

**REPORT OF INQUIRY INTO THE
EFFECT OF ARRANGEMENTS MADE BY
THE COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY
ON ITS VOLUNTEERS**



**Report by
His Honour David Jones AM
July 2011**

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GLOSSARY

24/7	24 hours a day, 7 days a week
ab initio	From the beginning
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AFAC	Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AIIMS	Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System
Av	Average
BA	Breathing Apparatus
BASO	Brigade Administrative Support Officer
BIS	Brigades in Schools Program
BMT	Brigade Management Team
Bushfire CRC	Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CFA Act	Country Fire Authority Act 1958
CFA Regulations	Country Fire Authority Regulations 2004
CFS	Country Fire Service
CO	Chief Officer
CSF	Community Support Facilitator
DOJ	Department of Justice
DRSC	Defence Reserves Support Council
DSE	Department of Sustainability and Environment
EA	Enterprise Agreement
EBA	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
EBIC	Enterprise Bargaining Implementation Committee
e.g.	for example
EMR	Emergency Medical Response
EO Act	Equal Opportunity Act 2010
ERS	Emergency Reporting System
ESP	Employer Support Payment
FIRS	Fire and Incident Reporting System
FSC	Fire Services Commissioner
FTG	Field Training Ground
FWA	Fair Work Australia
Hazmat	Hazardous Materials
HCMS	Human Capital Management System
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
HSR	Health and Safety Representative
ICC	Incident Control Centre
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
i.e.	in effect
IMT	Incident Management Team
inter alia	among other things
IR	Industrial Relations
IT	Information Technology

JOCC	Joint Operations Consultative Committee
JVDP	Junior Volunteer Development Program
L&D	Learning and Development
LFF	Leading Firefighter
m	million
MFESB	Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board
MIN	minimum
Minimum Skills	Minimum Skills Wildfire Firefighter Competency
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MTD	Manager, Training and Development
NBN	National Broadband Network
NSW	New South Wales
OH&S	Occupational Health and Safety
OH&S Act	Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
OIC	Officer in Charge
ORSP	Office of Reserve Service Protection
OT&V	Operational Training and Volunteerism
PAD	Practical Area Drill
PCBU	Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking
PPC	Personal Protective Clothing
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PSCS	Public Safety Competency Standards
PSTP	Public Safety Training Package
PTA Agreement	Professional, Technical and Administrative Agreement
RAR	Road Accident Rescue
RCC	Recognition of Current Competency
RDO	Regional Duty Officer
RMS	Resource Management System
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SA	South Australia
SDS	Service Delivery Standards
SMS	Short Message Service
SO	Station Officer
SOEIR	Standard of Emergency Incident Response
SOFC	Standard of Fire Cover
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SRI	Special Resource Initiative
TAFE	Tertiary and Further Education
UFU	United Firefighters Union of Australia (Victorian Branch)
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VBRC	2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission
VFBV	Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria
VICSES	Victoria State Emergency Service
VSO	Volunteer Support Officer
WHS	Work Health and Safety
WPI	Worcester Polytechnic Institute
WR Act	Workplace Relations Act 1996
YOU	Your Opportunities Unlimited
YR	Year

01. THE INQUIRY

01.1 INTRODUCTION

I was engaged by the Deputy Premier of Victoria and Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Honourable Peter Ryan MP, on 4 April 2011 to conduct this Inquiry. The Inquiry raises wide ranging and important issues about the effect of arrangements made by the Country Fire Authority (CFA) on CFA volunteers, who are an integral part of the firefighting and other protection provided to the community through the CFA.

I am grateful for the time and effort taken by those who participated in the Inquiry, either through attending consultations, making submissions, speaking at visits and assistance provided through supporting the conduct of the Inquiry.

I have been greatly assisted in the conduct of the Inquiry and preparation of this Report by Stella Tan, Senior Legal Policy Officer, and Lisa Farrell, Project Manager, who have been co-opted from the Department of Justice, as well as Karen Young from Hays Recruitment who typed and formatted the document. I am grateful for their assistance, which has been invaluable.

01.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Minister in establishing the Inquiry, determined the following Terms of Reference:

1. To examine the effect of arrangements made by the CFA on the recruitment, training, deployment, utilisation and support of CFA volunteers, including:
 - 1.1 The availability and accessibility of general or specialist training to volunteers so that CFA can both maximise the utilisation of volunteers and realise volunteer potential (for example, through training for senior incident management roles);
 - 1.2 Impediments to the ability for CFA volunteers to undertake any role within the CFA;
 - 1.3 Matters pertaining to the capacity for CFA volunteers to be appointed as employees of CFA, including:
 - (a) any impediments to such appointments resulting from qualification or eligibility requirements; and
 - (b) the availability and accessibility of training to volunteers which may make them eligible for appointment to any role;
 - 1.4 Mechanisms to enable and ensure that volunteer voices are heard and their experience utilised in accordance with CFA's commitment under the Volunteer Charter, including on matters relating to:
 - (a) the choice of, and use of, equipment; and
 - (b) the provision of support to brigades.
 - 1.5 The availability and utilisation of mechanisms, procedures or processes to resolve disputes, which might reasonably be expected to affect the interests of CFA volunteers, in an expeditious manner.
2. To make recommendations to address any shortcomings or difficulties identified as a result of the examination of the subject matter contained in Term of Reference 1.

01.3 BACKGROUND TO THE INQUIRY

Volunteer firefighters, through the CFA, play a pivotal and critical role in the prevention and suppression of fires in outer suburban Melbourne and the country area of Victoria. They are also involved in other emergency tasks such as Road Rescue. They act in conjunction with, and are supported by, paid personnel in carrying out their role.

Although the CFA is resourced by both volunteers and employees, it constitutes one integrated firefighting force not two – a volunteer and a paid. This needs to be recognised from the outset and is a theme that runs through this Report.

The role of volunteers was considered most recently by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC). Reference is made to the Commission's Report in Chapter 6 of this Report. Although noting that it is difficult to quantify the benefit for the State of CFA volunteers, the Commission acknowledged in its Report that some of the strengths of the CFA volunteer base were evident on 7 February 2009 (Black Saturday) including:

- Its surge capacity;
- The local knowledge of its members; and
- Its rapid response.

The Commission noted that on 7 February 2009, more than 20,000 CFA volunteers responded to 632 operational incidents in Victoria.

Prior to the State election in November 2010, the Government, when in opposition, emphasised its commitment to CFA volunteers and expressed concern about the effect of arrangements made by the CFA on volunteers in areas such as recruitment, training, deployment, utilisation and support.

It was stated that if elected, a Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Government would *inter alia*:

- Provide ongoing and substantial support for volunteers and the CFA;
- Amend the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* (CFA Act) to ensure that the terms of the Volunteer Charter established by the then Government are supported by legislation;
- Ensure that legislation and government policies are designed to recognise the needs and interests of volunteers and the value of volunteer capacity within the CFA; and
- Amend the CFA Act to make clear that the CFA is essentially a volunteer-based service.

The Coalition Opposition also committed, when in Government, to establishing an independent Inquiry into arrangements made by the CFA as they affect volunteers.

It was against this background that the Minister announced on 23 March 2011 the establishment of this Inquiry and the Terms of Reference. In doing so, he emphasised the importance of the Volunteer Charter and acknowledged the contribution of volunteers. He added:

“The Coalition believes an Inquiry into the arrangements made by the CFA for volunteers will help achieve the Charter’s intention to strengthen and facilitate the government and CFA’s contribution to volunteers.”

01.4 CONDUCT OF THE INQUIRY

The Inquiry is into the effect of arrangements made by the CFA on the recruitment, training, deployment, utilisation and support of CFA volunteers. It is not into industrial agreements entered into by the CFA in relation to its employees. The Inquiry is not into how these agreements came about or whether the CFA should have entered into these agreements. It is not about inquiring into industrial negotiations or the deliberations of the CFA Board in relation to decisions concerning industrial agreements. However, to the extent that such agreements contain arrangements that directly or indirectly affect volunteers, and are relevant to the Terms of Reference, they are considered in the Inquiry. It is not the function of this Inquiry to consider whether there should be an amalgamation of the CFA and the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFESB) or an expansion of the MFESB service area.

It is important to keep in mind that the Inquiry the subject of this Report is not into the CFA. Nor is it into all aspects of CFA volunteers, although inevitably, it is necessary to consider a wide range of matters relating to them. This Inquiry and Report is not about attributing blame to, or criticising, or making adverse findings about, the CFA, members of the CFA, whether paid or volunteer, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria or the United Firefighters Union. The Report is not about being negative. Rather, it is about endeavouring to ascertain the position in relation to the matters the subject of the Terms of Reference, identifying the issues that arise and considering possible solutions and improvements. The focus is on systemic issues, and solutions and improvements.

How information has been gathered for the Inquiry is reviewed in the next Chapter. A substantial record has been established.

The Inquiry has been conducted to the best of my ability having regard to the information that has been gathered and the time and resources that have been available to me.

I have endeavoured to provide as much information as practicable in the Report and yet make it succinct and readable. Inevitably, that involves tensions that are difficult to resolve. Consequently, the Report is of some length. However, I make no apologies for that. Important issues are involved and there is a considerable amount of ground to cover. It is important that the basis upon which comments are made, conclusions are reached and recommendations made, is understood. In other words, that the Report is transparent.

What is involved in the end, in compiling this Report, is a careful synthesis and analysis of all the information gathered. That is what I have done to the best of my ability.

02. COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY

02.1 HISTORY OF CFA

Victoria is one of the most bushfire prone regions in the world and as a result, has a long and rich tradition of volunteer firefighting. Country fire brigades have existed since as far back as 1854, when the Geelong, Sandhurst (now Bendigo) and Creswick brigades were first established. In 1890, the Fire Brigades Act was passed, which created two boards, a Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board for the metropolitan fire district, and a Country Fire Brigades Board, which had responsibility for fire brigades based more than 16 kilometres from Melbourne in the nine country fire districts.

The Country Fire Brigades, administered by the Country Fire Brigades Board, was established on 1 January 1891. By 1944, the Country Fire Brigades had more than 5,000 volunteers in over 180 brigades.

In 1926, devastating fires burned across vast areas of Gippsland. Sixty lives were lost with widespread damage to farms, homes and forests. Following these fires, the Forests Commission, with the co-operation of the Country Fire Brigades Board, the Police and Lands Departments started a statewide campaign to encourage local communities to set up bush fire brigades, and to standardise their operations and equipment.

In 1933, legislation was passed creating a Bush Fire Brigades Committee with the power to register bush fire brigades and the ability to give certain powers to bush fire brigade officers. The Bush Fire Brigades consisted entirely of volunteer members and received little or no financial assistance from the government. By 1944, the Bush Fire Brigades consisted of more than 30,000 volunteer members in over 770 brigades.

From December 1938 to January 1939, fires swept through more than 1.5 million hectares of land across Victoria. The fire severity peaked on Friday 13 January 1939, known as 'Black Friday', and caused 71 fatalities and destroyed more than 650 buildings and the township of Narbethong.

Three weeks after the 1939 bushfires, a Royal Commission led by Judge Leonard Stretton was convened to inquire into the fires. Judge Stretton recommended the establishment of a State Fire Authority consisting of representatives of the Bush Fire Brigades, the Country Fire Brigades, the Forests Commission and the relevant local government representatives to define general policy for preventing and suppressing bushfires outside state forests, organising and recruiting local brigades, and maintaining discipline of brigades and local fire authorities.

Judge Stretton's recommendation of a single firefighting organisation for country Victoria was not implemented until after the 1943-44 Victorian bushfire season, which was marked by a series of major bushfires following severe drought conditions. Between 22 December 1943 and 15 February 1944, 51 people were killed, 700 injured, and 650 buildings were destroyed across the State.

The 1944 fires emphasised the urgency of better coordination of country fire services and a major outcome following the fires was the establishment of the CFA on 2 April 1945. Country fire brigades and bush fire brigades, previously separate entities, were now unified in the one organisation as 'urban' and 'rural' fire brigades respectively. There became three separate firefighting agencies in Victoria – the Forests Commission (now the Department of Sustainability and Environment), the CFA and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

02.1.1 EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN CFA

On 16 February 1983, over 180 fires started and swept across Victoria and South Australia, killing 75 people, injuring 2,600 and destroying 9,000 homes. Thirteen CFA volunteer firefighters lost their lives in the Ash Wednesday fires. Years of severe drought and extreme weather combined to create one of Australia's worst fire days in a century.

The experience of 1983 dramatically altered attitudes to fire preparation and survival in Victoria. A cultural shift occurred in Victoria, beginning a movement from high dependency on CFA brigades to a greater sense of shared responsibility for bushfire risk. These changes paved the way for a broadening of CFA's role to include community safety and resilience building initiatives, such as the Community Fireguard program.

Ash Wednesday also galvanised popular and political commitment to CFA. This, combined with improved financial investment, led to CFA assets doubling between 1982-3 and 1992-3. A majority of the investment was directed towards infrastructure and fleet, but after Ash Wednesday, the CFA also dramatically improved personal protective clothing and equipment for its volunteers.

02.1.2 INTRODUCTION OF 'SAFETY FIRST' AND MINIMUM SKILLS

During the bushfire that burned through private land and state forests near the township of Linton on 2 December 1998, two CFA tankers became entrapped by fire following an unexpected wind change. Tragically, while the crew of one tanker successfully took survival action, the crew of five volunteer firefighters in another tanker died. The State Coroner later determined they had insufficient training in bushfire survival techniques.

The Linton Fire led to a major shift in approaches to fire ground safety and to investment in member training. Changes at CFA in the following decade saw a cultural shift away from the 'can do' attitude, to a culture of 'Safety First'. This new culture was accompanied by a prioritisation of the necessary training and resources that ensured the safety of firefighters. Only firefighters with Minimum Skills training, which gives volunteers a basic understanding of wildfire, the conditions under which it occurs and techniques for managing it, were permitted to turn out to fires and emergencies.

02.1.3 2009 VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES ROYAL COMMISSION

7 February 2009 (Black Saturday), the most complex day of bushfire fighting that Victoria has ever faced, was a unique and devastating event that changed Victoria and the CFA forever. 173 people lost their lives, thousands of homes and other dwellings were destroyed and over 400,000 hectares of land was burnt. Around 78 communities were directly impacted and entire towns were left unrecognisable. Victorian townships, including Marysville, Kinglake, Kinglake West, Narbethong, Flowerdale and Strathewen were devastated. More than 20,000 CFA members were involved in frontline firefighting, incident management and support behind the scenes.

This experience was a catalyst for changes to the way that the CFA, together with other emergency services, Government and Victorian communities, prepares for, responds to and recovers from fire. CFA has committed to the implementation of the recommendations put forward by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, the majority of which have impacts for CFA volunteers, either directly or indirectly.

02.2 STRUCTURE OF CFA

In recent years, CFA has confronted the worst fires in Victoria's history and subsequently entered a period of great change and organisation renewal.

02.2.1 EXECUTIVE STRUCTURE

Under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* (CFA Act), the CFA is subject to the general direction and control of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the performance of its functions and the exercise of its powers.

The Board of the CFA is constituted under section 7 the CFA Act and is responsible for ensuring appropriate risk management strategies are in place and that the CFA complies with relevant legislation, government requirements and its corporate objectives.

The CFA Board consists of a Chairman, Deputy Chairman and ten members, of which two are nominated by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, two nominated by the Insurance Council of Australia, two councillors from urban and rural areas nominated by the Municipal Association of Victoria, and four volunteer members of urban and rural brigades nominated by Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria.

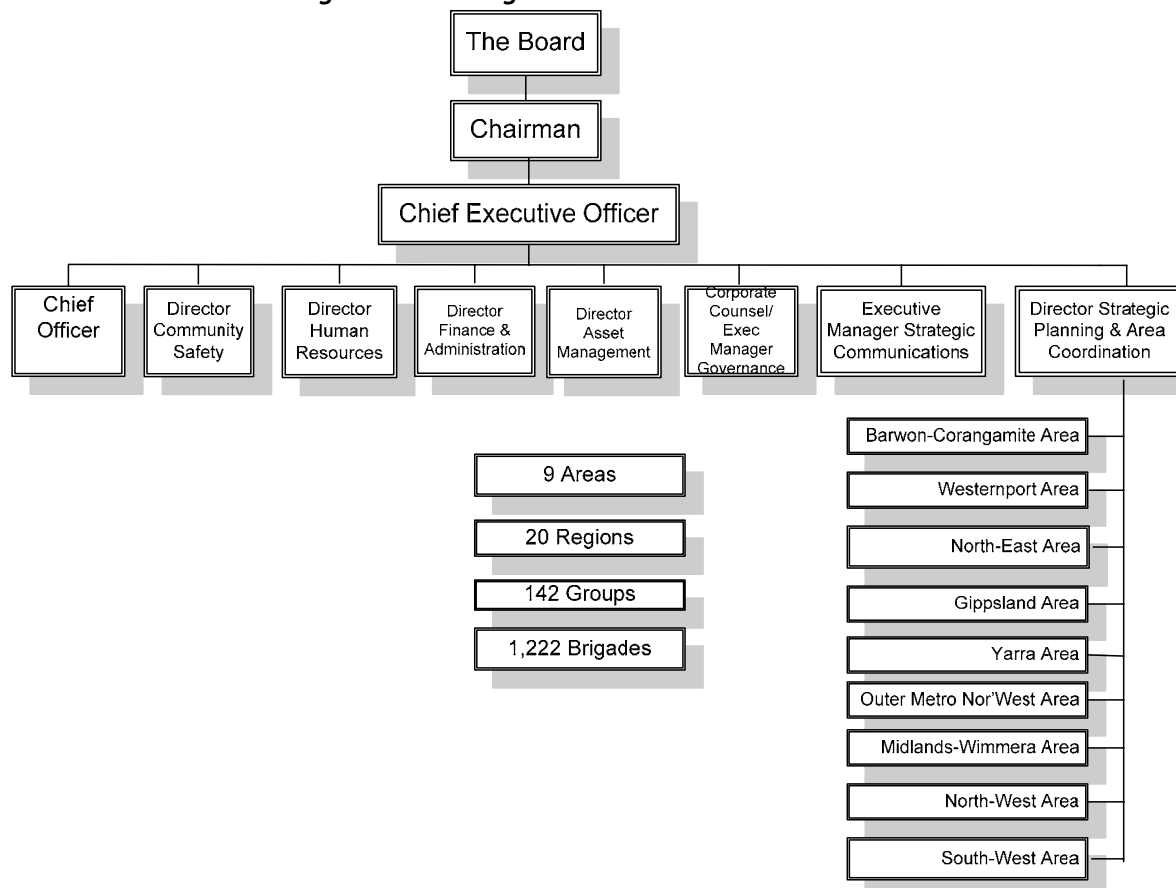
The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is appointed by the CFA Board under section 16A of the CFA Act, and is responsible to the CFA Board for the carrying out of its functions, including implementing policies and general business administration.

The Chief Officer is appointed by the CFA Board and, in accordance with section 27 of the CFA Act, all brigades, including the officers and members, are under the order and control of the Chief Officer.

The Executive Management team of the CFA reports to the CEO and consists of the Directors of the various Departments, including Operations, Asset Management, Community Safety, Finance and Administration, Human Resources, Executive Services, Operational Training and Volunteerism, Strategic Communications, and Strategic Planning and Area Coordination.

