subcommittee

Current VFBV Rules (refer clause 7.4) state that the State Council Executive may form separate urban and rural sub committees. Clause 5 of the Rules also enables the formation of specific purpose committees. The flexibility offered by existing clause 5 plus the fact that the respective urban and rural sub committees have rarely needed to meet, suggests that it might be simpler to delete the existing specific reference to the State Council Executive Urban Subcommittee and State Council Executive Rural Subcommittee (ie. delete clause 7.4) rather than to amend the words to tidy up the urban/rural brigade reference. As an example of the flexibility that already exists VFBV currently has an Integrated Brigades Working Group as a specific purpose committee.

Since their formation there has seldom been a need for either the State Council Urban Subcommittee or State Council Rural Subcommittee to meet in isolation. There have been no issues requiring a meeting of either of these committees in the past few years.

Future options proposed for item 4 are:

- Option (a): Delete existing Rules clause 7.4 specific reference to the State Council Executive Urban Subcommittee and State Council Executive Rural Subcommittee and apply clause 5 as required.
- Option (b): Retain specific reference in VFBV Rules to respective subcommittees (noting that titles could be quite long) but change membership to reflect the new risk based brigade classification approach and outcome determined for Item 3 above.

Item 5: President, Vice President, Vice President Urban and Vice President Rural positions/titles

The current titles are considered to be confusing with strong support from State Council to discontinue election of Vice President Urban and Vice President Rural by State Council. It is proposed for the VFBV Board to elect a President and a Vice President only. This does not remove the ability for State Council to elect two (2) ex-officio members to VFBV Board – this can continue but without the title Vice President Urban and Vice President Rural. They would simply be referred to as Board members.

Recommendation for Item 5 is:

It is proposed to remove all reference to Vice President Urban and Vice President Rural from VFBV Rules.

Item 6: District Council representation at State Council

VFBV Rules have already been amended to remove prescription regarding urban and rural delegate nomination – approved 16th September 2012, VFBV AGM.

NEXT STEPS

- Discussion Paper – Simplifying VFBV Structure and Rules will to be forwarded to State Council delegates on Monday 3rd June 2013 following State Council Executive meeting.
- Feedback on Discussion Paper – Simplifying VFBV Structure and Rules to be considered at June State Council meeting, 23rd June 2013.
- District Councils consider and provide any further feedback to VFBV CEO before 31st July.
- VFBV CEO to prepare written notice of special resolution to alter/add the VFBV Rules for issue to members before 15th August 2013 (to be considered at September 15th VFBV Annual General Meeting).
- Notification of the special resolution will be posted to VFBV website before 15th August 2013 and advertised as general notice in The Fireman August edition. Advance notice of resolution will be advised via all available VFBV internal communications mediums.

FEEDBACK FORM TO VFBV

Brigade / District / Individual

This form is provided to assist members to provide feedback to VFBV on Options as presented.
 Please tick the preferred Option – in either column 2 or Column 3. A Column for comment is provided as an option, if required.
 Feedback forms to be returned to VFBV office before Friday 25th July 2013.

Issue	Please tick Preferred Option		Comment (optional)
	Option (a) <input type="checkbox"/>	Option (b) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Fundamental Option for discussion (page 2)	Option (a) <input type="checkbox"/>	Option (b) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Item 1: VFBV Board composition	Option (a) <input type="checkbox"/>	Option (b) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Item 2: VFBV Board Selection Process	Option (a) <input type="checkbox"/>	Option (b) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Item 3: State Council Executive Membership	Option (a) <input type="checkbox"/>	Option (b) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Item 4: State Council Executive urban Subcommittee and State Council Executive Rural Subcommittee	Option (a) <input type="checkbox"/>	Option (b) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Item 5: President, Vice President, Vice President Urban and Vice president Rural positions/titles	Support Recommendation: YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		

PLEASE RETURN FORM TO VFBV OFFICE via Email j.laing@vfbv.com.au; Fax 9886 1618 or post VFBV, P O Box 453, Mt Waverley 3149