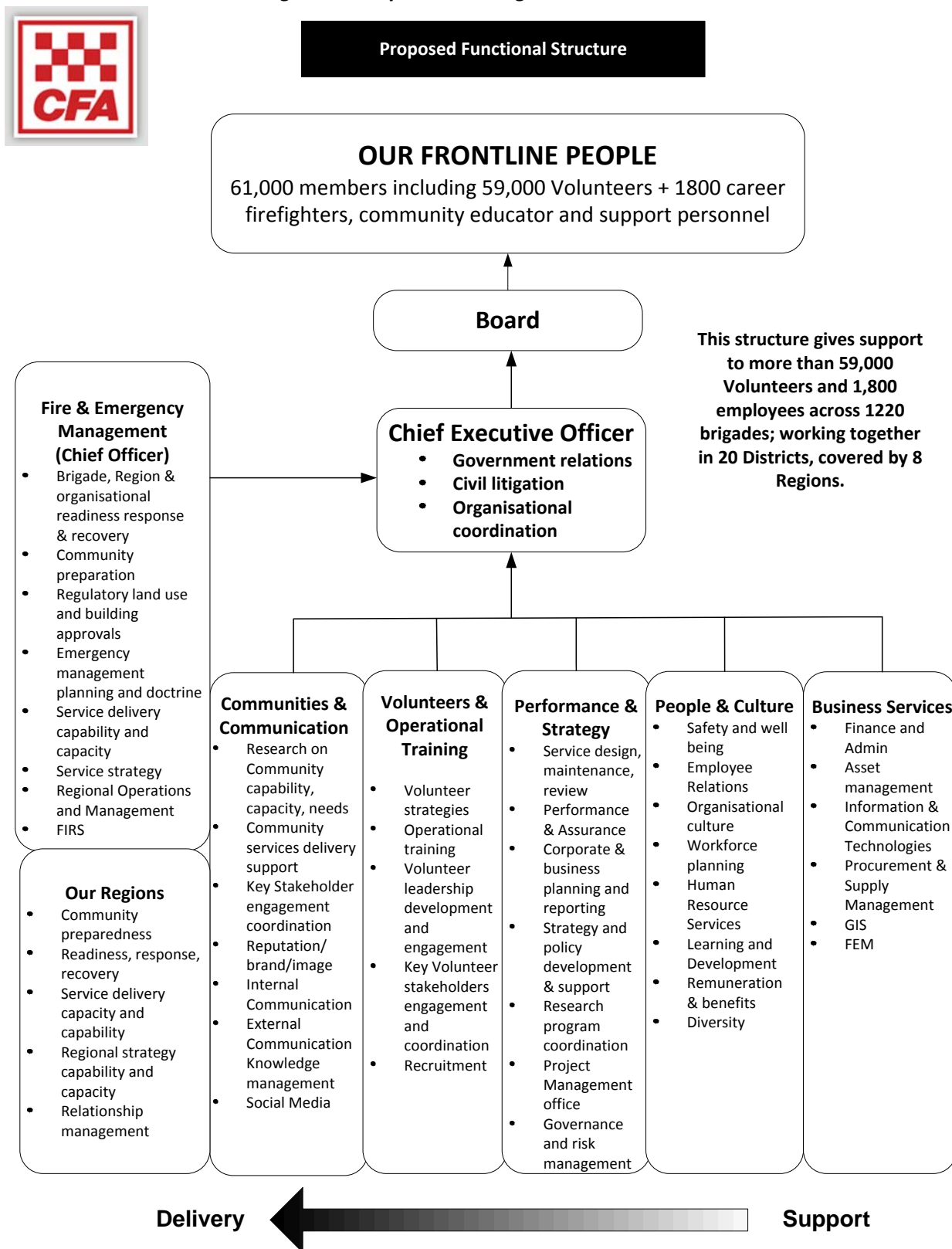
The CFA Organisation Chart in its 2010 Annual Report can be seen in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1: CFA Organisation Chart as at 30 June 2010



The current CEO of CFA commenced in his position in late 2009, and the current Chief Officer in late 2010. The CFA Board recently commissioned a review of the CFA organisational structure, which has been drafted for discussion with CFA members and their representative bodies. The diagram below shows the proposed CFA organisational structure.

Diagram 2: Proposed CFA Organisational Structure



It appears that the CFA is moving away from a hierarchical organisational structure. CFA acknowledges that, ultimately, the organisational structure needs to align more closely with the top of the organisation to CFA's membership base, to better support CFA's frontline people. This is further explored in Chapter 11 on the Chief Officer and his support for the concept of 'Mission Command'.

02.2.2 CFA VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

In April 2011, the CFA Board committed to a revised Vision and Mission for CFA:

What we are *CFA is a community based fire and emergency services organisation.*

Vision *Working together with communities to keep Victorians safe from fire and other emergencies.*

Mission *To protect lives and property.*

The CFA is developing a statement of Values to accompany its Vision and Mission. This is further explored in Chapter 13.

02.2.3 FUNDING

Under the CFA Act, CFA receives funding for annual estimated expenditure through the State Government of Victoria and through the Fire Services Levy on insurance premiums. The statutory ratio for this funding is set at 22.5% to 77.5% respectively.

Additional revenue streams that contribute to CFA's budget include:

- Victorian property and asset owners who make direct contributions where their insurance companies are not obliged to (usually overseas organisations);
- Additional State Government funding received for specific community safety and volunteering programs;
- Revenue from the provision of goods and services to external bodies (such as training services);
- Support from the Transport Accident Commission for road rescue services;
- Public donations;
- Interest; and
- Recognition of additional brigade assets.

Brigades also raise funds through sponsoring local fundraisers and soliciting public donations to acquire additional vehicles and equipment for their own brigade.

CFA's initial budget for 2010-11 was \$420.5 million (m) (\$399m Government and Insurance contributions, and \$21.5m Income Generated). The following table shows the trending increase in the CFA Budget from 2005-06 to 2010-11.

Table 3: CFA Budget over a six-year period

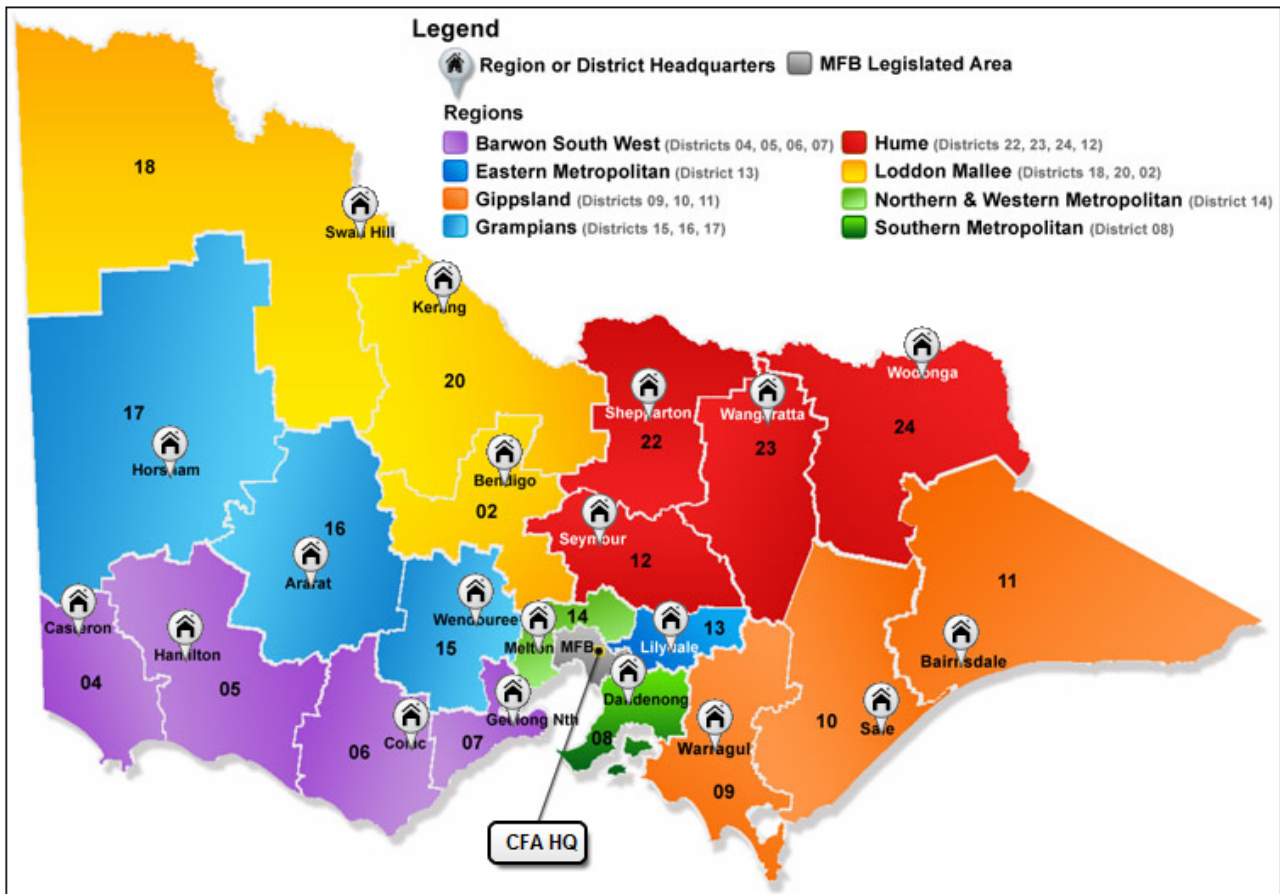
Year	Budget \$M	Change \$M	Change %
2005-06	202.6		
2006-07	226.9	24.3	12.0
2007-08	259.9	33.0	14.5
2008-09	295.8	35.9	13.8
2009-10	391.2	95.4	32.3
2010-11	399.0	7.8	2.0

The State Government announced in May 2011 that the Fire Services Levy will be replaced with a new property-based levy, as recommended by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. The Government will introduce the new legislation in early 2012, with a transition period to commence on 1 July 2012, to allow insurers to phase out the Fire Services Levy prior to full implementation from 1 July 2013.

02.2.4 REGIONS AND DISTRICTS

CFA divides its areas of responsibility into eight Regions. Each Region contains one or more Districts, with 20 Districts in total. Supporting the Regions and Districts is CFA Headquarters.

Diagram 4: Map of CFA Regions and Districts



Some CFA programs and arrangements for volunteers are designed and delivered from CFA Headquarters. However, the vast majority of a volunteer’s interactions with the CFA will be through their local District or Regional headquarters team.

Many Districts break down their area even further and establish ‘Catchment areas’. These facilitate the assignment of resources to particular areas of the District to address an identified fire risk profile. For example, a District may have four Operations Officers and create four separate Catchment areas so that responsibilities and local arrangements are clear for both staff and volunteers.

02.2.5 BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT

In 2010, as a result of a direction from Government, CFA realigned its regional boundaries to match State Government and municipal boundaries. This realignment served wider State Government planning, operational and administrative purposes. The 2009 bushfires demonstrated that common boundaries would enable better coordination of an emergency response across all agencies in the emergency management sector.

In adopting the State regional boundaries on 1 July 2010, CFA adopted new names across the State. Eight new CFA Regions and 20 Districts replaced the previous nine CFA Areas and 20 CFA Regions.

While the fundamental structure of CFA has not been altered by these changes, a number of volunteers and staff have been required to realign their reporting and accountability arrangements. While these changes may seem simple, they are not necessarily so, and in some areas, CFA people have managed and are continuing to manage a range of practical, technical, personal and cultural impacts. This boundary realignment was consistently raised at consultations and in submissions. It has clearly been a source of concern and frustration.

02.2.6 GROUPS

Section 23A of the CFA Act provides for the formation of a group of brigades, subject to CFA approval. Groups are led by the Group Officer, who is elected by volunteer delegates from each brigade within the Group. Group Officer is the highest rank attainable by a volunteer. As at May 2011, there are 136 Group Officers and 607 Deputy Group Officers.

Each Group is comprised of approximately ten brigades, although this can be higher or lower. There are 138 Groups divided into 1,220 Brigades in Victoria. Groups bring together brigades in areas that have similar geographical characteristics and are often based on local government boundaries. The map of CFA Group Boundaries is shown in Appendix A.

The role of the Group varies depending on the risk profile and needs of the brigades within the Group, but Groups are generally responsible for both day-to-day administration within the Group and for incident management. This includes preparedness planning, resource and succession planning, training, support of the Incident Management Team (IMT) during an incident, supporting communications between brigades and the Region, and representing the interests of their brigades. One of the key roles of a Group is to coordinate the formation and dispatch of strike teams. Group Headquarters are also used to manage Level 2 incidents, and, in larger incidents, as Divisional Command Centres.

The responsibilities of a Group Officer within their Group include overseeing the implementation of Group and Regional readiness plans, ensuring that incidents within their Group are managed in accordance with Standard Operating Procedures, and fulfilling IMT roles where appropriate, in accordance with recognised competency and endorsement. A Group Officer is also responsible for planning and management of support for all members within their Group, ensuring all officers within the Group undertake their duties as required, and maintaining discipline and morale.

History of Groups

The Group system expanded rapidly during the 1940s and 1950s and was the first attempt by the CFA to provide an intermediate operational structure for command and control from grass roots level to the top of the CFA organisation. By the 1960s, the Group system was firmly entrenched in the CFA. Often, Group officers had a significant fire ground command role, in addition to their administrative duties. This could involve fire ground command and control during a fire. Group Officers also played a significant role in the development and adaptation of operational policies and systems of work - particularly for bushfire management.

During the 1970s and 1980s, weaknesses in the Group system were identified. The 2002 Coroner's *Report of the Investigation and Inquests into a Wildfire and the Deaths of Five Firefighters at Linton on 2 December 1998* identified these to be:

- Difficulty of controlling resources to larger incidents that crossed Group or Regional boundaries or between private and public land;
- Difficulty in responding in a timely way to large and evolving fires;
- Lines of management and spans of control were not adequately defined for larger incidents to be efficiently managed;
- Very little or no time was spent by Group Officers in developing strategies or forward planning;
- Because of the ad hoc delegation of tasks by Group Officers on the fire ground, there was no clear recognition of the roles and responsibilities of the individuals assisting Group Officers;
- The people elected to positions of authority within a Group or brigade were not necessarily the most suitable people to be in charge at a fire because their leadership skills were lacking or they were not appropriately trained;
- Petty rivalries and territorial issues could hamper management of fires where they crossed Group or Regional boundaries; and
- Local brigade structures had the potential to collapse in fast moving fires due to local pressures and emotional issues.

To overcome these issues, the CFA and other fire suppression agencies in Australia adopted the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) in the 1990s, which is designed to promote effective joint operations through the use of common terminology, and a structure that provides for appropriate communication between organisations at all levels of the incident, whilst maintaining the integrity of the chains of command and information systems within the participating agencies.

During the early 2000s, the then Chief Officer initiated a review of the role of the Group. This resulted in Groups being taken to one side of the chain of command.

Issues have been raised in consultations and submissions about the current role of Groups, with volunteers expressing concern that their operational roles in particular have been eroded.

The current Chief Officer has suggested, and the CFA Board is supportive of, a short review to be undertaken on the role of the Group. The review will focus on strengthening the Group role in operations response and preparedness. Group personnel bring a wealth of local knowledge. The Chief Officer states that it could be argued that, by sidelining the role of the Group in the CFA chain of command, the CFA has sidelined key people who are strong leaders and have a unique grasp on the local situation and local brigades.

02.2.7 BRIGADES

Within CFA Regions and Districts, there are 1,220 brigades, including Road Rescue brigades, Forest Industry brigades, Coast Guard brigades and Headquarters brigades. Brigades are at the forefront of emergency response. Much of the work of CFA happens at brigade level, from recruitment to community fire risk awareness, and many activities undertaken are specific to local community needs.

Examples of services provided by CFA brigades include:

- Fire suppression in motor vehicles, structures, industrial complexes, grasslands, forests and plantations;
- Rescue of victims trapped as a result of motor vehicle accidents and industrial accidents;
- Specialised rescue including trench rescue, high angle rescue and urban search and rescue;
- Aerial intelligence gathering, command and control and firefighting;
- Marine firefighting (by CFA and by arrangement with the Coast Guard);
- Provision of emergency medical response (in support of Ambulance Victoria in selected locations); and
- Support to other control agencies, including flood response and search and rescue.

Brigades have a delegated management model as stipulated in sections 16C and 28 of the CFA Act. The CFA Act provides that the CEO and the Chief Officer may delegate elements of their responsibilities, powers, authority, duties or functions, and many of these elements are delegated to brigades.

The most senior position within a brigade is Captain who must, unless there are exceptional circumstances, have held the position of Lieutenant for at least two years. In integrated brigades, the most senior volunteer rank is First Lieutenant, the Officer in Charge being a career member at the rank of Operations Officer.

In fully volunteer brigades, brigade officers - Captain and First to Fourth Lieutenants - are elected biannually at the Brigade Annual General Meeting (AGM). Brigade officers tend to be long standing or highly active members. All elected positions are approved by the Regional Operations Manager under delegation from the Chief Officer.

As a community service organisation, CFA brigades are strongly supported by their local communities in responding to meet Victoria's fire safety and emergency management needs.

In recent times, CFA's responsibilities for responding to urban risks have grown substantially. The risk profiles of suburbs have changed due to urban growth around Melbourne that has far exceeded the metropolitan fire district boundary. In addition, regional growth has led to the CFA being responsible for large urban centres in regional Victoria.

The vast majority (97.5%) of CFA brigades are solely volunteer-based but there are 31 integrated brigades, located primarily in outer suburban Melbourne or in larger regional centres (see Appendix B). Integrated brigades consist of both volunteers and paid firefighting staff to meet local service delivery demand. The majority of integrated brigades have staff rostered on a 24/7 basis, with the exception of Scoresby, which has day shift support by a paid staff member. There are no CFA brigades staffed only by paid firefighters.

CFA's operations rely on the skills of an integrated force of volunteer and paid members. As at May 2011, there were over 58,000 volunteers, of which over 38,000 are volunteer operational firefighters. As at May 2011, the CFA comprised of 1,714 employees. Of these, 1,577 were employed full time, 99 part time and 38 casually. Of the full-time staff, around 514 were career firefighters. Almost 37% of CFA staff are also serving volunteers.

Table 5: Number of employees and volunteers at integrated stations (as at May 2011)

Brigade Name (District)	Total	Employee	Volunteer
Bendigo (02)	96	37	59
Portland (04)	43	1	42
Warrnambool (05)	83	11	72
Belmont (07)	70	14	56
Corio (07)	87	27	60
Geelong City (07)	62	45	17
Cranbourne (08)	94	19	75
Dandenong (08)	83	46	37
Frankston (08)	72	25	47
Hallam (08)	75	19	56
Mornington (08)	68	9	59
Patterson River (08)	68	8	60
Rosebud (08)	31	9	22
Springvale (08)	49	19	30
Morwell (10)	84	13	71
Traralgon (10)	80	14	66
Boronia (13)	88	18	70
Scoresby (13)	58	1	57
Caroline Springs (14)	72	14	58
Craigieburn (14)	78	14	64
Eltham (14)	52	14	38
Greenvale (14)	28	11	17
Hoppers Crossing (14)	99	14	85
Melton (14)	125	12	113
Point Cook (14)	53	6	47
Sunbury (14)	93	7	86
Ballarat City (15)	63	38	25
Mildura (18)	89	11	78
Shepparton (18)	116	15	101
Wangaratta (23)	109	16	93
Wodonga (24)	61	12	49
Headquarters/ Interagency	4	4	
Total	2333	523	1810

Brigades are currently classified on the risk profile of the brigade's area - Wildfire, Wildfire Low Structure, Wildfire Structure, and Structure Wildfire. The Table below shows the number of brigades in each risk profile in each District.

Table 6: Number of brigades in each risk profile in each District

District	Wildfire	Wildfire Low Structure	Wildfire Structure	Structure Wildfire	Total
2	14	24	12	11	61
4	43	9	2	2	56
5	69	20	3	4	96
6	4	52	3	5	64
7	1	17	13	17	48
8	1	19	13	41	74
9	0	22	12	13	47
10	17	17	19	8	61
11	13	18	5	3	39
12	11	16	6	2	35
13	1	10	20	18	49
14	1	19	19	18	57
15	20	23	9	5	57
16	33	24	4	5	66
17	64	8	8	4	84
18	30	21	13	8	72
20	27	19	11	5	62
22	36	24	8	5	73
23	27	26	1	3	57
24	29	14	15	4	62
Total	441	402	198	181	1220

02.2.8 BRIGADE AND MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION PROJECT

In December 2008, the CFA Board approved the development of a project to change the way in which brigades and brigade members are classified within CFA.

The Brigade & Membership Classification Project aims to classify brigades based on their risk profile. Depending on their risk, brigades can choose from four brigade management models, which will make it easier to operate in the future and reflect the way brigades, Groups and Districts operate today.

Under the new classifications, all CFA brigades will be registered as 'fire brigades' and the reference to urban and rural brigades will no longer be used. This change will be reflected in the CFA Act and Regulations.

As at 5 April 2011, 55 brigades are trialling the new membership and classification arrangements and will introduce those changes during the 2011 election cycle. All CFA brigades are expected to transition to their selected models of brigade management and membership classification by the next election cycle in 2012 or 2013. The project will be completed by June 2013.

All brigades will be grouped into a classification that reflects the risk profile of the area that they operate in and the role they play in supporting other brigades. There are five brigade classifications:

Classification 5: Structure with Bushfire (fully urbanised environment), such as Werribee.

Classification 4: Structure with Bushfire (significant township, city or suburban environment with predominately structural risk), such as Hamilton.

Classification 3: Bushfire with Structure (risk evenly spread between bushfire & structural), such as Peshurst.

Classification 2: Bushfire with low Structure (risks predominately bushfire, grass & scrub), such as Dunkeld.

Classification 1: Bushfire (risks predominately bushfire, grass & scrub), such as Boorhaman.

From time to time, the brigade and the Operations Manager will review the classification of the brigade to ensure it reflects the risk for which the brigade is responsible.

Special risk brigades such as Headquarters Brigades, Coast Guard Brigades and Forest Industry Brigades will also be registered. Where a specific risk exists that the Operations Manager believes warrants delivery of specialist services, the Chief Officer may agree to form a specialist brigade to address that risk. Such brigades would have specific roles and responsibilities that other brigades in the area are unable to meet.

Brigade Management Structure

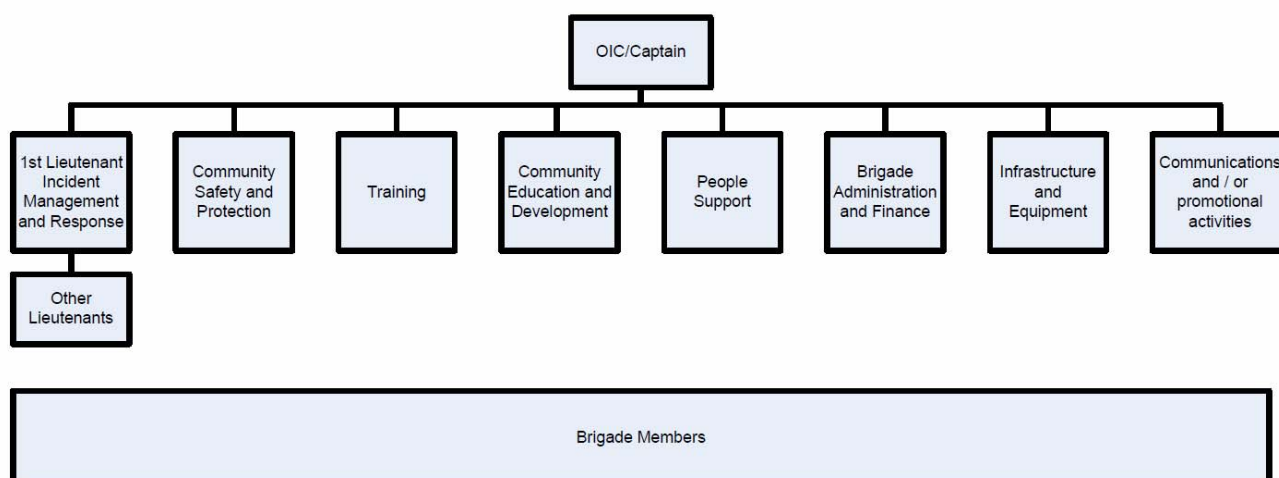
There are four management structures, which reflect the complexity of a brigade’s risk, the needs of the community it serves and the capacity and needs of the brigade membership. The management structure will be determined by the brigade’s classification and requirements. The structures are designed to provide brigades with the flexibility to manage their brigades.

Model One

Appropriate for Classification 3, 4 and 5 brigades.

The model identifies a number of functional roles that are considered appropriate for the management of the brigade’s responsibilities. An example is shown below at Diagram 7:

Diagram 7: Example of Model One - Brigade Management Structure



The Officer in Charge (OIC) of an integrated brigade will be an Operations Officer appointed by the CFA. The existing consultation process with Brigade Management Teams (BMTs) on the selection process will continue.

The senior volunteer officer in an integrated brigade will hold the rank of First Lieutenant. It may also be appropriate to establish the position of Executive Chairman within the BMT. This is a position filled by a volunteer member of the brigade who will preside at brigade meetings and assist the OIC in the management of the brigade.

Model Two

Appropriate for Classification 2, 3 and 4 brigades.

This model involves the election of a BMT consisting of a Captain, a minimum of three Lieutenants, a Communications Officer and a Secretary, plus such functional positions as the brigade considers appropriate and are approved by the Operations Manager. These might include a President or Chairman, a Treasurer, a Publicity Officer, a Training Officer or an Equipment Officer.

The specific functional roles that make up the BMT may vary from brigade to brigade depending on the needs of the brigade.

Model Three

Appropriate for Classification 1 and 2 brigades.

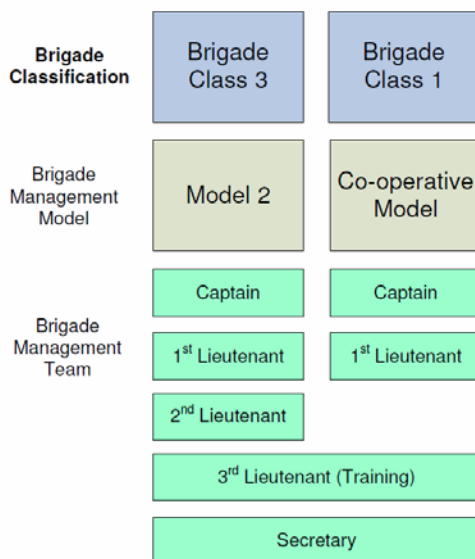
This model involves the election of a BMT consisting of a Captain, a minimum of three Lieutenants, a Communications Officer and a Secretary.

Model Four

This model applies to Classification 1 brigades only where the brigade has chosen to operate under a Co-operative Brigade Management Structure and has the Operations Manager’s approval and the support of the adjoining brigade to do so. This model involves the election of a Captain, a Lieutenant and, where considered appropriate, a Communications Officer.

Other brigade management responsibilities, such as administration, financial management and training coordination are to be undertaken by the brigade that has agreed to partner the Co-operative Brigade (see Diagram 8 below). The Captain of a brigade that has chosen the Co-operative Management Structure may be a member of the BMT of the partner brigade.

Diagram 8: Example of Co-operative Management Structure



Brigade Membership

There will be four categories of brigade membership based on the role that a person plays within the brigade and the wider service. Each member will be expected to develop and maintain the skills necessary to undertake the role they are responsible for. The four categories are:

- Operational Firefighters, who undertake firefighting and incident management roles;
- Brigade Support Members, who undertake roles in support of emergency operations, either on or off the fire ground, or roles related to the effective ongoing management of the brigade's affairs and the maintenance of the brigade's relationship with the community;
- Associate Members, members who support the brigade in other ways but do not wish, or are unable, to become fully involved in the day-to-day operation of the brigade; and
- Juniors.

All registered members of a brigade will be eligible for CFA and brigade service awards regardless of their classification, excluding juniors, and have access to CFA insurance and compensation arrangements.

02.3 LEGISLATION

The CFA now operates under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* (CFA Act) and Country Fire Authority Regulations 2004 (CFA Regulations), and has evolved to become one of the world's largest volunteer-based fire and emergency service and community safety organisations and is responsible for the prevention and suppression of fires in outer suburban Melbourne and the country area of Victoria

The country area of Victoria is defined in the CFA Act as any area of Victoria that is outside the metropolitan fire district, excluding areas of forest, national parks and protected public land. The country area of Victoria covers more than 15,018,200 hectares and is home to around 2.6 million people, roughly 50% of the State's population. It includes 60% of Victoria's metropolitan area with outer Melbourne suburbs such as Frankston and Dandenong, and key growth suburbs such as Cranbourne, Melton and Werribee.

Country Fire Authority Regulations 2004

The CFA Regulations were made by the Governor in Council under section 110 of the CFA Act and came into operation on 31 January 2004. The CFA Regulations will sunset ten years after the day of making on 28 January 2014. All Regulations, such as the CFA Regulations, covered by the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* are revoked or 'sunset' after ten years. This process of regular review has been in place in Victoria since 1985 and has contributed to the removal of unnecessary regulation.

The objectives of the CFA Regulations are to provide for:

- (a) The proceedings of the CFA;
- (b) The management of officers and employees of the CFA, including disciplinary procedures;
- (c) The management and administration of fire brigades, including membership, elections, and conduct and duties of members;
- (d) The issue of permits to burn and other fire prevention measures;
- (e) The financial arrangements of, and fees and charges levied by, the CFA;
- (f) Compensation for personal injury and destruction, damage or loss of wearing apparel and personal effects of volunteer members of brigades, casual firefighters and volunteer auxiliary workers; and
- (g) Other matters authorised by the CFA Act.

The CFA Act and Schedules 5 and 6 of the CFA Regulations, being the Brigade and Group Model Rules, prescribe the manner in which brigades and Groups must operate.

Schedule 5 of the CFA Regulations states that the object of the brigade is to serve the community by protecting life and property from the threat of fire or other emergency. Schedule 5 provides brigade model rules relating to membership, finance, brigade meetings and management, including the appointment of Brigade Management Teams.

Schedule 6 of the CFA Regulations states that the object of the Group of brigades is to serve the community by protecting life and property from the threat of fire or other emergency, and coordinating activities of brigades that are members of the Group. Schedule 6 provides Group model rules relating to meetings and management, including the appointment of a management team to manage and administer the affairs of the Group. The Group of brigades may, by resolution and with the approval of the CFA, make rules not inconsistent with the CFA Act or Regulations.

Country Fire Authority Act 1958

The CFA Act was assented to on 30 September 1958 and came into operation on 1 April 1959.

Unlike most statutes enacted by the Victorian Parliament in recent years, the CFA Act does not contain a section which spells out the purposes or the objectives of the Act. Rather, these must be determined by reference to particular sections of the CFA Act, which spell out the powers, duties and responsibilities of the CFA and its officers and members. Statutory interpretation and inference are important in determining what the CFA can, and must, do to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.

Statutory Powers and Duties of the CFA

The following sections of the CFA Act appear to be the principal sources of direction as to the powers, duties and responsibilities of the CFA and its members.

Section	Summary of Power, Duty or Responsibility
14	Control of the prevention and suppression of fires in the country area of Victoria
20	General duty of the CFA to superintend and enforce all necessary steps for the prevention and suppression of fires and for the protection of life and property
20AA	General powers of the CFA, including power to enter into agreements for the provision of goods or services to the CFA
20A	Attendances unconnected with fire
23	General powers of CFA with respect to brigades, apparatus etc
44	Duties of officers in charge of region to make regular inspections
96	Power of CFA to use water for fires and drills without charge
97	CFA as a protection agency for purposes of <i>Environment Protection Act 1970</i>
97A	CFA may provide rescue and extrication services
97B	CFA may provide road accident rescue service
97C	CFA may provide protection services
98	Power to investigate fires

Statutory Powers and Duties of the Chief Officer in the CFA Act

The following sections of the CFA Act set out the powers, duties and responsibilities of the CFA Chief Officer:

- 27 – Chief Officer to have control of all brigades, and officers and members of those brigades.
- 28 – Power to delegate any power or authority conferred on him under any Act or Regulation, with certain exceptions.
- 29 – At least once a month, summon brigades for practice to render the members fit and efficient for service, and arrange for regular practice of members of volunteer brigades.
- 29 – Have control of all apparatus and other property of the CFA and cause them to be kept in a fit state at all times for efficient service.
- 29 – At all reasonable times, have free access to any land, building or premises (whether public or private) for the purpose of ascertaining and reporting to the CFA on any contravention of the laws relating to the prevention of fires or to the protection of life and property in case of fire or to the abatement of fire dangers.
- 30/33(2) – Where the Chief Officer believes on reasonable grounds that there is danger of fire occurring or where a fire is burning or has recently been extinguished, the Chief Officer will have and may exercise the following powers and authorities:
 - Have control and direction of any brigades present and any person who voluntarily place their services at his disposal whilst present at the scene of the fire.
 - Authority to enter any land or building and if necessary, force open any doors and take apparatus onto the premises.
 - Enter, with force if necessary, any vessel, wharf, pier or jetty and take necessary apparatus.
 - Take any measures which in the circumstances are reasonable and which appear to be necessary or expedient, in particular, enter, pull down, destroy or remove any fences, vegetation or structure.
 - Shut off water from water supply in order to obtain greater supply and pressure of water for the purpose of extinguishing fire, and take water from any source of water supply.
 - Close any road in the vicinity of the scene of any fire to any traffic.
 - Order to withdraw, or remove, any persons who interfere by their presence with the operations of any brigade or who are in or on any land, building or premises then burning or threatened by fire.
 - Pull down or shore up any wall or building damaged by fire that may become dangerous to life or property.
 - Take such other measures as appear necessary for the protection of life and property
- 44A – Power to close roads where safety is compromised.
- 48 – Power to direct extinguishment of fire.
- 50B – Duty to issue warnings and provide information in relation to fires in the country area of Victoria if delegated to do so by the Fire Services Commissioner, or the Chief Officer considers that such action is necessary for the purposes of protecting life and property.
- 50P – Chief Officer may advise on defendability of buildings in event of bushfire.
- 98 – Power to investigate fires.

Section 29 – Annual Brigade Inspections

Section 29 of the CFA Act requires that the Chief Officer 'shall from time to time inspect or arrange for the inspection of all brigades and report to the CFA on their state of efficiency or otherwise, and make such recommendations as he thinks fit'. This activity requires an annual brigade inspection process for each brigade, delegated by the Chief Officer to Operations Managers and their staff. A number of pre-determined and common areas of performance and activity are inspected and assessed. Section 29 inspections provide evidence of past and present brigade activity capability, including an overall assessment of a brigade's future viability.

Volunteers in the CFA Act

The CFA Act defines a volunteer officer or member of a brigade to mean an officer or member who receives no remuneration for his services in relation to the brigade but does not include an officer or member of an industry brigade. A volunteer brigade is defined as any association of persons formed for the purpose of the prevention and suppression of fires and solely or principally composed of volunteer officers and members but does not include an industry brigade.

The following sections of the CFA Act relate to volunteers:

Section	Summary of Section relating to volunteers
6F	Recognition of CFA as a volunteer-based organisation
6G	Recognition of the Volunteer Charter and its requirement that the State and CFA commit to consulting with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria on any matter that might reasonably be expected to affect volunteers
6H	CFA to have regard to Volunteer Charter in performing its functions
6I	CFA's responsibility to encourage, maintain and strengthen capacity of volunteers
25	Election of officers of volunteer brigades

It is notable that the majority of sections in the CFA Act that refer to volunteers were only recently inserted by the Country Fire Authority Amendment (Volunteer Charter) Act 2011 that commenced on 11 May 2011.

Other Legislation

It should be noted that some of the duties and responsibilities placed upon the CFA and its personnel derive from other legislation, for example, the *Building Act 1993*, *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998*, *Dangerous Goods Act 1985*, *Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010* and the *Emergency Management Act 1986*.

Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010

The *Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010* provides for the appointment and powers of the Fire Services Commissioner, who is the senior operational firefighter in Victoria and exercises control over major fires as the permanent State Fire Controller. The Fire Services Commissioner has responsibility for promoting and leading a program of reform to improve the operational capability of fire service agencies and must, in performing his or her functions, have regard to the importance of CFA volunteers with respect to Victoria's firefighting management and capacity.

COMMENT

Over the years, there have been a significant number of piecemeal amendments to the CFA Act by no less than 125 amending Acts and subordinate instruments, with the first commencing on 8 December 1959 and the most recent on 11 May 2011.

The need for a more general review of the CFA Act has been recognised for some time and there have been previous attempts to commence and undertake this work. Substantial difficulties for proper reform exist, which is not uncommon in these situations given linkages to other Acts and instruments, and the implications for changes made.

It is clear that a broad review of the 53 year-old CFA Act is required to modernise the CFA Act. Such a review should ensure the CFA Act supports CFA's ongoing service delivery and operations and reflects current community expectations and new initiatives, frameworks and principles.

Such a review could consider a consolidation of the powers and functions of the Chief Officer, which have been 'band-aid' amended over an extended period. The *Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1958* is similarly antiquated and it may be worthwhile to consider a holistic review of both Acts to facilitate effective interoperability.

The review should include a review of the CFA Regulations. As will be apparent from matters raised in Chapter 19, there are concerns and issues in relation to the disciplinary and other procedures in brigades. These matters are addressed by the CFA Regulations and a review could examine these processes.

A review should involve consideration of the provisions relating to the structure and appointment of the CFA Board. Those provisions have been in place for a long time and the substantial change in circumstances that have arisen over that time mean that the current structure and method of appointment may no longer be in the public interest. It is necessary for alternatives to be considered so that the CFA, being a public authority, is governed by a Board that best serves the interests of the community in 2011.

RECOMMENDATION 1

That a review of the Country Fire Authority Act 1958 and the Country Fire Authority Regulations 2004 be undertaken.

02.4 VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) is the principal association representing volunteer brigades in Victoria. Individual volunteers are not represented by VFBV, as they are not members. VFBV brings together the Victorian Urban Fire Brigades Association and Victorian Rural Fire Brigades Association. The inaugural VFBV AGM was held on 4 October 2008. CFA brigades choose to be affiliated with the VFBV. The VFBV is funded by the CFA to undertake its role.

Section 100 of the CFA Act states that the role of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria Incorporated is to enable members of brigades (other than industry brigades) to consider and bring to the notice of the CFA all matters affecting their welfare and efficiency (other than questions of discipline and promotion). An officer of the VFBV, with the exception of the CEO, Executive Officer or member of staff, must be a registered volunteer.

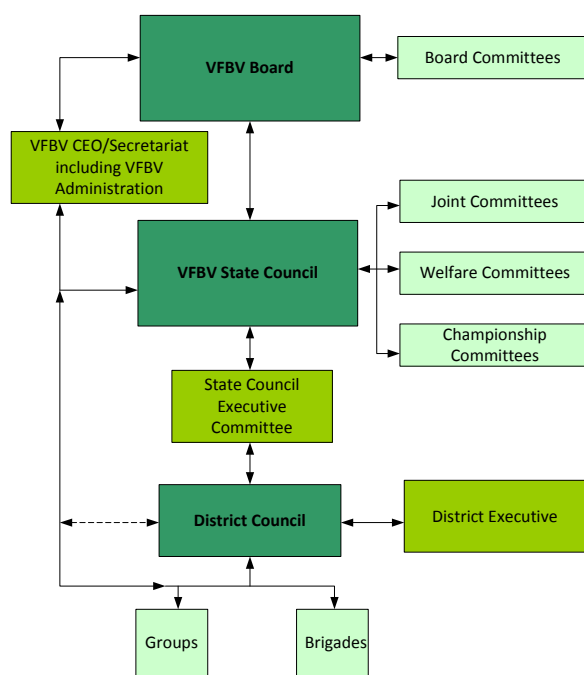
The VFBV Board meets with the CFA Board as the peak forum for strategic consultation on matters impacting on volunteers whether policy development, volunteer welfare, support or development, equipment and infrastructure, or planning for CFA's future.

The diagram below illustrates the overall structure of the VFBV and process links between key VFBV forums. The roles of the three levels can be described as follows:

- VFBV Board – governance, strategic direction, policy and oversight.
- State Council – the operating level, key advisory forum and statewide representation.
- Regional Councils – allows local level input and is the local operating level.

The VFBV CEO and staff secretariat provide overall coordination, management, advice and support to the VFBV at each level.

Diagram 9: VFBV Organisational Structure



The VFBV have submitted to the Inquiry that they feel the reason why some quite sound arrangements made by the CFA have failed to deliver optimal results in the past is because CFA leadership has participated with the VFBV in a superficial way only. Consultation and communication between the CFA and VFBV is further considered in this Report, particularly in Chapter 20. It is of great importance. There is also a need for the VFBV to be a strong and independent organisation.

Role of the VFBV

A number of submissions received by the Inquiry were critical of the role of VFBV in representing volunteers. Submitters raised the point that not all volunteer brigades were affiliated with the VFBV, that VFBV receives substantial funding from CFA and were not, and could not, be truly independent and representative in that respect. Some submitters noted that VFBV should not be a mediator between volunteers and the CFA or State Government, but must be a strong voice for volunteers and their communities.

COMMENT

It is true that not all brigades are affiliated and it appears that there are perceptions that the VFBV is not sufficiently independent of the CFA and representative of volunteers.

The CFA does provide funding to VFBV. Such a funding arrangement could be perceived to compromise the ability of the VFBV to truly represent the interests of volunteers with the CFA and reduce the strength of the VFBV in dealing with the CFA.

In addition, the current membership arrangement, where brigades choose to be affiliated with VFBV, could be said to prevent volunteers from having a sense of ownership of the Association.

RECOMMENDATION 2

- A. Consideration be given to the VFBV being funded directly by Government rather than by the CFA.
- B. The VFBV give consideration to amending its Constitution to enable individual volunteers to be members of the Association.

02.5 UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF AUSTRALIA – VICTORIAN BRANCH

The United Firefighters Union of Australia (UFU) was granted federal registration on 1 August 1990. The Victorian Branch of the UFU, then known as the United Firemen's Union of Victoria, was established on 22 January 1911 and celebrated its centenary this year.

The UFU is the representative body for career firefighters in Victoria, save for those employed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, and seek to achieve, *inter alia*, improved working conditions for their members, including their welfare and safety.

The UFU stated in its *Response to the Submission of Counsel Assisting the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission regarding Organisation Structure* that, as does any union, the UFU provides industrial representation to its members; however, due to the uniquely hazardous nature of the work, such representation extends further than the usual industrial concerns of wages, leave provisions and so on. In particular, physical working conditions, staffing levels, safety equipment and training are of paramount interest to the UFU.

The UFU did not participate in the Inquiry.

03. VOLUNTEERS AND CFA: AN OVERVIEW

In order to provide some background and context to the issues addressed in this Report, it is necessary to set out a brief overview of the relationship of volunteers and the CFA. This will, to some extent, overlap with ground already covered in Chapter 2.

This overview is based on information contained in the comprehensive witness statement of Alexander (Lex) de Man to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC) made on 16 April 2010. The VBRC sought a witness statement from the CFA relating to CFA volunteers. Mr de Man has had 33 years ongoing volunteer service with the CFA, becoming a career officer in 1995. At the time of his statement, he was General Manager of the Yarra Area. He is currently Executive Manager of the CFA Operational Training and Volunteerism Department.

The CFA is a volunteer-based fire and emergency service. Employees are based at CFA Headquarters, District and Regional locations and at integrated fire brigades (with both paid and volunteer firefighters).

The role of CFA employees is to support volunteers and the community. An important document that is central to the relationship between the CFA and volunteers is the Volunteer Charter. This document is reviewed in Chapter 4 and will be further considered when analysing the issues, particularly relating to consultation and communication.

Volunteers reflect their communities. The recruitment of volunteers is reviewed in detail in Chapter 14 of this Report. The sustainability of the volunteer model in the long term is a critical matter that is considered in this Report. It is intrinsically bound up with the recruitment and retention of volunteers, particularly the youth.

A volunteer may be operational or non-operational. Operational volunteers have, as a minimum, successfully completed Minimum Skills Wildfire Firefighter Training (Minimum Skills) and are recorded as operational in the CFA's Resource Management System (RMS).

A wide range of non-operational roles are undertaken by both operational and non-operational volunteers. They include community education and development, community safety and protection, training, and infrastructure and equipment maintenance. Other activities include assistance at community events, and support for fundraising efforts for not-for-profit organisations.

In 2007, the CFA commissioned research into Brigade Representativeness and Connectedness with the community. A key purpose was to better understand how CFA people support their community, to enable the CFA to better support their members. The research showed the connectedness of CFA members to the community and the various competitors to a CFA volunteer's time.

Significantly, Mr de Man explained the position this way in his statement:

"CFA both values and relies on its volunteers and it is important that as an organisation, it understands limitations on volunteer time and competing interests of volunteers. The CFA respects the fact that CFA volunteer time is limited and finite and it is incumbent on the CFA to ensure we utilise volunteer time effectively." (P18)

The value to the Victorian community of CFA volunteers has been estimated at \$840 million per year. This does not represent the cost to fully replace volunteers with paid firefighters. Much of the value of volunteers cannot be assigned a monetary value.

In some rural areas, the CFA brigade may be the only community institution, with a high proportion of the community being volunteers. In these areas, the brigade is integral to ongoing social health and community viability. An example is Mitre, 40 km west of Horsham, where 60% of the population of around 110 are CFA members. The community connectedness of being a CFA member is clearly of significant benefit to the community. In many parts of Victoria, the local CFA brigade is the glue that holds the community together.

The value of volunteers is not limited to bushfire response. CFA members respond to tens of thousands of incidents every year, from bushfires, grass fires and structural fires, to car accidents, rescues, oil spills and flood assistance.

The clear majority of incidents that CFA responds to are urban based. CFA's Fire and Incident Reporting System (FIRS) data records that in 2010, CFA brigades responded to 27,849 urban incidents, and 7,283 rural incidents.

The following table demonstrates a 29% increase in incident rates across Victoria from 2000 to 2009:

Table 10: Incidents responded to by CFA 2000-2009

Year	All CFA			
	Fire	Non Fire	Total Incidents	Total Turnouts
FY 2000	11912	18691	30603	50612
FY 2001	14895	19209	34104	59910
FY 2002	14014	19143	33157	57121
FY 2003	15307	20040	35347	63151
FY 2004	13624	19437	33061	57589
FY 2005	13308	21250	34558	60716
FY 2006	11849	17924	29773	57361
FY 2007	17181	22802	39983	77664
FY 2008	16011	21833	37844	70225
FY 2009	17212	22396	39608	80818
Grand Total	145313	202725	348038	635167
Change FY2000 to FY 2009	44%	20%	29%	60%
Data Source: CFA FIRS/GIS				

CFA attend a large number of false alarm calls each year – an average of 7,000 per year in the last six years, the majority of which are generated by automatic alarm systems. Unwanted false alarms place an additional strain on CFA's volunteers. The CFA is working with other agencies to develop procedures and processes to ensure building owners and managers can be educated and adhere to their legal responsibilities.

A central strength of the CFA model is its internal surge capacity. Black Saturday is an important example with the CFA responding to 632 incidents. Surge capacity can also assist other emergency services, such as during the Longford gas crisis in 1998.

In answer to the question posed by the VBRC whether more volunteers are needed to provide an adequate emergency response to a fire, Mr de Man states that there is no evidence to suggest on Black Saturday there were insufficient volunteers. The CFA has the capability through its volunteers to ensure that it has capacity to respond to major incidents.

The CFA structure means that any decrease in volunteers in rural areas is offset by growth in provincial, peri-urban and outer metropolitan areas.

The role of the small rural brigade should not be undervalued. Even if they respond to a small number of incidents each year they provide central rapid response to those incidents and can assist in incidents that do not occur in their area.

The CFA is involved in the formation and evolution of a brigade from a small volunteer rural brigade to a fully integrated urban brigade, as the surrounding community develops and grows. The development of this Volunteer Continuum of Support has been the subject of discussion between the CFA and VFBV and is reviewed in Chapter 18.

An example of this Continuum is Craigieburn, where a volunteer rural fire brigade was formed in 1945 and progressed with the growth in the area to a fully integrated brigade in 2006.

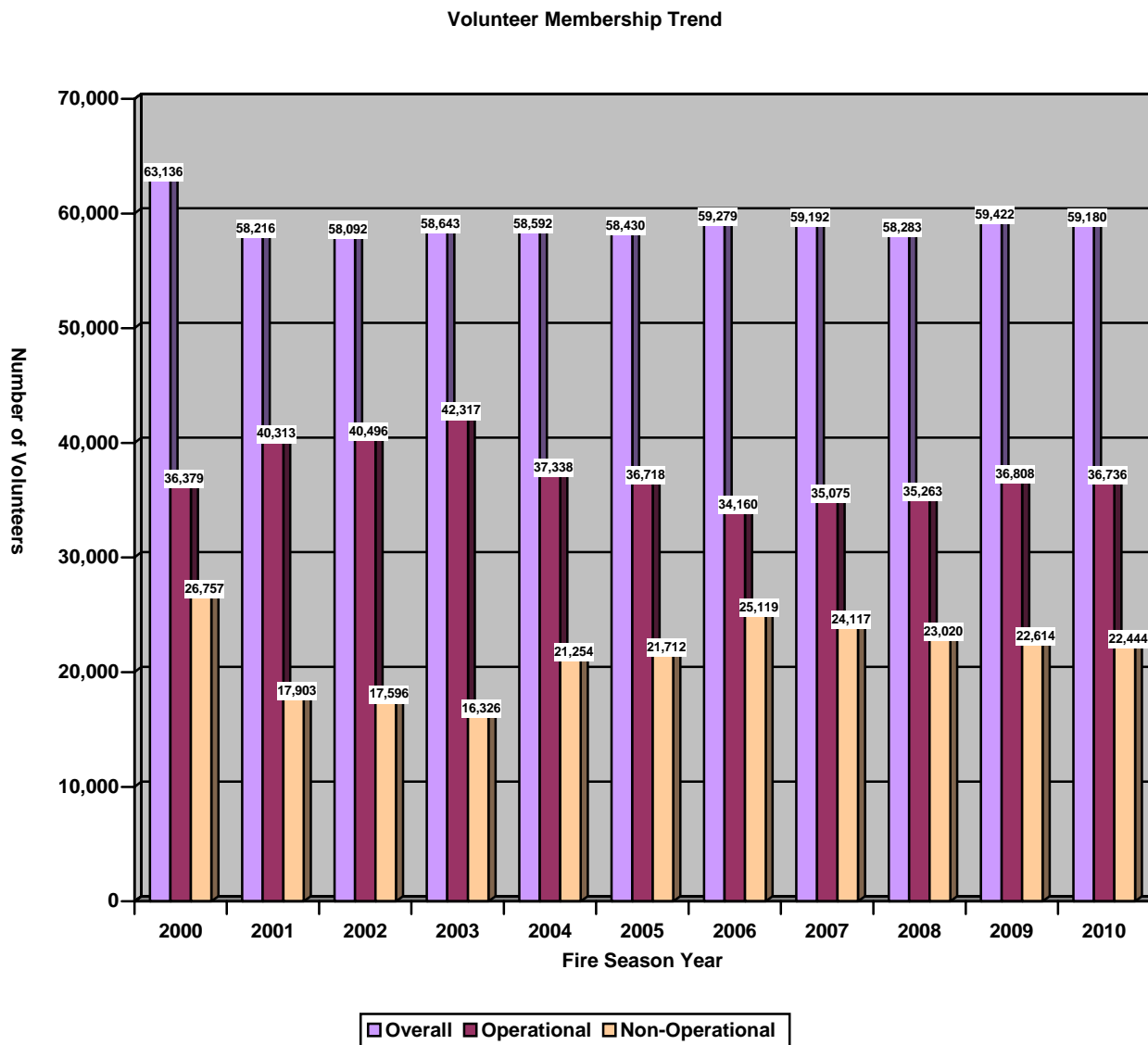
As at May 2011, there are 1,220 CFA brigades. They are significantly diverse. To illustrate this, Mr de Man provided a table analysing four examples of brigades. It is instructive and reproduced below as Table 11.

Table 11: Four examples of brigades within CFA

Brigade	Mitre	Dunkeld	Colac	Bayswater
Location	Region 17 40 km West of Horsham	Region 5 30 km NE of Hamilton	Region 6 71 km West of Geelong	Region 13 26 km East of Melbourne
Calls per year (10 yr av)	8.9	9.5	161.4	468.2
Number of Members:	60	99	67	76
Operational:	39	48	47	40
Non Operational:	21	51	20	36
Population	100-120	444	21,030	56,446
% of population who are CFA members	60%	22%	0.31%	0.13%
Risks	Wildfire Grass lands Crops Haystacks Scrub	Wildfire Grass lands Crops Haystacks Scrub Structural Transport	Structural Transport Hazmat Wildfire Grass lands Crops Haystacks, Scrub	Structural Heavy Industrial Hazmat Transport Wildfire
Firefighting resources	1 CFA Tanker, 1 trailer 25 private units	2 CFA Tankers Slip-on % Quick-fill trailer 18 private units	2 Tankers, 1 Pumper 1 Trailer & Support	1 Pumper, 1 Tanker 1 Breathing Apparatus van
Community Safety programs (BIS = Brigades in schools program)	Fire Ready Victoria every year in one location. Ladies group.	BIS, Fire Ready Victoria, Fire Safety talks as requested, community events.	BIS, Fire safety talks as requested, delivery of Victorian Certificate of Adult Learning.	BIS, Brigades & Industry. Fire safety talks as requested, Hot Spots.
Training	1 organised session per year and a Group exercise.	Not specified, ongoing roadside burn-offs used for training.	CFA specified and brigade set skills maintenance schedule to work around volunteer needs.	6 hours per week min. Also Group/region training.
General	School closed. Tennis club disbanded and not maintained. Small community hall. CFA the only community function left in the district and is very well supported with a majority of the population being CFA members.	CFA members involved in majority of community activities including service and sporting clubs. Shared SES/CFA station. Many CFA members and SES members.	Less involvement in community service and sporting clubs. Most members belong to one or more community organisations.	Few members are involved in other community activities. High level of commitment to CFA activities including training and response to fires and incidents.

The following graph produced by Mr de Man in his statement is reproduced and updated as Diagram 12 and shows membership as at 31 December of each year over a ten-year period.

Diagram 12: Number of Volunteers from 2000 to 2010



Over this period, the following events have affected volunteer numbers as depicted:

- In 2000, Minimum Skills training requirements were introduced. This was fast tracked as a result of the Linton disaster in 1998. There was a five-year transitional period. At the end of 2005, Minimum Skills became mandatory for all members going on to the fire ground, which could explain the increase in operational numbers at this time.
- A CFA database clean up in 2000-01 resulted in a decrease of recorded volunteer members.
- A recruitment campaign for non-operational volunteers from 2000-06 resulted in their membership increasing from 16,326 to 25,119.
- There was an increase in volunteers following the North East Fires in 2003, major fires across Eastern Victoria in 2006 and Black Saturday fires in 2009.

It is difficult to define an 'active' volunteer. The number of times a brigade turns out each year varies widely. In 2010, 711 brigades turned out less than ten times, while 140 brigades turned out over 100 times.

The number of distinct turnouts (operational volunteers that turned out at least once in the relevant period) for 2008 and 2009 are recorded as follows:

- In 2008, 22,069 turnouts representing 62.6% of operational volunteers at that time.
- In 2009, 26,690 turnouts representing 72.5% of operational volunteers at that time.

With respect to resignations, volunteers are required to resign from a brigade before transferring to another. Over the ten years to May 2011, the average number of resignations including transfers each year has been 5,055. A 2004 Report - *Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers: Rural Fire Services*, noted that retention rates within the CFA were higher than any other volunteer fire service in Australia.

The CFA does not conduct exit interviews or receive other formal feedback from volunteers who have resigned. Rather, reliance is placed on conducting surveys of sample groups of current volunteers.

As at May 2011, there were over 47,000 male and over 11,000 female volunteers. The proportion of female volunteers have slowly but steadily increased since 2006. The percentage of females has increased from approximately 18.4% in 2006-07 to 20.3% as at May 2011. Today, approximately one in five CFA volunteers are female and over 5,000 female volunteers are listed as operational members.

Table 13: Age of Volunteers as at May 2011

Age bracket	<16	16-18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Unknown	Total
Total number	2379	1133	5366	6743	9447	12459	11265	9323	212	58,327
Percentage	4.0%	1.9%	9.2%	11.6%	16.2%	21.4%	19.3%	16.0%	0.4%	

It is significant that 35% of volunteers are over 54. The age profile of volunteers and the implications is a continuing theme in this Report.

Currently, approximately 37% of CFA volunteers fall within the 35-55 age bracket, when many are likely to be married, have children of an age requiring considerable parenting, are paying off a mortgage, establishing a farm, career or business or involved in family-related volunteering activities.

The Community Connectedness Report of 2007 collected data from a sample of 20 brigades across the State and analysed it against the census as follows:

- CFA members are more likely to be married when compared to the general population.
- About one in four members surveyed lived on a farm property.
- Members are more likely to have lived at their current address for more than five years than the general community.
- 70% of members work full time compared to 39% of the general community.
- 13% of members are not in paid work compared to 41% of the general community.
- Members were more likely to work in agriculture, forestry and fishing with 44% of CFA members in paid employment in those industries.
- 48% of volunteers surveyed owned their own business.

Of the 1,714 CFA employees, 531 are current serving volunteers and 1,347 have been a volunteer at some stage. 352 volunteers are former CFA employees.

CFA employees are not drawn from volunteers. Volunteers are provided with opportunities, like other members of the community to be employed by the CFA. At times, volunteers gain employment with the CFA. 1,216 CFA employees were volunteers before being employed, or still are, representing 62% of all employees.

Mr de Man puts the position of recruitment of volunteers this way in his statement:

“When they do (that is, volunteers) it is because they are the most appropriately skilled, experienced and qualified person to fulfil that position” (P23).

In other words, volunteers do not receive preferential treatment. Nevertheless, is it a level playing field? Is sufficient weight given to their volunteer experience? Are volunteers inhibited from being engaged as employees? This is an area addressed specifically by the Terms of Reference. Volunteers have expressed strong views about it. This important area is addressed in Chapter 15.

The first level of qualification for a volunteer wishing to be operational is the Wildfire Firefighter Course. Each operational level requires additional training or experience. Supplementary training courses may be undertaken to obtain specific skills.

The progression on the fire ground for a volunteer is:

- Firefighter.
- Crew Leader and Level 1 Incident Controller.
- Strike Team Leader.
- Sector Commander.
- Divisional Commander.

Training of volunteers is a critical part of the operation of the CFA, bearing in mind that it is a volunteer based emergency service. Mr de Man acknowledges that the CFA needs to ensure that its training regime is flexible and identifies the type of training required so that those who would benefit from the training are given every opportunity to undertake it. Ideally, he states, each volunteer would have their own identified training pathway. More must be done to improve training opportunities for volunteers but it is important that training quality is not compromised and that career members and volunteers are given the same standard of training.

Training is a key area addressed by the Terms of Reference and has raised many issues. It is considered in depth in Chapter 16. It is clearly a matter of particular concern to volunteers.

Operational progression to Incident Management Teams (IMTs) often requires the member to undertake approved training and gain relevant experience. The pathway to key Level 3 incident management roles is estimated to take between seven and ten years. The Chief Officer endorsed list showing volunteers endorsed or qualified to hold an IMT role for 2010/11 reveals 768 volunteers holding at least one position of the Level 3 IMT roles.

Mr de Man states in his witness statement to the VBRC that the CFA recognises that the number of volunteers in incident management roles are low and comments:

“It is important that the CFA addresses this moving forward to ensure that the CFA has a sufficient number of appropriately skilled members to fulfil these roles. This process will take a number of years as volunteers of all levels will need to be provided with further training to ensure all incident management roles are filled” (P40).

Mr de Man points out that an extremely low number of volunteers are endorsed as a Level 3 Incident Controller (11 at the time, currently 22) and that CFA must take steps to ensure that volunteers are encouraged to undertake higher level incident management training and ensure that opportunities are provided so that incident management needs continue to be met. Mr de Man noted in his witness statement that a career pathway document for both volunteers and paid members needs to be formally developed, endorsed and implemented by the CFA.

Utilisation of volunteers, particularly in incident management positions, is another important area addressed by the Terms of Reference. Mr de Man refers to, and supports, a Memorandum in August 2007 of the then Chief Officer stressing the need for volunteers to be involved in incident management roles and his expectation that volunteers will be utilised in key roles in every Region. This is a matter that was consistently raised by volunteers in the consultations and is referred to in Chapter 17.

The two primary CFA roles that support volunteers are Operations Officers and Brigade Administrative Support Officers, although all employees have a role. Support of volunteers is another important area addressed by the Terms of Reference and is considered in Chapter 18 in the light of issues arising in relation to it. An Operations Officer or Manager who is employed full-time by CFA cannot also be a volunteer.

The CFA agrees that volunteers should not be paid. However, there is a need to minimise the personal financial cost of volunteering. Volunteers can be reimbursed for accommodation and transport costs and a range of other costs. It appears that this issue is under consideration at a national level by fire authorities. It is a matter that was raised by volunteers in consultations.

An emergency service comprised of volunteers and paid members raises cultural issues and poses challenges. In many respects, these are at the heart of this Inquiry. This is revealed, in particular, by the matters raised in consultations and submissions. They will be addressed in Chapter 13.

Volunteers are the key to the CFA being able to meet its operational commitments across Victoria, which could not be achieved with a fully paid firefighting service. All CFA firefighters, whether paid or volunteer, are trained professionals providing the same level of service. As I stated at the outset, the CFA is one integrated firefighting force, something that must firmly be kept in mind when considering the wide range of issues involved.

04. VOLUNTEER CHARTER

The CFA Volunteer Charter, at Appendix C, is a statement of principles that applies to the relationship between the CFA, the State Government and CFA volunteers. The Charter states that the individual and collective interests and needs of volunteers must be protected if they are to deliver their services safely and effectively.

The original Charter was signed on 22 December 2001, re-signed by the former Government on 25 August 2008, and re-affirmed on 27 February 2011 by the Premier of Victoria, Ted Baillieu, and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Peter Ryan, on behalf of the State of Victoria, Mr Kerry Murphy, Chairman of the CFA, and Mr Hans van Hamond, President of the VFBV.

Several of the key principles in the Volunteer Charter include:

- That CFA recognise that VFBV represents volunteers in general, and ensure there is meaningful consultation, allowing enough time for real involvement, with VFBV on all matters which may impact upon volunteers before the adoption or implementation of any new or changed policies, procedures or approaches;
- That CFA acknowledge that policy development and change should always be considered in terms of its potential to support and facilitate the volunteer contribution and the particular situation of local brigades; and
- That the State of Victoria consult with VFBV on all matters which may impact upon volunteers including proposed legislation and the adequacy of resources to enable volunteers in CFA to deliver the agreed services.

The Charter requires that the CFA recognises and acknowledges that a primary responsibility of the CFA and people employed by the CFA is to nurture and encourage volunteers and facilitate and develop their skills and competencies.

Under the Charter, the CFA is required to provide administrative, operational and infrastructure support to enable volunteers to perform their roles safely and effectively within available resources, as well as support and assistance for volunteers in applying for employment as CFA employees.

VFBV/CFA DEED OF AGREEMENT

On 25 August 2008, the CFA and VFBV signed a Deed of Agreement in conjunction with the re-signing of the Volunteer Charter. The Deed affirms that VFBV will be the single representative body for all CFA volunteers and will advance the interests of CFA volunteer members throughout Victoria. The objectives of the Deed are to:

- Establish a binding agreement that commits CFA and VFBV to actively support the principles, commitments and undertakings set out in the Volunteer Charter;
- Recognise, support and provide a mechanism for the ongoing review of existing consultative structures relating to the Volunteer Charter;
- Establish and maintain a management structure, including a Consultative Group and Joint Board Forum, to implement the Volunteer Charter; and
- Establish good governance principles for CFA and VFBV in relation to ongoing support and implementation of the Volunteer Charter and the principles, commitments and undertakings set out in it.

VFBV submits that this Deed provides focus and structure, but to work, it will require a genuine desire to engage, and recognition by CFA of the legitimate role VFBV has been established to perform and as an asset to CFA in the delivery of the CFA Act.

The Deed will expire in August 2011, when a new Deed will be negotiated.

VOLUNTEER CHARTER LEGISLATION

In October 2010, as part of the Government's election commitments, the Minister committed to enshrining the Volunteer Charter into legislation. This was in response to concerns raised by VFBV to all members of Parliament prior to the State election regarding the continual lack of consultation with volunteers by the CFA, especially in relation to the negotiations for the CFA/UFU Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement 2010, of which the impact on CFA volunteers is explored further in this Report.

The Country Fire Authority Amendment (Volunteer Charter) Bill 2011 was introduced by Minister Ryan into Parliament on 1 March 2011 and came into operation on 11 May 2011. The Bill amends the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* to require CFA, in performing its functions, to have regard to the commitment and principles set out in the Volunteer Charter.

The Volunteer Charter legislation is, as the Minister noted in his Second Reading Speech to Parliament, “...an important milestone in the history of the CFA”. It recognises, for the first time in the CFA Act, that the CFA is first and foremost, a volunteer-based organisation, in which volunteers are supported by employees in a fully integrated manner.

The Volunteer Charter requires that the Government of Victoria and CFA consult with VFBV on behalf of CFA volunteers, prior to making a decision on any matter that might reasonably be expected to affect them. This is now recognised in the CFA Act. The explanatory notes to the legislation clarify that the consultation requirement would include matters such as recruitment, training and support programs but is intended to exclude operational matters such as the deployment of brigades in a fire or emergency incident.

The Volunteer Charter legislation further creates a responsibility on the CFA to develop policy and organisational arrangements that encourage, maintain and strengthen the capacity of volunteers to provide CFA’s services. The explanatory notes to the legislation clarify that this is intended to include the provision of administrative, training, operational and infrastructure support to ensure that volunteers will have the necessary resources to enable them to deliver CFA services now and into the future.

05. INFORMATION GATHERING

The Inquiry has gathered a substantial body of information relevant to the Terms of Reference from a wide and diverse range of sources. This is now reviewed.

05.1 WEBSITE

A website was established at www.cfavolunteersinquiry.vic.gov.au to disseminate information as widely as possible about the Inquiry. It has been of great assistance, particularly in receiving submissions. Those interested in the Inquiry have been easily able to find out what it is about and how they can provide input, such as through lodging a submission.

As at the time of reporting, the website has received 1,249 hits. Appendix D is the content of the website.

05.2 INFORMATION LINE

In addition to the website, an Information Line was established to provide information for those that did not have access to the internet or who would rather talk to someone over the phone about the Inquiry. Information Victoria kindly set up the 1800 phone number and received incoming calls relating to the Inquiry. The majority of calls received related to providing a submission.

At the time of reporting, the Information Line had received 28 enquiries.

05.3 DOCUMENTATION

A considerable amount of documentation has been obtained by the Inquiry. The CFA has been very responsive and helpful to requests for documents and their co-operation through Mr Lex de Man is appreciated. Documents have also been provided by the VFBV and their assistance is appreciated.

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission record, including its Final Report, has been utilised where relevant. Documents have been received from a number of other sources. It is not necessary to list them.

05.4 SUBMISSIONS

A strong response was received to the call for submissions. 76 submissions were received. Many were from volunteers and brigades.

Comprehensive submissions have been received from the CFA and VFBV. A submission was not received from the United Firefighters Union (UFU). On 25 May 2011, the following email was sent to Mr Peter Marshall, Secretary of the UFU.

“The deadline for submissions has now expired and I note that the UFU has not provided a submission. I presume, therefore, that the UFU does not wish to participate in the Inquiry. I respect the position that the UFU takes regarding the Inquiry but would be grateful if you could confirm that you did not intend to participate, or if the position is otherwise, what involvement you wish to pursue.”

At the time of reporting, a response had not been received from the UFU.

Table 14 below shows a representation of submissions received.

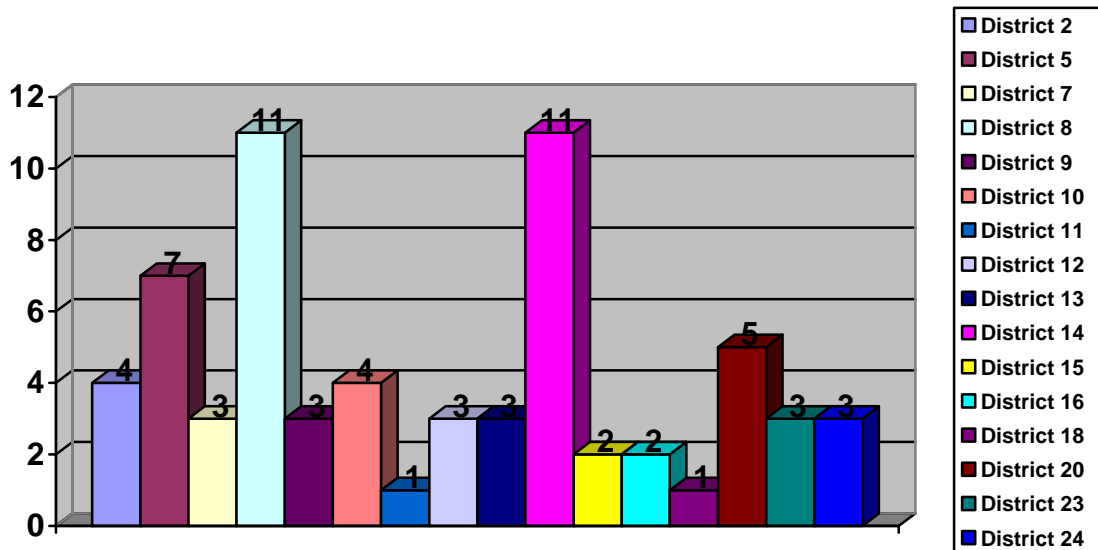
Table 14: Representation of submissions received

Submissions received from	Number received
Individual Volunteers	56
Brigades	13
Organisations	6
Did not disclose	1
Total	76

Of the 76 submissions received, 56 were from individual volunteers, 13 from brigades, six from organisations and one undisclosed as to whether a volunteer or not.

Diagram 15 represents the Districts from which submissions were received by volunteers and brigades.

Diagram 15: Submissions received by Districts



The input from all submitters is appreciated and has been considered. Many are quite detailed and comprehensive and would have involved considerable time and effort. I am grateful to all submitters for their interest in the Inquiry. It is not practicable to set out in the Report a summary of each submission. However, where necessary, reference may be made to particular submissions in the course of the Report.

A number of submissions referred to particular grievances in relation to brigade disputes and management. It is not a function of this Inquiry to investigate and resolve specific grievances raised in submissions. To the extent that such grievances give rise to systemic issues, they are considered as part of the Inquiry. I will say more about this in Chapter 19.

COMMENT

Generally speaking, matters raised in submissions, particularly from volunteers and brigades, are similar to matters raised in consultations, which are referred to next. Although I respect the decision of the UFU not to lodge a submission, I am nonetheless disappointed, as I believe the Inquiry could have been assisted by their input.

05.5 CONSULTATIONS

Although volunteers had the opportunity to lodge a submission, it was important to be able to speak personally to them and thereby hear their voices and interact with them.

To enable this to be done, the Inquiry established a number of volunteer consultations throughout the State. The assistance of Mr Lex de Man from the CFA in arranging these consultations is acknowledged and appreciated. Those intending to attend had the opportunity beforehand to consult with colleagues about matters they wished to be raised. The consultations took place at Dandenong, Werribee, Kerang, Wangaratta, Hamilton and Sale for a period of two hours. Thus, volunteers from outer suburban Melbourne, regional cities and rural areas were able to attend. A good cross-section of volunteers attended from across the State.

COMMENT

The consultations were facilitated by me and were relatively informal but structured to maximise input. They focused on the areas covered by the Terms of Reference. Participants were encouraged to express their views frankly and did so. They were also encouraged to look at systemic issues, identify where there are problems and how they might be improved and did so. As will be apparent, although there are some variations, the volunteers at the consultations were generally “singing the same song”. Inevitably, having regard to the nature of the consultations, the focus was on concerns and issues rather than positive remarks about their involvement with the CFA, which they clearly value. Their comments and views were based on their experiences but also revealed perceptions they had developed from their involvement as volunteers.

Prior to the start of each consultation, I explained that I was approaching this Inquiry and the consultations in a positive manner and I asked those present to look at systemic issues and make suggestions for improvements. I clarified that this was not an Inquiry into industrial agreements. I explained that arrangements reflected in such agreements may affect volunteers in a number of ways, and on that basis, the Inquiry is looking at arrangements and their effect on volunteers.

A summary of each consultation now follows. The background information referred to was provided by the CFA. It is practicable to follow this course with the consultations, whereas it is not with the submissions. Both are important sources of information to the Inquiry. The particular value of the consultations was to have face-to-face discussion about the issues.

However, they are summaries and not a verbatim record and therefore, not every comment has been included, but all have been considered and taken into account.

05.5.1 DANDENONG

Venue: Drum Theatre, Dandenong

Date: Wednesday 11 May 2011 - 6.30pm to 8.30pm

Attendees

The consultation held in Dandenong saw volunteers from two different CFA Regions in attendance, being the Southern Metropolitan Region (District 8) and the Eastern Metropolitan Region (District 13). In total, approximately 50 volunteers attended. Attendees from the Southern Metropolitan Region included volunteers representing the VFBV District 8 Council and District 8 Group of Brigades. Attendees from the Eastern Metropolitan Region included volunteers from a range of brigades and areas, including VFBV representatives.

Volunteers attended from the following areas, brigades and groups: Langwarrin, Berwick, Eastern Metro Region, Southern Metro Region, Clematis, Gembrook, Bittern, Pakenham Upper, Lang Lang, Peninsula Group, VFBV District 8 Council, Moorooduc, Mt Martha, VFBV District 13 Council, Maroondah Group, the Basin, Dandenong, Knox Group, South Coast Group, Patterson River, Monbulk, Frankston, Silvan, Little Yarra, Yarra Valley Group, Dromana and Hastings.

Background

The Southern Metropolitan Region (District 8) has a predominantly urban demographic with the majority of incidents (approximately 10,000 annually) being industrial or residential fires. The Region has a population of approximately 941,000 people and an expected growth rate of 12% over the next ten years. District 8 covers approximately 3,300 square kilometres and is served by approximately 3,200 volunteers, 146 career firefighters and 63 full time and casual staff. The Region has 61 volunteer brigades, 8 integrated brigades, 5 Coast Guard brigades and 6 Groups.

The region risk profile covers a broad range of risks including industrial, commercial, urban residential, remote residential, agricultural and peri-urban wildfire. The Region provides services across the local government areas - Greater Dandenong, Frankston, Casey, Cardinia, Bass Coast, Mornington Peninsula and part of Kingston. District 8 brigades are also highly skilled in and responsible for:

- Road Accident Rescue.
- Emergency Medical Response (first responders).
- High Angle Rescue.
- Hazardous Materials response.
- Urban Search and Rescue, Trench Rescue and Rope Rescue.

The Eastern Metropolitan Region (District 13) provides service delivery to a complex mix of areas and communities, spanning over 3,310 square kilometres with a population of over 370,000. The Region covers a growing growth corridor from the mountain ranges including Kinglake, to the Upper Yarra areas and much of the Dandenong Ranges. One third of the Region's geography includes state or national forest (public land). The Region provides services to a diverse range of industry and commerce, viticulture, urban and remote residential and peri-urban wildfire. There are over 3,000 volunteers in the Eastern Metropolitan Region across 69 fire brigades. There is also a number of staff supporting several integrated brigades.

Summary of Consultation

Training

There was consensus that scheduling of training needs to be more flexible and improved to include more availability at times when volunteers can attend. Many volunteers work full-time and are unable to attend sessions during the working week, while others are able to.

Location of training is important and should be at the local brigade wherever possible. For other training, there were concerns that once travel is involved, it has an inverse ratio, being that the further the distance to travel and the longer the duration of the course, the less inclined volunteers are to make the commitment. The closer it can be, the more inclined and motivated they are to have the training.

There was discussion about online training possibly through the proposed National Broadband Network (NBN). I suggested NBN presents an opportunity to improve flexible delivery where appropriate for volunteer training.

The structure of courses is a problem - not flexible in delivery, that is, a five-day course could be offered in segments of one day per week over five weeks. The view was expressed that there is a need for workable and effective modules of competencies, which should be done efficiently and by everyone.

Concerns were expressed as to a lack of availability of places for First Aid training for volunteers.

It was raised that training needs to be practical but volunteers have lost the ability to do practical training. What is needed is a system to keep it simple and keep everyone trained to the same standards. There are volunteers with different skills but sometimes their skills are not recognised.

The degree of training required for incident management roles was raised as a problem. There is not enough opportunity and flexibility to enable volunteers to improve their skills.

Problems with the CFA employing instructors due to industrial agreements were raised. Concerns were raised about lack of access to the Vector training and a shortage of Wildfire and Structural instructors. There was discussion about the availability of career members for training.

Training Pathways

Career members have a training pathway but volunteers do not. This makes it difficult for volunteers to progress beyond Minimum Skills. CFA should develop a career pathway for volunteers that are the same as for career members.

Cost of Travel

Reimbursement of cost of travel for meetings and training for volunteers was discussed and there were suggestions for improvement.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)/ Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC)

Problems were raised about the difficulty of gaining RPL or RCC. It was expressed that it is easier to do the course rather than apply for RPL. A volunteer suggested, as an example, my previous legal qualifications as a Judge would probably not be recognised in the 'Introduction to Law' course for CFA volunteers and it would be easier for me to do the course.

Transfer Process

It was pointed out that if a volunteer wanted to transfer from one brigade to another, they would have to resign from that brigade, re-apply, obtain another police record check and be on probation again. They cannot simply transfer.

Recruitment

The view was expressed that the recruitment process is too slow. Brigades recruit volunteers but they often do not want to wait six months for the Minimum Skills course to be held, before they can turn out to incidents.

The view was expressed that some move on for the right reasons but some leave because of frustration with the long wait before they can put in or provide any input. There should be a vision in the organisation - maybe a little less theory and a lot of mentoring.

A volunteer pointed out that District 8 lose people every year due to work, education or sea change. Some brigades conduct an exit survey but the majority do not. There is no process through CFA for a mandatory exit interview.

I referred to the ethnic diversity in some areas and whether the CFA should be aiming recruitment at the next generation. Examples were given of where it would appear cultural backgrounds are not in sync with volunteering, it is just not part of their culture. Hopefully, the next generation will become involved.

It was raised that, at Berwick, jobs are tighter and there is difficulty in taking time off for training. There is no legislative support that allows payment to an employer when a volunteer takes time off to attend a course. In the private sector, this can be a disincentive to employ CFA volunteers. There was discussion about this. Some form of legislative support for employers was suggested.

The view was expressed that the CFA used to be a volunteer organisation supported by paid staff but since about six to eight years ago, CFA seems to have lost their way and have changed to a career organisation supported by volunteers – or that is the view at least. There was concern that new volunteers will not have the variety of experience gained in the past.

Juniors

The difficulties in getting volunteers to assist with the Junior program was raised and it was emphasised that it was important for CFA to be involved at schools.

The need to invest in young people was raised. When they go to University, there should be a mentoring system. There is a need to involve them in primary/secondary schools and retain them when they become adults.

Recruitment of volunteers as employees

No lateral entry is regarded as a significant problem. There was strong agreement that volunteer experience is not taken into account. Volunteers would like to be able to do everything they can within their abilities, participate at all levels, and contribute to the CFA. Volunteers want value placed on their qualifications and experience. Volunteers want the opportunity to pursue firefighting as a vocation.

Occupational Health and Safety and Fatigue

There was a discussion about fatigue bearing in mind the work commitments of volunteers. The view was expressed that fatigue is being handled better these days.

What are the five most important things volunteers want to be done?

The group was asked to identify things that could be done to enable volunteers to better serve the community. They suggested the following:

- Identify impacts of industrial agreements on volunteers.
- Give volunteers a say in local level management.
- See improved communication in rural communities.
- Recognise that the support mechanism required is different in each region. Outer-metro growing – needs some shifting of resources. Match the resources to the needs.
- Joint committees and joint strategies with paid staff and volunteers as the staff numbers increase.
- Brigade management – election of officers for HR matters to be dealt with better.
- Volunteers want a say in how the CFA works– want to be consulted during, not after the event.
- VFBV to be involved in decision-making.

COMMENT

As will be apparent, the discussion at the consultation was wide-ranging and lively. The volunteers present are committed and passionate about their role. They were predominately about 60 years in age with very few under 40 and very few women. They reflected senior experienced brigade members who are clearly concerned about the future of volunteers in the CFA.

05.5.2 WERRIBEE

Venue: Wyndham City Council Civic Centre

Date: Thursday 12 May 2011 - 6.30pm to 8.30pm

Attendees

Volunteers attending were from a diverse geographical area, including the Barwon South West Region (Districts 6 and 7), the Northern & Western Metropolitan Region (District 14) and the Grampians Region (District 15).

Approximately 50 volunteers attended from the following areas, brigades and groups: Toolern Vale, Smythesdale, South Morang, Coastal Group, District 6, District 7, Bellarine Group, Burrumbeet, Whittlesea, Hume Group, Kalkallo, Plenty, Hoppers Crossing, Lovely Banks, Anakie Group, Craigieburn, Sunbury, Lara, Winchelsea Group, Inverleigh, Kingston, Newlyn Dean, Creswick, Grampians, District 14 and Truganina.

Background

Districts 6 and 7 cover the Geelong, Barwon and Bellarine areas, including Colac and Otway Ranges. District 14 covers the outer metropolitan northern and western areas of Melbourne including urban areas ranging from Melton and Werribee across to areas such as St Andrews in the north. District 15 is part of the Grampians region and includes Ballarat and broader regional areas to the West.

Summary of Consultation

The majority age group at the consultation was between 60 to 70 years of age. Two women were present but it was stated that the number of female volunteers was increasing. I asked the group to provide feedback on the following issues, which had been identified at an earlier consultation.

Recruitment

In District 6, township brigades can recruit easily but in rural (for example, Rural Shelford – soldier settlement) areas, it is more difficult. Other examples were provided. Some volunteers start at 16 years old but are lost at 18 years when they leave town. It is difficult to retain younger members.

Reference was made to a recent recruit drive that occurred in the Craigieburn area and involved secondary schools. Reference was made to South Morang where there is no need for such a recruitment drive as there are more enquiries than there are vacancies. They have a good percentage of young people and women. Looking at the demographics of rural Victoria, younger people are not in the community anymore. With respect to Doreen, it is harder to recruit the 18 to 32 age group.

It was pointed out that retention of volunteers is very important because there is a lot of time and effort put in to training people. They become part of the brigade and there is disruption to the group if they leave. The CFA is not following up on why volunteers are leaving – there is no structured exit process. The CFA do not receive a true picture as to why they leave.

There is a perception that the outer Melbourne area is MFESB not CFA and a perception that volunteers only do wildfire in summer.

Suggestions made to increase CFA recruitment:

- Promote volunteer recruitment from a marketing and public relations perspective.
- Provide encouragement with school programs in outer metro areas.
- Community thinking has changed. The older generation helped out and joined the CFA to assist their community but the younger generation want to know what they can get out of the CFA – there is a shift in thinking which needs to be addressed by the CFA to encourage younger people to join the CFA.
- Advertise the skills that can be obtained from the CFA that are transferable to other situations in life, for example, leadership skills gained from being a CFA volunteer.

Record Keeping

I pointed out that problems had already been identified with record keeping, which has a flow on effect when transferring from one brigade to another. I suggested there should be a computerised profile of every volunteer, which includes all his or her details, training and endorsements.

First Aid Training

It was pointed out that First Aid Training can be utilised outside of the CFA but training numbers are capped. Brigade Operational Skills Profiles state how many First Aiders are required; this presents a problem if volunteers do not maintain their First Aid qualifications.

Training

There is frustration if volunteers are unable to put their skills to use. They become disillusioned. Reference was made to problems being able to access training at higher levels now that accreditation is so important. Volunteers agreed that shorter sharper training courses are preferred.

It was pointed out that there are difficulties for volunteers when the pre-requisite for incident management roles is offered at Fiskville on a Monday to Friday between 9am to 5pm. Incident management roles are not available to volunteers who would like them to be. There was general discussion on the availability of Fiskville for volunteers.

It was pointed out that in District 15 - Kingston - when floods occurred, volunteers assisted the Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) although they were not trained or equipped. It was their community duty to do so.

It was stated that there is an increasing requirement in the standards of training. However, the standards are uneven and are applied differently across Districts. Volunteers were in general agreement that there is a need for consistency in training across the board.

There is a failure to keep pace with 'train the trainers' and there are limits on who can present training. Getting volunteers trained to be able to train advanced subjects is a problem. This is falling to paid firefighters, as the availability is just not there; therefore, training for volunteers is reducing.

It was stated there is a lack of appreciation of the Certificate IV in training for volunteers. The CFA used to provide Certificate IV training for volunteers, but now they only provide certain parts of the course.

It was stated that in the Bellarine Group, about 10% had joined the CFA with the purpose of being a career firefighter, which was positive because they continue being volunteers, which works well

and needs to be encouraged. However, there is sometimes pressure from career colleagues about them continuing as volunteers, the inference being they are doing someone out of a job.

Concern was expressed that there is an attitude that volunteer training is inferior to career member training.

Fatigue

It was suggested that perhaps volunteers need some form of paperwork if they have been out all night to give an employer to ensure the safety of its employees, for example, if a volunteer is required to work on machinery after being up all night attending an incident.

Consultation

It was stated that it is important for volunteers to be on recruitment selection panels, especially for Operations Officers and Manager positions, which are the most important roles dealing with volunteers.

Further, Operations Officers need to be trained in human resource matters, including disciplinary matters. Some are not well trained in this area.

A view was expressed that operational decisions were influenced by industrial agreements and not resulting from group and brigade representative discussion.

Deployment

The '*Hurry up and wait*' situation was raised. The view was expressed that as an organisation, the CFA need to be more professional so that volunteers were not wasting time sitting idle when unnecessary. It was felt there were communication issues between brigades. One volunteer summed up the position "*we just want to put the wet stuff on the red stuff and go home*". 90% of volunteers just want to do their duty to their community but are restricted in relation to lack of communication from CFA, deployment and training.

Overall, there is a feeling by volunteers that their experience is not valued.

COMMENT

Again, the discussion was wide-ranging and lively, with volunteers being frank in their views. They are mainly in the twilight of their CFA involvement. There was a strong view that their experience and training was not valued and they were not given the opportunity to undertake training and be involved at all levels of the CFA.

05.5.3 KERANG

Venue: Kerang Bowls Club

Date: Sunday 15 May 2011 - 3pm to 5pm

Attendees

Volunteers attending were from the Loddon Mallee Region (Districts 2, 18 and 20) and included VFBV representatives and a diversity of brigades from urban to rural areas.

Approximately 50 volunteers attended from the following areas, brigades and groups: Macedon, Eaglehawk, Donald, Kerang, Loddon South Group, Romsey Group, Hopetoun West, Riddells Creek, Maldon, Irymple and Sunraysia Group, Merbein, Echuca, Beulah, Northern Campaspe Group, Lockington, Metcalfe Group, Rosebery, Rochester, Dumosa, Ouyen and Murrayville.

Background

The Loddon Mallee Region runs from the Macedon Ranges Shire, through to Bendigo and the goldfields district, north to the Murray River and West to Swan Hill, Mildura and the South Australian Border. Geography is a great challenge within this Region. This Region covers 59,000 square kilometres, being 27% of the land area of Victoria.

Between its northwest and southwest extremities, the region spans 520 kilometres or 6.5 hours travel time. The region services a population of 317,175 (ABS 2009 paid firefighters at two integrated brigades (Bendigo and Mildura).

The Loddon Mallee Region has a membership demographic of 78% male and 22% female and is an ageing demographic. The Region includes 199 Brigades within 25 Groups and features the specialist 'Oscar One' Mine Rescue Team. Service delivery across the Region includes wildfire, structure, road accident rescue and mine rescue (and a range of other incident types). In the first quarter of 2010-11 (July-September), Loddon Mallee Region brigades responded to 50 bushfires/grassfires, 212 structural fires, 105 motor vehicle accidents and 99 other incidents.

Summary of Consultation

Brigade Demographics

The majority of the volunteers at the consultation were between 60-70 years of age. Two women were present in the room and they noted that many brigades utilize women as active volunteers.

There was discussion on brigade member demographics and training. Swan Hill was noted as the largest volunteer brigade represented, with 120 members and several hundred calls a year. Some smaller brigades respond to less than 20 calls a year. Examples were given of small rural brigades and their need to look after houses and homes just like other brigades, even though they may only have a couple of calls a year.

Recruitment

It was raised that CFA seem to have made a simple process difficult over the years. Issue of the probation period was raised, including the need to pass police checks and need to travel to training venues to complete training.

One Group Officer suggested that there is a need to focus on attracting older people as volunteers and that this needs to include the option for these people to do Minimum Skills and let them just stick to that if they want to - do not make them feel like they have to keep upgrading their skills.

There was discussion on retaining young people, including the challenges of keeping training interesting for the younger generation.

Training

There was agreement that each brigade would like to run their own training. This was clarified as skills maintenance only as "*we do not have the Certificate IV so we are unable to do the actual training*". Volunteers want as much training as possible to be held at their own brigade.

There was discussion on the differences in training courses and duration. Some examples were given. Suggestions were made as to how this could be improved, including doing theory at home or at the brigade to reduce the need to travel on nights and weekends. It was suggested that there should be an online library where volunteers can view, or order, training materials.

Rural stations or quiet stations should have training at the station and then the assessor should come to the station (on a Saturday). Urban stations should have a mix, and volunteers should be able to do some of their training in different places.

Only a few volunteers present were accredited to conduct or assess training. There was discussion about integrated stations and the impact of industrial agreements on training. Mildura was given as an example. Staff there have recently commenced supporting the training of volunteers at Mildura but cannot train surrounding brigades.

Reference was made to new mobile training props but there was no consultation about them with volunteer groups. There was discussion on access to and distance from training grounds. The problem is that volunteers just cannot get there. Specialist skills and access to training were raised and discussed.

It was said that there is no consistency across the CFA. There are essentially 20 CFAs, not one. An example was given of a brigade that recently moved from one District to another and noticed a major difference, especially in the availability and delivery of training. The training and development department writes the courses. Each region then delivers as they see fit, with the budgets they have available and allocated. Course cancellations were noted as an issue.

There was discussion about the level of training required. A volunteer referred to an example of Breathing Apparatus (BA) training - he said his brigade has 40 members. Their risk profile says they need ten members with BA but they only have eight members with BA, who are not available much of the time. There is no instructor available in their region to provide more BA training for new members.

The amount of paperwork required is an issue. Sometimes, too much training is required and can lead to volunteers leaving. For example, a volunteer said that the new driver training should not be required for people who have been driving trucks professionally for years.

It was accepted the CFA cannot afford to train everyone, but the CFA could train 'smarter' if volunteers were able to mentor people and train them locally. Mentoring was discussed as a theme, and raised by one younger person in the room. Mentoring is seen as a smart and good way to train.

First Aid

There was discussion on caps on training for First Aid at brigades. Courses are not available for First Aid and keep getting cancelled. The current proposal to increase First Aid is good but is based on faulty statistics.

RPL/RCC

It was stated that an ambulance officer in a brigade left when the brigade could not get him recognized as having First Aid qualifications. Other examples were given.

Record Keeping

Volunteers commented on record keeping. They cannot enter their information into the FIRS system. The issue of tracking of skills and service history was discussed - paper based processes at brigades were outlined.

Skills Maintenance

Skills maintenance needs to be recognized as having greater value - success of the performance in 2009 bushfires, for example, was not just due to training but also maintenance of skills.

Consultation

The view was expressed that the CFA need to get out amongst the volunteers more and be on the same page as volunteers. There was discussion on the difference between consultation and communication that is one way. There was discussion on how can consultation can be improved. The comment was made that VFBV have no access to CFA member records so they are unable to contact volunteers to gather their views.

Groups

Defining the role of the Group was discussed at some length.

Support

In terms of the people that support volunteers, there is an Operations Officer, a Brigade Administrative Support Officer and maybe a training manager.

Volunteers do not see the regional manager and the staff anymore. They used to see them. Staff need to get out of their offices more. Operations Officers used to come and see the Group Officers, now volunteers have to go to them. This is not a reflection on local management; it is just the amount of work they have to do now.

COMMENT

A geographically dispersed group, with one committed volunteer coming from as far as Murrayville. Views were expressed frankly but constructively. There was a strong view about training equating to the level of skill required. Many brigades are small rural with few callouts. The lack of consultation is a common concern, as is skills maintenance.

05.5.4 WANGARATTA

Venue: Quality Hotel Wangaratta Gateway

Date: Monday 16 May 2011 - 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

Attendees

Volunteers attending were from the Hume Region (Districts 12, 22, 23 and 24), including VFBV representatives from some Districts.

Approximately 50 volunteers attended from the following areas, brigades and groups: Wangaratta North, Bowser, Mitchell Shire, Numurkah, Benalla, Devenish, Alexandra, Yea, Corryong, Euroa, Rodney, Violet Town, Tawonga, Wodonga, Wodonga West and Bright.

Background

The Hume Region spans a broad geographic area of 43,500 km with a population of approximately 260,000 and a range of different risk profiles. The region runs from Stawell in the South, through to Shepparton and the northern eastern and alpine districts of Victoria. This area includes large tracts of public land (state and national forests), rural areas and urban townships. The Hume Region is served by approximately 12,000 volunteers and supported by 151 paid firefighters, operational and administrative staff. There are 227 brigades and 24 Groups in the Hume Region.

Summary of Consultation

Recruitment

A comment was made that some rural communities do not have waitlists. If people come along, those brigades generally take them. Some rural brigades may have a high number of members but only a few active members.

It was pointed out that about 25 years ago, TAFE in Wangaratta offered an agricultural course, which included some fire training. Most people who completed the course joined their local CFA and remained members. This was before Minimum Skills came in.

Some young people gain basic skills and then leave because they have moved to another area, but a barrier is that they must de-register and re-apply, they cannot be transferred. There is a need to go through probation again. No formal career path at CFA to bring new volunteers in is a barrier to recruitment.

Younger Recruits

Mansfield runs a Minimum Skills course at schools and have picked up a couple of kids but do not keep them. They hope to get them later. At the end of the course, they are wildfire firefighters at 16-17 years of age.

Some areas just do not have younger people, they have moved away for work or university. Hard to retain once they go off to university. Some people fall away, especially in smaller towns. Some want to join but do not want to wait so long to do the Minimum Skills training. A positive is that the young ones have the IT skills that some of the older volunteers do not have. They can assist at Incident Control Centres (ICC).

Training

It was pointed out that there is too much emphasis on theoretical and not enough on practical skills. Some volunteers felt basic skills go too far and they are being over trained having regard to the risk of their brigade. There was consensus that basic training, particularly at brigade level, should be determined by the requirements of the region. Training and qualifications should be commensurate with that risk.

It was raised that the lack of systems are barriers to volunteer training. Difficult to keep up with training demands. Training requirements seem to always be changing. Equipment familiarisation every season needs to be done but not all brigades do it.

Generally, volunteers can be involved in training, but not as involved as they could be. It is not just a matter of delivering training on a volunteer basis but where appropriate, it should be on a paid basis. The suitability of a trainer should be taken into account, regardless of whether being a paid or volunteer member. Some courses are being cancelled because of lack of staff; paid firefighters can only do so much.

There is always short notice for courses. The training department contacts volunteers directly when training comes up but if that training is not taken up, others could fill those places but the brigade does not know. The course is sometimes cancelled due to lack of numbers.

Volunteers are not eligible to be structural instructors, and positions are unable to be filled. Volunteers feel they become disenfranchised when they are unable to train people when they

have previously. Volunteers want to be involved in doing training. There is concern that is not occurring. There is not sufficient utilisation of volunteers to provide training - not enough taking place at brigades. This relates to skills acquisition and skills maintenance.

There is a need for statewide standards and more guidance from CFA regarding maintenance of skills. There should be standard assessment criteria. Skills maintenance is neglected. There is no criteria for skills maintenance. There is a lack of consistency and guidance about what should be delivered. Volunteers do not need someone to do it; they can do it at the brigade level but need some guidance, criteria and/or guidelines.

There is frustration that volunteers are not being able to achieve higher-level positions, but this comes down to training availability. Minimum Skills need to be brought up to date (for example, not taught how to use a chainsaw).

The further volunteers have to travel, the less likely they want to be involved. Generally, once the travel time goes beyond an hour it becomes difficult. Generally, training as far as possible should take place at the brigade. There is a lack of flexibility in training.

Brigade Administrative Support Officer (BASO)

BASO time is taken up with District administrative matters. More administrative assistance is required by brigades.

Record Keeping

There is no system for recording training on a person's record. There needs to be an improved record keeping system. A centralised system is required. Brigades are unable to access training records and are advised by the CFA that the reason is privacy issues. This makes it hard to plan. There are systemic problems with software used by the CFA.

Consultation and Communication

The development of a process for Level 3 incident controllers is an example of good consultation. However, usually, the CFA only provide short notice for consultation on issues, if at all. Volunteers do not feel like their opinions or experience is valued. When decisions are made, there is not enough time to relay to the community. An example is the boundary changes, where consultation was lacking and disenfranchised volunteers, particularly those whose boundaries changed. Volunteers are often the last ones notified but first ones affected.

Some CFA employees do not understand the CFA volunteer role. The role of Groups and the Group structure has become a grey area. This needs to be defined.

Reimbursement of Volunteers

Reimbursement of expenses of volunteers needs to be reconsidered and widened to include, for example, use of vehicles and mobile phones.

COMMENT

Again, the participation by volunteers was lively and frank. Key themes were training, recruitment and consultation. The importance of volunteers carrying out training at brigades was emphasised together with the need for flexibility. The need to recruit and then retain young volunteers was raised, with suggestions as to how this might be done.

05.5.5 HAMILTON

Venue: Hamilton Performing Arts Centre

Date: Wednesday 18 May 2011 - 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

Attendees

Volunteers attending were from the Barwon South West Region (Districts 4 and 5) and the Grampians Region (Districts 16 and 17). Approximately 50 volunteers attended.

Background

Districts 16 and 17 span Stawell, Ararat, Horsham and Nhill, through to the South Australian border. Districts 4 and 5 span the far South West of Victoria, from the southern coastline including Warrnambool and Portland, north to Hamilton and Casterton and west to the South Australian Border. The area is predominantly populated with rural brigades. However, there are also some major towns, key infrastructure and industry risks managed including the port at Portland, and large plantation areas in the South West, and large public land areas such as the Grampians.

Summary of Consultation

Recruitment

Hamilton brigade recently had a recruitment drive, motivated by its target of active members. There was a need to replace departing members and it was aimed at having their recruits ready by the fire season. There was advertising in the local paper and signs on streets. Local schools were also involved.

Most brigades run junior programs. Warrnambool gain recruits from their junior program, but are unable to find enough time to train them. Training requires a lot of resources, even with career members. This seems to be an issue across the board. However, you need the ability to train so recruits can have some basic involvement. Otherwise, if recruits have to wait six months and have not been able to do anything in that time, they leave after their interest wanes. This is more of a problem in urban areas.

There are difficulties in attracting and retaining young brigade members. The CFA has to think about the sustainability of volunteers providing emergency services assisted by paid staff rather than a paid service assisted by volunteers. Need to have replacements for the more senior members who will not be around forever. The volunteer 'army', by and large, is getting older and they need to take into account their physical limitations. A progression/succession plan needs to be implemented.

Barrier to Retention

If volunteers move, we need to make it easier for them to return. When they go away to university, they should be able to be utilised during the holidays when they come home, particularly during the summer fire period. The CFA and brigades should be working with the Department of Education to target secondary schools to get training and skills into schools.

Training

There is a need for flexible training to suit the commitments of the members in the area. If a course goes on for a few days, there are fewer volunteers likely to be able to take the time off work. There is a need for shorter/sharper courses. There needs to be a balance between practical

and theory. Technology such as the NBN offers limitless opportunities for the CFA to deliver programs/materials and to be able to communicate with volunteers.

The fundamental message is that volunteers want training and maintenance of skills done at their brigade (where possible and practical) by volunteers. The preference is that training is conducted locally by local people. Volunteers should decide what to train to meet the needs of the brigade, not national standards – the degree of training should fit the risk that the brigade is likely to encounter.

Brigades need the ability to tailor training to their own individual Brigade. However, it is accepted that the standards are up to the Chief Officer. Common sense needs to be applied but legal issues drive formal rules. If training was delivered by the brigade Captain or a Group Officer, you could easily identify those with differing abilities. Training saturation can occur, as some people just want basic skills.

Access to field training grounds is sufficient for the needs in rural areas. There is a need for consistency in training - different regions do things differently. Training for structures is hard to get. Such training stops at the Crew Leader. The CFA have not looked at structural wildfire training for volunteers. Horsham have been trying to get structural wildfire training but there are no structural trainers around.

Record Keeping

There are deficiencies in record keeping. There is no proper record kept of personnel records and training records. There is no reason why the CFA cannot have a system that has a personal profile for each volunteer that records all training, etc and can provide a personal pathway regarding additional skills and progression.

Operations Officers and BASOs

Operations Officers were once involved in training but not anymore. They need to have people skills and be trained in what volunteers do. There was general agreement that Operations Officers need to have more people management skills. BASOs were a good initiative but are now less available to assist brigades.

Lateral Entry

There was discussion on lateral entry. A person is unable to apply, for example, for a position of Operations Officer unless they have been employed for five years in a station. This precludes volunteers. One District referred to the good assistance they receive from Catchment Officers.

Groups and Group Structure

Concern was expressed that the operational role of Groups had been reduced. The volunteers indicated they want to retain the Group structure.

RPL/RCC

There was general agreement that the RPL and RCC processes are difficult and it is easier to do the course again, than undertake RPL or RCC. The national standard says that the organisation should go out of their way to assist volunteers seeking RPL or RCC. This is not the case in the CFA.

Succession Planning

There was concern about a lack of succession planning. It was pointed out that brigades could not succession plan because they are unable to train young people in areas they wanted to learn in, for example, Breathing Apparatus and First Aid. If you want to keep younger/junior recruits, you

need to keep them involved. The problem appears to be that the brigade risk profile is set by the Region and the brigade does not have any input.

There was a feeling people were reluctant to take on officer positions at brigade or group level, as it was too great a commitment.

Incident Control Centre (ICC) Training

Volunteers are still waiting for the CFA to write modules for training in ICCs. There is frustration with not being able to get the chance for selection for ICC.

Equipment

Some trucks are not compatible for terrain. A one-size fits all does not work. Some trucks are not adequately equipped. Reference was made to a 20 year old tanker being replaced by one nearly the same age.

Consultation

In relation to the change of boundaries, there was some frustration that volunteers were not consulted before the decision was made. There was a feeling that if we can get enthusiasm for being a CFA member back, we will get members back. There is a need to improve morale generally. Volunteers want to be volunteers supported by paid members and not the other way around.

COMMENT

Again, a frank expression of views by volunteers across areas raised at other consultations. The importance of succession planning and recruitment and retention of young members was emphasised. There was strong support for the Group structure and their involvement operationally.

05.5.6 SALE

Venue: Adult Community Education Centre

Date: Thursday 19 May 2011 - 6.30pm to 8.30pm

Attendees

The Gippsland Region is comprised of Districts 9, 10 and 11. Volunteers from all Districts were represented at the meeting. Volunteers representing the VFBV Districts 9, 10 and 11 Councils and Districts 9, 10 and 11 Planning Committees were present.

Approximately 50 volunteers attended from the following areas, brigades and groups: Drouin, Longford, Tyers, Glenaladale, Hillside, Sarsfield, Bairnsdale, Omeo, Ensay, Winnindoo, Stradbroke, Heyfield, Stratford, Trafalgar, Kongwak, Koonwarra, Korumburra, Pound Creek, Maffra, Morwell, Yarram, Mt Taylor, Narracan, Willow Grove, Allambee, Mirboo North, Sale, Toora and Welshpool.

Background

The Gippsland Region has a predominantly rural demographic with the majority of incidents (approximately 2,825 annually) being rural or residential fires. Gippsland Region comprises the following local government areas - East Gippsland, Wellington, South Gippsland, Latrobe and Baw Baw.

The Gippsland Region has a population of approximately 261,900 people, with an expected population growth of 43,850 by 2026. The land area of the Gippsland Region is approximately 41,539 square kilometres and is served by approximately 6,400 volunteers, 32 paid firefighters and 52 full time and casual staff. The Region has 145 volunteer brigades, 2 integrated brigades, 14 Groups and 5 Coast Guard brigades.

The Gippsland Region risk profile covers the range from industrial, commercial, urban residential, remote residential, agricultural and peri-urban wildfire. The majority of the Region is rural and remote rural with large tracts of public forested land. Gippsland brigades also protect significant state infrastructure including power stations, the Longford gas plant and significant tracts of high value plantation timber.

Gippsland brigades are also highly skilled in and responsible for:

- Road Accident Rescue.
- High Angle Rescue.
- Confined Space Rescue.
- Hazardous Materials response.
- Urban Search and Rescue, Trench Rescue and Rope Rescue.

Summary of Consultation

The majority of volunteers attending were over 60 years of age. There was a range of differing numbers of call outs per year, as well as a range of diverse risks within the area, including electricity generation, coal mining, gas production, airfield, RAAF base, marine, hospitals, forests and industry.

Recruitment

Different views were expressed regarding recruitment. There was general agreement that it is difficult to recruit volunteers, particularly young people in rural areas. There was an increase in numbers of recruits after Black Saturday. An ageing volunteer group means there is a need to encourage the younger generation as recruits and also to stay on as volunteers.

There was discussion that the main issues relating to recruitment seem to be with the youth development program and retaining young people. They want to be involved but when they reach 16 and effectively become seniors, and could choose to be operational members, CFA tend to lose them – probably their transition could be handled better.

Wonthaggi brigade had a good youth crew, but lost 80% of them because they moved away for university or other reasons. It was suggested that younger members who go to university should be able to come back. There is a need to look at easier ways for them to come back, for example, as part of summer crew arrangements.

It is worth trying to get the 30-40 year age group, who have a mortgage and are established in the community, to become involved. If women are to be encouraged to join there is a need for amenities to encourage women to join, for example, some brigades do not have toilets.

Training

As much as possible, training at brigades to be done by volunteer instructors. There was a strong view that there are too many inhibitions on volunteers being instructors - the most important thing is when you train you should train with the people you will be working with. Some believe volunteer brigades have been disempowered and have lost morale – team building has been lost.

It was raised that there is a Minimum Skills training overload. There was discussion as to whether it would be better to look at the needs of the area and work out training depending on the risks that area presents and tailor those needs to that profile of the brigade. However, if the brigade is called out to an incident in another area there is a need for balance.

Concern was expressed as to lack of consistency in what is required –it depends on where you are and who the instructor is. A lot of practical training has turned into paperwork. Training needs to be shared around, some volunteers carry all the workload in attending incidents before doing the courses and there are people who have done all the courses but have no experience – there needs to be a balance.

There should be scope for volunteers to use training grounds. There are many barriers to moving above the base level skills, for example, in Incident Management Teams. There is concern that if they obtain qualifications, they are not utilised. It is not understood by the CFA that this ‘one cap fits all’ approach does not work.

In some areas, NBN would be useful. However, it was suggested that it might not be rolled out to some areas due to the typography of the areas.

What would help overcome these barriers – some views

More instructors and Practical Area Drill (PAD) operators would mean more training could be offered. There should be more courses at times that suits volunteers in those areas (for example, in farming areas, not at cropping and harvesting times). The CFA should conduct more train the trainer courses. Possibly utilising TAFEs and the TAFE training system. Brigades being able to tailor training to suit their area would help.

Record Keeping

FIRS and TRAIN do not correlate. A profile for each volunteer with all details, including training and other services would overcome this issue.

RPL/RCC

There is a wealth of experience of volunteers that is not being recognised. Needs to be improved.

First Aid

The general view is that the number of First Aid training places being offered having regard to the particular circumstance of brigades are not enough. There may be a few in each brigade who have First Aid training, but they may not necessarily be the ones who attend an incident. Volunteers are frequently the first to arrive to road rescue incidents and should have First Aid. More volunteers to be trained in First Aid as brigade profile is not always accurate in determining the numbers of volunteers and currency of qualification is not accounted for when calculating numbers.

The local ambulance staff are unable to conduct the training. They are not allowed to and some are in the same town as the brigade. It would be easier for them to provide the training as they have local knowledge. The First Aid training offered by the CFA is general First Aid that is offered to ‘mums and dads’, not tailored to CFA volunteers.

Groups

The Group arrangements have changed and the knowledge of senior volunteers is now not used. In particular, it was noted that:

- Groups feel they have been pushed to the wayside.
- Currently, the Group Officer is more honorary than operational.

- Groups do not get a lot of support from the CFA, it has dwindled right back.
- By way of example, the Leongatha Group meets regularly and have portfolios for different areas and the Group decides who will undertake each portfolio, for example, support, logistics. This works well.

BASOs

Brigades never know which BASO is servicing a brigade, as it is a revolving door. There are not enough BASOs. There is a continuity problem, with positions not being filled. The BASO needs to be independent of the brigade and should be accountable to the Operations Manager in the District. More assistance is required from BASOs.

Minimum Skills Assessment Package

The Drouin Brigade provided, at the consultation, some written comments about the Minimum Skills Assessment Package provided by the Gippsland Region. They set out issues that arise and the difficulties that are caused. They suggested that the training could be divided into three packages:

- Practical assessment at the start of about one month training and an assessment that will give a recruit a probationary status that is vigorous enough to make them safe.
- A theory package.
- A final package that focuses on the structural aspect of the CFA as an organisation.

It is pointed out that the current continuous length of the training and assessment program is a serious deterrent to the recruiting of volunteers particularly the young and those with low literacy skills.

In a further document, the Drouin Brigade addresses the time commitments to training by volunteers and provides some practical examples of how training has been delivered at the brigade. A number of resolutions passed by the brigade in relation to training were set out. They are comprehensive and obviously well thought out. There is no need to set them out here. They reflect views that have been consistently expressed by volunteers at the consultations.

COMMENT

This was the last consultation and raised similar issues to those raised at the earlier consultations. Many positive suggestions were made as to how things might be improved. Again, the importance of recruitment was stressed and the need to make it easier for young people and women to be recruited and remain as volunteers. All in all, the consultation involved a frank but mainly positive expression of views from an obviously dedicated and committed group of volunteers.

05.6 COMMON ISSUES RAISED AT CONSULTATIONS

It is felt that it would be helpful to provide a brief summary of the common issues raised at the consultations although they have already been referred to in relation to each consultation. Appendix E is a summary of common issues raised at consultations.

05.7 MEETINGS

During the course of the Inquiry, a number of meetings were held to discuss issues and obtain information to assist the Inquiry. The co-operation and willingness to assist of those involved in the meetings is appreciated and has been of much assistance. One of the meetings was with CFA Regional Managers after the completion of the consultations. Their perspective of the views expressed at the consultations was helpful, particularly in relation to the perceptions the volunteers had about the CFA.

Appendix F is a list of the meetings, some of which took place by telephone. More specific reference and an overview of what was discussed at some meetings is outlined later in the Report. There were also some informal discussions with a number of persons. As these were informal, there is no need to provide details of them.

05.8 VISITS

INTRODUCTION

A number of field visits were conducted to brigades and training grounds. Mr Lex de Man from the CFA assisted in the arrangement of these visits. They provided the opportunity to inspect those facilities and have an informal discussion with some involved with them. This was most helpful to the Inquiry. A brief review of those visits follows.

05.8.1 MELTON FIRE BRIGADE

Tuesday 10 May 2011 at 8.30am

Background

The Melton Fire Brigade is a busy brigade in a growing community. In 2010, the brigade attended 607 calls. In 2008, the brigade transitioned to an integrated model, introducing paid firefighters to assist in meeting the increased service demand. There are 10 staff and 113 volunteer members at Melton. The municipality of Melton is acknowledged as being the second fastest growing municipality in Australia (just behind Wyndham) and the township of Melton currently has 54,000 residents.

The Melton Fire Brigade is classified as a 'Structure with Wildfire' brigade and responds to a range of different events including structure and bushfire, and is also an accredited Road Rescue brigade. Recently, seven members of the brigade received Chief Officer's commendations following their actions at a house fire late last year. This was regarded as a good example of staff and volunteers working together as a team to achieve a successful outcome.

Brief Summary of Visit

- There was a general informal discussion with volunteers and career members. Two career members are on duty 24/7 with a day shift of ten hours and a night shift of 14 hours.
- 70-80 volunteers are operational (includes junior and auxiliary). 80% of volunteers work, with some shift workers. A small percentage of volunteers are retired.

Training

- Training schedule is done locally; training committee meets monthly. Training takes place once a week and maintenance work is done on a Sunday.
- There is limited access to Fiskville for volunteers.
- There are challenges with training because of the size of the membership. They struggle with availability of instructors.
- Volunteers provided the Inquiry with a copy of their training schedule to August 2011.

COMMENT

This is a recently integrated brigade with a large and active volunteer involvement in a rapidly growing area. It was apparent that there was a good working relationship between volunteers and career members, with mutual respect and co-operation evident.

05.8.2 CFA TRAINING COLLEGE - FISKVILLE

Tuesday 10 May 2011 at 10.00am

Background

Fiskville is a 180-hectare site originally used as a long distance radio communication station.

By the early 1970s, the CFA's role as a fire service had grown in size and complexity. Rapidly expanding urban populations in regional centres and on the fringe or interface areas of Melbourne, plus the growth of commercial and industrial activity in decentralised locations, required the CFA to possess a widening range of expertise. By 1972, the CFA had begun to transform Fiskville into a specialised training facility. The existing buildings were converted to perform training tasks.

The Training College

Fiskville is the main training college for operational staff as well as the Field Training Ground (FTG) for volunteers from Districts 6, 7, 14, 15 and 16 (Western and South Western areas of Victoria). Districts 8 and 13 (Eastern Metropolitan and Southern Metropolitan areas of Victoria) also use Fiskville from time to time for volunteer training weekends.

The primary purpose of the college is to train and assess career firefighters, Leading Firefighters (LFF) and Station Officers (SO). Around these priorities, statewide courses and volunteer training in the evenings, on weekends and some weekdays are scheduled.

At present, 25 recruit career firefighters are being trained at Fiskville. Over the next five years, the CFA proposes to train 342 new career firefighters, which requires additional and overlapping 16-week long recruit courses. The increase in numbers for career firefighter recruit courses is likely to place pressure on Fiskville and impact on opportunities for volunteers to have access to Fiskville for training. The last major upgrade to infrastructure was about 20 years ago.

The total number of students attending courses at Fiskville for 2009-10 was 6,350. Of this, 1,166 were volunteers who used Fiskville as their FTG.

There is a Memorial Wall at Fiskville dedicated to the men and women of CFA who have lost their lives while serving their communities.

Brief Summary of Visit

A tour of the facilities and accommodation was conducted. Training was observed in progress. The facility provides a broad range of simulated real life training in a wide range of areas. Twenty portable training props, for example, a gas cylinder fire, are being developed that can be taken to brigades for training locally.

COMMENT

Fiskville is a major training facility, which would appear to require infrastructure upgrading. It is apparent that there is, and will continue to be, limited availability for the training of volunteers.

05.8.3 BALLARAT CITY FIRE BRIGADE

Tuesday 10 May 2011 at 12.00pm

Background

The Ballarat City Fire Brigade was formed in 1859, and transitioned to an integrated model in the early 1950s. Ballarat is a large regional city with a population of over 90,000 people. The city and its immediate surroundings are supported by a number of CFA brigades with Ballarat City brigade being the busiest of these. In 2010, the brigade attended over 1,400 calls.

The brigade is classified as 'Structural Wildfire' and has 37 staff and approximately 30 volunteers.

Brief Summary of Visit

The brigade is looking for more volunteers, could accommodate more and would welcome more with Minimum Skills. The availability of specialist training is a challenge due to time constraints, most volunteers do not have the time required for the specialist training. There is a perception that the CFA is bushfire only but it is not, Ballarat is busier in the winter months – Melton is the same. The brigade attends to structure fires mainly, instead of grass fire.

Training

The planning committee looks at training and plans for 12 months ahead. Training is held either at Ballarat City or Ballarat Barkly St brigade. Ballarat City brigade have been able to train and participate in training and have a nucleus of people to facilitate training. The Second Lieutenant is the brigade's Training Officer.

COMMENT

This is a major integrated brigade. It was apparent that there is a good working relationship and co-operation between career members and volunteers.

05.8.4 FERNTREE GULLY INCIDENT CONTROL CENTRE

Wednesday 11 May 2011 at 4.00pm

Background

The Ferntree Gully Incident Control Centre (ICC) replaces the ICC facility previously established at Belgrave Fire Station. The Belgrave facility had served the region for many years but was getting beyond its effective level for operational command and control. It was decided to replace the Belgrave facility with this facility.

An ICC is a critical element to CFA's operational management of fires and emergencies. Incident Management Teams (IMTs) are comprised of members with specialised training in incident management and work from a range of facilities including this ICC.

In 2010, funding was obtained from the State Government as part of the first round Government Bushfire Preparedness program, supporting ICC upgrades across the State. Field level ICC members (including staff and volunteers) have been intrinsically involved in designing the layout of the centre to ensure that a conducive and productive environment is available which better supports multi-agency interoperability during an emergency.

Brief Summary of Visit

A brief discussion was held with those present at the ICC. Several views expressed include:

- A challenge for training is the availability of instructors.
- If there is a quiet summer, then there will be fewer people interested in joining as a volunteer but if it is a hot summer, then many people are interested.
- There is a near impossibility to be able to do practical burn off training due to municipality restraints, rules and regulations. This is a significant issue, as it is a predominant part of risk.
- Vector training is the best training other than the real thing.
- Mobile props – only difficulty is that have to have one of the 16 trainers to use it. This is not always possible.
- There was general agreement that there could be more leadership training and people skill management, especially on an operational level.
- There was some discussion on NBN and the view was expressed that online training is a good option but there needs to be face-to-face interaction to work as part of a team.
- There was discussion on training, assessments and standardisation and consistency.

COMMENT

This ICC is an impressive facility that has been established following the recommendation of the VBRC. The views of volunteers were constructive and helpful.

05.8.5 HOPPERS CROSSING FIRE BRIGADE

Thursday 12 May 2011 at 3.30pm

Background

The Hoppers Crossing Fire Brigade is a busy brigade in a growing community. In 2010, the brigade attended 1,130 calls. In 2002, the brigade transitioned to an integrated model, introducing paid firefighters to assist in meeting the increased service demand. There are 15 staff and 85 volunteer members at Hoppers Crossing. The municipality of Wyndham is acknowledged as being the fastest growing municipality in Australia. The brigade is classified as a 'Structure and Wildfire' brigade and responds to a range of different incidents, including structure and bushfire.

Brief Review of Visit

It was expressed that the profile of volunteers in the brigade include a good range of different levels of qualifications. The brigade currently has enough volunteers and is concentrating on upgrading the new recruits, rather than recruiting new ones. The age of volunteers range from 17 to 60 years, with the majority between 25 to 45 years old. There are approximately five women. Two Station Officers are in charge of training.

COMMENT

There was a discussion with some volunteers about the operation of the station and they raised a number of issues. There is no need to set them out. In essence, it is felt the integration is not working as it should and that effectively there are two brigades, one paid and one volunteer. The position, perhaps, could be contrasted with what is apparent at the Melton Fire Brigade. I wish to make clear that I make no finding or criticism of any career member at Hoppers Crossing, as I did not speak to them to obtain their views about these issues. It would not have been appropriate for me to do so in the circumstances. This Inquiry is not about determining particular issues but in dealing with systemic issues. However, what is indicated is that the interface of career members and volunteers does present challenges for the CFA and strong leadership is critical in ensuring that these arrangements are fair to all and ultimately in the best interests of the community.

05.8.6 WERRIBEE FIRE BRIGADE

Thursday 12 May 2011 at 4.30pm

Background

The Werribee Fire Brigade is a busy brigade in a growing community. In 2010, the brigade attended 720 calls, which makes it the busiest fully volunteer brigade in the CFA. There are 131 volunteers at Werribee.

Werribee Fire Brigade is classified as a 'Structure with Wildfire' brigade and responds to a range of different incidents, including structure and bushfire. It is also an accredited road rescue brigade. The Werribee Fire Brigade includes a 'satellite' location to support service delivery to the community. Due to growth, a new fire brigade – the Wyndham Vale Fire Brigade – will be established which transitions the current Werribee Satellite brigade to a stand alone fully volunteer brigade. Local strategic planning identifies that within five to ten years, the new Wyndham Vale Brigade may transition to an integrated brigade to meet growing service demand.

Brief Summary of Visit

A considerable number of members of the brigade were present and a lengthy discussion took place, which was frank and lively. The Captain of the Werribee brigade provided us with minutes from their monthly meeting, which outlined issues that members of the brigade wanted to be raised with the Inquiry. Issues that arose from the discussion and the meeting minutes include the following:

- It is felt that there has been a mind set change of the CFA hierarchy from a consultative one to a non-consultative one. There is very little consultation, and volunteer knowledge and experience is not respected.
- An example referred to is Rescue. Werribee is a very good rescue brigade but its members are not allowed to be on the assessment panel for road accident rescue, as they are not career members.
- Continuity of access to CFA management via Operations Officers in the last three to four years has been an issue with temporary appointments and change.
- Concern was raised about the inability of volunteers to hold Strike Team and instructor positions, which have become the preserve of career members.
- The use of volunteer air observers has declined significantly.
- Volunteers cannot apply to become Operations Officers or above in the CFA, whereas they used to be able to. Only staff who have completed the staff recruit course can now obtain these positions.
- Werribee is a Rescue brigade but cannot get members onto First Aid courses. First Aid is one of the requirements of a rescue operator.
- Issues were raised about the provision of Personal Protective Clothing (PPC), it being felt that it was inadequate having regard to the work of the brigade.
- Concern was expressed about a lack of support in relation to station maintenance and repairs. There is a lack of consultation by the CFA with respect to equipment that is supplied.
- Various matters were raised about the funding support by the CFA, it being felt that it was inadequate.
- Concern was raised about a lack of ongoing specialist training.
- A view was expressed that the VFBV should assist volunteers in respect of issues they have with the CFA.
- Concern was expressed about the lack of security at the station, particularly for volunteers.

- Concerns was also expressed with respect to lack of availability of training in areas such as confined space, high angle rescue and Breathing Apparatus when the brigade's risk in these areas continues to increase.
- Issues were raised with respect to the provision of equipment, such as portable radios.
- It is felt that the CFA has not been sufficiently receptive to safety issues regarding the station that have been raised, taking the position that Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) legislation and policy does not apply to volunteers.
- As a brigade, Werribee had to make things happen to maintain its level of fire coverage. The brigade has driven initiatives, rather than the CFA.
- Although volunteers are praised and recognised when they provide support, there was a sense of frustration and a feeling that career members were getting unwarranted preference.

COMMENT

As is apparent, the Werribee volunteers did not hold back with their comments. It is the largest volunteer brigade in the CFA, with a strong membership. The thrust of the comments was a feeling that the brigade's value is not sufficiently recognised by the CFA and it is not sufficiently supported across a range of areas.

05.8.7 WANGARATTA FIELD TRAINING GROUND

Monday 16 May 2011 at 3.30pm

Background

The Wangaratta Field Training Ground (FTG) provides a hot fire training facility for the more urbanised fire environment involving structural fire attack, including Breathing Apparatus training facilities.

Brief Summary of Visit

The training ground provides weeknights and weekend training for volunteers. It is also used by external groups. Volunteers have priority for the training ground.

There is one staff employed at the Wangaratta FTG. He said if he had one more Practical Area Drill (PAD) operator and one more full time instructor he would be able to double the throughput of the FTG.

It was felt that the availability of training online could assist, as could the availability of more mobile training props to increase mobile training. Some statistics were provided as to the use of the training ground. These indicate that the number of brigade students has been about 1,300–1,400 per year over the last three years. There have been about four brigade training sessions per week.

COMMENT

This facility impresses as a training facility for volunteers and I was impressed by the enthusiasm and drive of the staff member. It seems clear that with more instructors and support through resourcing, it could be utilised much more, including the provision of mobile training props to brigades to enable training to be done locally.

05.8.8 GRANGE FIRE BRIGADE, HAMILTON

Wednesday 18 May 2011 at 5pm

Background

The Grange Rural Fire Brigade is on the outskirts of Hamilton. CFA have issued this brigade a 2.4C tanker and an ultra light tanker. This brigade also responds to the District 5 Field Operations Vehicle (FOV). The brigade is in the process of extending their station into three bays to house this equipment. The brigade has 52 active volunteer members and covers rural residential and light industrial premises. This brigade also acts as a support response directly into the city of Hamilton.

Brief Summary of Visit

A good discussion was held with some volunteers at the station around a fire that they had lit. They referred to the difficulty in retaining young people after they left the area for work or studies. At one time, Monivae College had a cadet arrangement. They raised the issue of the scheduling of First Aid training, which they said should be more flexible, as they are often held on school holidays. Some older volunteers in the brigade had left due to difficulty in gaining recognition of prior learning. There is good cooperation with nearby brigades, such as Hamilton.

COMMENT

It was instructive to visit a rural 'shed' brigade and gain the perspective of some of the members who are obviously committed but concerned about attracting and retaining younger members to replace the ageing brigade.

05.8.9 SALE FIELD TRAINING GROUND

Thursday 19 May 2011 at 5pm

Background

The Gippsland Region is comprised of Districts 9, 10 and 11, spanning from Drouin and Warragul in the West, through Morwell and Sale, and on to Bairnsdale, Orbost, Omeo and Mallacoota (to the New South Wales border). Gippsland has a predominantly rural demographic with the majority of incidents (approximately 2,825 annually) being rural or residential fires.

The CFA Gippsland Fire Training Complex west of Sale was previously occupied by the National Safety Council of Victoria and has been established to provide fire training for volunteers from CFA brigades within Gippsland. Since its establishment, the training ground has been developed to incorporate a wide range of specialist training from Breathing Apparatus to Confined Space Rescue. Many external organisations and local industries are able to utilise the training and facilities available here to complete necessary fire safety training.

COMMENT

A tour of the Sale Field Training Ground was conducted by the staff member who is the only person employed there. The facility, which was built by volunteers, is impressive. At the time of the visit, about 40 MFESB firefighters were using it for training. I was impressed by the commitment of the staff member who clearly would like the facility to be available more for the training of volunteers, which could be done if additional resources, such as instructors were provided. As with Wangaratta, the impression is of a good facility staffed by a keen staff member but under utilised due to a lack of resourcing.

06. 2009 VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES ROYAL COMMISSION

The 2009 Victorian bushfires were the worst in Australia's history and 7 February 2009 will be remembered as one of the darkest days in the State's memory. The fires that burned throughout Victoria in late January and February 2009 devastated 109 communities across the State, destroyed more than 2,000 homes and damaged around 430,000 hectares of land. By the time the fires were contained, 173 people had lost their lives and many others were seriously injured.

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC) was established on 16 February 2009 to investigate the causes of, preparation for, responses to and impact of those fires. The Hon. Bernard Teague AO was appointed Chairperson of the Royal Commission, supported by Commissioners Ron McLeod AM and Susan Pascoe AM. The Commission delivered its Interim Report on 17 August 2009 and its Final Report on 31 July 2010.

In its Final Report, the Commission acknowledged and extended its gratitude to all those who placed their lives at risk to fight the fires that burned in Victoria in early 2009, and particularly recognised the contribution of volunteers and their families. The Commission noted that the strength of the CFA volunteer base was evident on 7 February 2009; this included its surge capacity, the local knowledge of its members and its rapid response.

The Commission heard of volunteers preparing for the day, warning local residents and assisting with the confronting task of locating and identifying the dead. It was told that on 7 February 2009, over 20,000 CFA volunteers responded to 632 operational incidents in Victoria. Countless more volunteers took up support roles.

The Commission made 67 recommendations in its Final Report that gave priority to protecting human life and reflected the shared responsibility that governments, fire agencies, communities and individuals have for minimising the prospect of a tragedy of such a scale ever happening again.

On 4 November 2009, Mr Neil Comrie AO APM, was appointed as the independent Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor to report on the progress of Government departments and agencies in implementing the Commission's recommendations. Mr Comrie will be required to table in Parliament a Progress Report on 31 July 2011 and his Final Report by 31 July 2012.

The Commission received a number of submissions and witness statements and conducted hearings where witnesses discussed material relevant to this Inquiry, particularly relating to the training and utilisation of volunteers.

To expedite the process of searching through the vast amount of information received and considered by the Royal Commission, I consulted with Ms Jane Brockington, former CEO of the VBRC and currently Executive Director at the State Services Authority and Ms Susannah Robinson, Senior Adviser of Public Policy and Organisation Review at the State Services Authority, who were able to provide me with a shortlist of evidence presented to the Royal Commission that are of relevance to this Inquiry. It is attached as Appendix G.

They were also able to helpfully provide a list of key themes they identified as having arisen out of the Royal Commission that could be relevant to this Inquiry. They made clear that they were not speaking on behalf of the Commission but expressing their own views on these matters. This is understood. The key themes identified were:

- Training, accreditation and endorsement of volunteers for fire management positions:
 - Process for identifying skill needs.
 - Process for identifying volunteers with potential for fire management activities.
 - Progression pathway for volunteers to Incident Management Team (IMT) roles.
 - Application of special arrangements for training activities to accommodate needs of volunteers (e.g. training activities on weeknights and weekends).
 - Whether the influence of UFU restricted or limited the available volunteer training opportunities.

- Use of qualified and endorsed volunteers in IMTs:
 - Use of qualified and endorsed volunteers in IMTs on 7 February 2009.
 - Whether a preference exists for using career staff in IMTs.
 - The use of local knowledge by incident controllers and IMTs – the benefits of locally based volunteers in providing local knowledge was highlighted in the evidence.

- Impact of changes to organisational structure on the relationship and commitment of volunteers to the CFA:
 - Influence of a ‘volunteer culture’ within the CFA on the ability of the CFA to recruit and retain volunteers.
 - Importance of volunteers to the surge capacity of fire services.
 - The funding implications of shifting the balance between paid firefighters and volunteers.
 - Whether increasing the use of paid firefighters impacts on the CFA’s ability to recruit and retain volunteers.
 - Whether utilising paid firefighters ensures excessive demands are not placed on volunteers.
 - Differences in the culture and interests advanced by the UFU and VFBV.
 - Influence of the UFU (representing paid firefighters) on the organisational culture of the CFA.

Some of the themes listed above were reflected in the consultations conducted and submissions received by this Inquiry and have been considered in this Report.

07. JUDGE GORDON LEWIS REPORT

On 25 October 2007, the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services, requested Judge Gordon Lewis AM to investigate the process undertaken by the CFA and the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFESB) to identify new Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) and to determine reasons for delay in the process.

The Terms of Reference related to identifying causes for delay in timely decisions/agreements, determining the key obstacles in the decision making process and making recommendations that would resolve the procedural obstacles.

Judge Lewis delivered his Report to the Minister on 28 February 2008.

The provision of adequate and safe PPC is of critical importance to all firefighters, including volunteers. No doubt, this caused the Minister to appoint Judge Lewis to hold the Inquiry into the delays in the process of securing PPC for firefighters.

In view of the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry and the issues that need to be addressed, it is necessary to make some reference to the Report of Judge Lewis. The United Firefighters Union (UFU) did not participate in his Inquiry.

His Report reviews the tendering process from 2000 to 2007. The following comments are noted in his Report:

- The CFA had to take into account specific design requirements involved in the use of PPC by volunteers.
- When the CFA Clothing Ensemble Committee met for the first time in early October 2002, the UFU refused to participate due to the inclusion of volunteer representatives in the consultation process.
- In July 2005, formal discussions began between the CFA and the UFU on a replacement for the 2002 Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA). The CFA sought to replace clause 47 of the then EBA, requiring the UFU's agreement to new PPC, with a requirement to consult with the UFU. This was not acceptable to the UFU.
- In February 2006, the Volunteer Associations publicly criticised the protective material chosen by the UFU and claimed it deteriorated more quickly under sunlight. They also publicly criticised the prospect of a new EBA between the CFA and the UFU that was created without consultation with volunteer firefighters.
- In September 2006, a document called the 'Way Forward', which was facilitated by the Department of Justice (DOJ), was agreed by the parties. It was based on the view that the MFESB and the CFA, including both paid and volunteer firefighters, should have the same structural firefighting PPC.
- At the time of the conduct of the Inquiry, the Report listed a number of matters that were unresolved in the PPC process.
- He also commented that throughout this period, volunteers had been co-operative in their participation.
- Relevantly, Judge Lewis concluded and recommended in his Report, *inter alia*:
 - Project difficulties were symptomatic of issues in the relationship between the CFA, the MFESB, the UFU and Volunteer Associations.
 - That in any future EBA, clause 47 (which relates to uniforms and equipments) be amended to provide for UFU consultation, rather than agreement.

Judge Lewis made some specific comments in relation to volunteers that are of relevance to this Inquiry:

- The Government and the CFA have recognised the value and importance of the role that volunteers play through the Volunteer Charter, signed in 2001.
- Under the Volunteer Charter, the CFA must ensure that the view, concerns and opinions of volunteers are fully considered before adopting any new or changed policies, procedures or approaches, which will impact on them as CFA volunteers.
- Regarding any future EBA reached between the CFA and the UFU, the CFA should be committed to consult with volunteer firefighters in Victoria who should be entitled to participate in any discussions directed at all matters that affect them, including the improvement of clothing and equipment issued to firefighters.

COMMENT

The Report of Judge Lewis provides an insight into arrangements that relate to a critical area of importance to volunteers – Personal Protective Clothing.

The reasons for problems with the arrangements are identified by Judge Lewis. They are many and varied but it is clear that he did not attribute them to the volunteers. The lack of an effective relationship between the CFA, UFU and the Volunteer Associations is referred to.

The necessity to obtain the agreement of the UFU in relation to new arrangements for PPC was identified as a major factor and Judge Lewis recommended that in any future enterprise agreement, it be limited to consultation. However, the relevant clause in the CFA/UFU Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement 2010 still requires agreement, rather than consultation.

Judge Lewis stresses the importance of CFA consultation with volunteers in accordance with the Volunteer Charter and their entitlement to participate in any discussions about matters that affect them, including the improvement of clothing and equipment.

Consultation and the resolution of disputes are important areas being considered by this Inquiry. The Lewis Report reviews what occurred in relation to PPC during the period covered by his Inquiry.

08. INDUSTRIAL AND ALLIED AGREEMENTS BETWEEN CFA AND UFU

INTRODUCTION

It is not the role of, nor is it appropriate for, this Inquiry to investigate the entering into of any industrial agreements whether they be Enterprise Agreements under federal law or agreements made by way of Deeds between the CFA and the UFU.

Neither the VFBV nor volunteers are considered employers, employees or a union. Therefore, any industrial or allied agreements made between the CFA and the UFU do not involve the VFBV or volunteers as parties.

However, some arrangements in those agreements may have a direct or indirect effect on volunteers in relation to their involvement in the CFA. Where this occurs, the effect of those arrangements on CFA volunteers is relevant under the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry.

However, it is emphasised that it is not the clauses of the agreements per se that are examined but the clauses in the context of ascertaining effects that they may have on volunteers.

A theme that runs through this Report is the importance of transparency. It is particularly considered in Chapter 13, which deals with cultural issues in the CFA. It is apparent to me that there has been a lack of transparency in the CFA in relation to industrial agreements. This is evidenced by the comments and concerns expressed by volunteers in consultations and in submissions when they were consistently unclear on what was contained in such agreements.

Indeed, they were confused, and consequently prone to perceptions that might not, in fact, be true. This is one of the vices of lack of transparency. People who might be affected are not in possession of the facts and consequently, will often think the worst, or jump to conclusions. Transparency avoids this occurring and means that any debate or discussion on issues is factually based.

Thus, it is necessary to set out in this Report in a factual way, details of the clauses in various industrial agreements that are relevant to this Inquiry. By doing this, the factual basis for comment and analysis of arrangements that affect volunteers is clear and there is an appropriate factual context. There is, as a result, the necessary transparency.

A brief history and relevant content of industrial and allied agreements between the CFA and UFU is set out below. The industrial agreements briefly summarised below can be either found or listed on the Fair Work Australia website at www.fwa.gov.au. The CFA provided the Inquiry with copies of the Deeds of Agreement and a relevant letter from the Workplace Authority. Although these Deeds are not made under federal law, as are the industrial agreements, it is essential, in my view that they be referred to in this Report. The effect of the arrangements contained in these industrial agreement clauses that are reviewed in this Chapter are considered later when dealing with the arrangements the subject of the Terms of Reference.

On 1 July 2009, Fair Work Australia began operations as part of a new national workplace relations system underpinned by the *Fair Work Act 2009*. The new system replaces that which operated under the *Workplace Relations Act 1996*. An enterprise agreement (EA), as it is known under the Fair Work Act, is an agreement between an employer and its employees reached through a collective bargaining process. In the past, under the Workplace Relations Act, the resulting agreements were known by a variety of names, including enterprise bargaining agreements (EBA).

08.1 1996 - 2008

08.1.1 1996

The CFA/UFU Firefighters and Fire Officers Certified Agreement 1996 (1996 EBA) came into force on 4 December 1996 and had 24 Clauses, one Attachment and three Appendices.

Staffing - New Fire Stations

One of the paragraphs in clause 9 of the 1996 EBA states that the CFA will, following consultation with and input from the union, determine numbers of people, classification and duties of people, hours of work, rosters and penalties according to local service delivery requirements, which are to be ascertained through consideration of recommendations from any interested parties including the community, career and volunteer personnel and the union.

Clause 9.2 states that in particular, staffing is to be determined after considering a range of integrated factors, including but not limited to the following:

- Hazard Assessment (Structural).
- Standards of Fire Cover.
- Volunteer availability/skills base.
- Activity levels.
- Brigade management/support.

Such factors are to be considered utilising such methodologies as, for instance, set out as below:

Fire Service Delivery and Quality Assurance Methodology

1. Assess Risk

Hazard Assessment Urban, Rural

Consult: Community.
Other Services.
Volunteer: Career Firefighting.
Government/Agencies.

2. Determine Service Delivery Requirement

Standard of Fire Cover (SOFC)/Standard of Emergency Incident Response (SOEIR).
Liaise with Minister of Police and Emergency Services.

3. Apply SOFC/SOEIR

Resource According to Service Delivery Requirements.
Firefighting Career/Volunteer.
Region Staff.
Training.
Equipment/Vehicles.
Building, etc.
Funding.

4. Measure Compliance with Standard

Via ISO9000/AS3900.
Turnout Time.
On Scene Time.
Firefighters responding.
Fire ground efficiency.
Equipment performance/availability.
Injuries/Accidents.

5. Examine Quality Assurance Feedback Findings

Examine trends and acts as necessary

Staffing - Current Career Fire Stations

One of the paragraphs in Clause 10 of the 1996 EBA states that the CFA, following consultation with and input from the union, determined that, until 1 December 1998, the minimum number of employees for current career fire stations based on current operational requirements is 288.

Merit Based Selection

Clause 19 of the 1996 EBA states that the parties agree to remove time criteria applying to appointment to advertised vacant positions. Vacant positions (except for orders of transfers made by the Chief Officer) will be advertised internally, and externally where it can be demonstrated no suitable internal applicant exists. Appointment to all advertised vacant positions will be based on merit and an assessment of whether or not an employee has the requisite skills, competence and experience required to meet the selection criteria for a vacant position. In this context, for appointment to the classifications of Fire Officer 1 and Fire Officer 2, the appointees will require five years recognised and accepted service in a professional/career fire service.

Enterprise Bargaining Implementation Committee

Clause 20 (Consultation) of the 1996 EBA states that the parties recognise the need for consultation and communication to establish and maintain a climate of mutual trust and co-operation. The parties agree to the establishment of an Enterprise Bargaining Implementation Committee (EBIC) to facilitate the implementation of the 1996 EBA and ongoing workplace reform.

08.1.2 2000

The CFA/UFU Operational Staff Agreement 2000 (the 2000 EBA) came into force on 20 September 2000 and was terminated on 5 December 2002. The 2000 EBA comprised five Sections and three Appendices.

- Section 1 Applies to all employees.
- Section 2 Firefighters and Fire Officers.
- Section 3 Communication Department.
- Section 4 Protective Equipment Department.
- Section 5 Practical Area Drill Department.
- Appendix A Occupational Health and Safety Agreement.
- Appendix B CFA, UFU Joint Statement on Operational Training and Assessment.
- Appendix C Brigade Administrative Support Officer.

Training Instructors

Clause 5.4.1 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA states that CFA agrees in principle that all paid operational training and assessment shall be undertaken by full time personnel. However, there may be areas that require instructors to be other than full time. Employment of other than full time instructors shall be determined on an agreed needs basis between the parties. Such agreement will only be reached if it is established that such work cannot be undertaken by full time employees including the use of appropriately qualified firefighters and fire officers. In determining this matter, the parties will take into account:

- The nature of the operational training required.
- The training skills and operational competencies possessed by full time employees available.
- The location at which the training is required.
- The number of instructors required to meet the need.
- The availability of volunteers.
- The number of paid employees who will be required to deliver Operational training to volunteer firefighters and officers and assess their competence.
- The provision of paid operational training and assessment by other persons or organisations with specific expertise not held by employees covered by the 2000 EBA.
- The training modules which are deemed to be operational.
- The difference between the Minimum Skills training competencies required by volunteers and career firefighters and officers will be clearly defined, along with the content and method of delivery for each risk.
- The classifications and location of the instructors.

Clause 5.4.2 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA states that paid instructors will hold appropriate train the trainer and assessor qualifications. Initially, eight positions will be established additional to current staffing levels. Six of these positions will be offered to current CFA firefighters and officers in the first instance through the normal internal advertising procedure.

Current Career Stations

Clause 5.5 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA states that the CFA and UFU agree to the establishment of a working party to review all current career fire stations. The working parties' objective will be to ensure that there are appropriate staffing levels to provide the community with adequate levels of fire cover by way of prevention and suppression. The CFA and UFU will use the factors included but not limited to those in clause 5.6 of the 2000 EBA to assist them in their deliberations.

Clause 5.6 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA lists the Fire Service Delivery and Quality Assurance Methodology listed previously in this Report, including a new step – 6. Hazard assessment score for staffing levels.

Review of Staffing Needs at other Fire Brigades

Clause 5.6.1.1 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA states that a minimum of 133 additional full-time Firefighter/Fire Officer positions will be created and filled in the CFA within the next 12 months or otherwise at the earliest practicable time as agreed by the UFU and CFA.

Clause 5.6.1.4 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA states that where the review of the brigade determines that career firefighter(s) or fire officer(s) are required, then the brigade administrative support officer will be transferred to another brigade unless otherwise agreed between the parties.

Processes for Reaching Agreement

Clause 5.7.1 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA lists the principles for processes for reaching agreement on Clauses 5.4, 5.5, 5.6 and 5.6.1 of the 2000 EBA. Clause 5.7.1.4 states that the parties acknowledge that in relation to the concept of consultation, it is understood that it involved more than the mere exchange of information. For consultation to be effective, the parties must be contributing to the decision process not only in appearance but also in fact. This will require co-operation and commitment to the consultative process.

Clause 5.7.1.7 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA states that should the parties be unable to achieve agreement after all avenues of negotiation have been exhausted, then the following shall apply:

- i. The CFA shall advise the union in writing within seven days of the action they intend to take and the reasons for taking such action.
- ii. Should the union disagree with the course of action proposed, then it may within 14 days appeal the matter to a Board of Reference.
- iii. This appeal process can also be utilised by either party should it be considered that consultation has been inadequate or that bargaining has not been in good faith.

Board of Reference

Clause 5.7.2 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA states that a Board of Reference shall be established for the purpose of resolving any dispute in relation to clauses 5.4, 5.5, 5.6 and 5.6.1 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA, which were under discussion.

The Board shall be constituted by a Chairperson who shall be nominated by the Minister and agreed by the parties (or in the case of no agreement an independent person appointed by the appropriate panel head of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission) and up to six other members of whom half are nominated by the CFA and half nominated by the UFU.

The Board shall make arrangements for an assessment and report on the matter by persons representing the parties. The Board, when considering the matter, will take into account the above principles, processes and data used in making the disputed decision. The Board will then

consider the reports and make recommendations to the parties on a course of action to resolve the matter. Subject to the 2000 EBA, both parties agree to abide by the recommendations of the Board of Reference.

Community Support Facilitators

Clause 5.8.1 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA states that the CFA agrees that Community Support Facilitators (CSFs) and the existing CSF classification will be abolished by the CFA at the earliest lawful opportunity (but no later than 12 September 2000) and will not be replaced by CSFs or persons engaged in any similar classification or positions howsoever named. The CFA agrees that immediate notification will be given, under the terms of the contract, to Skilled Engineering for the termination of the contract relating to outsourced CSF personnel and will not make or renew any contract or arrangement with any person or body to provide CSFs or any other type of personnel to the CFA performing similar duties in any similar classification or position howsoever named. The CFA shall not pursue any additional claims in relation to CSFs or any alternative classification performing similar duties not provided for in the 2000 EBA.

Volunteer Support

Clause 5.8.2.8 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA states that any person other than a Firefighter or Fire Officer who is employed by the CFA as a brigade administrative officer to provide administrative support to volunteer brigades shall have their hours of work set and shall not respond or turnout as volunteer firefighters or officers or do any other firefighting related work other than administrative work during their set hours of work. For the purpose of this clause, administrative support is defined as general administrative duties including typing, accounting, fundraising, making arrangements for meetings to be held, community liaison, and volunteer recruitment.

Brigade Administrative Support Officers

Appendix C of the 2000 EBA states that Clause 5.6.1.4 of Section 2 of the 2000 EBA will operate and be implemented in accordance with the following arrangements:

Where the review of brigades (where CSFs have been engaged) determines that career Firefighters and/or Fire Officers are required, the appointed career Firefighters/Fire Officers will as part of their duties undertake the volunteer support administrative duties as defined in clause 12.3 of the 2000 EBA at those brigades. These arrangements will not affect the administrative duties undertaken by volunteers under the broader membership program, or other unpaid arrangements.

Should the brigade and the CFA determine that the brigade support administrative duties as defined should continue to be performed by the Brigade Administrative Support Officer (BASO) then this will be advised to the UFU in writing. The brigade and CFA will then determine the location at which these duties will be performed. Such location to be selected from one of the following:

- CFA Area or Regional Office.
- Volunteer brigade closest to the brigade or brigades being serviced by the BASO.
- Within the brigade complex, separate from the station. Such positions shall be limited to no more than 23 at any one time.
- These arrangements shall be evaluated by the parties, using the consultative process, no later than 12 months after the brigade becomes an integrated brigade.

The CFA may require the BASO to service more than one brigade.

08.1.3 2002

The CFA/UFU Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement 2002 (2002 EBA) was approved by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission on 5 December 2002. The 2002 EBA is comprised of five Sections, 77 Clauses and nine Appendices.

Consultative Processes

Clause 8.2 of the 2002 EBA established a CFA/UFU Consultative Committee comprising people involved in the decision-making processes of both organisations.

Staffing

Clause 45.5 of the 2002 EBA states that the parties acknowledge that the deployment of 116 firefighters was not in accordance with the Fire Service Delivery, Quality Assurance Methodology (listed previously in this Report) and during the life of the agreement, the parties will re-examine the methodology.

Clause 45.6.1 of the 2002 EBA states that should there be any additional full-time employees employed during the life of the agreement, there will be a mix of Leading Firefighter, Fire Officer and management positions. Any such additional employees will be over and above those provided for in Clause 5.6.1.1 of the 2000 EBA.

Memorandum of Agreement

Clause 40A.1 of the 2002 EBA states that the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed by the CFA and UFU on 3 November 2002, reproduced as Appendix I to the 2002 EBA, is incorporated into and forms part of the 2002 EBA.

Clause 5 of the MOA states that, with immediate effect upon the signing of the MOA, CFA will be able to commence the implementation of interim deployment of staff in compliance with the criteria set out in clauses 5.1 and 5.2 of the MOA, which includes deploying relieving capacity to three priority new stations listed in Schedule 1 of the MOA in line with clause 6.7 and Schedule 3 of the MOA.

Clause 6.7 of the MOA states that, prior to the deployment of a fire station referred to in Schedule 1 of the MOA and without prejudice to the processes for reaching agreement referred to in clause 6.1 of the MOA, the UFU and CFA shall determine the suitable fire station infrastructure, furnishings, fittings for that location using the processes prescribed in clause 8 of the 2002 EBA, consultative processes. When the processes provided for in clause 8 of the 2002 EBA are finalised and all matters have been determined regarding a particular location, deployment of staff will occur as provided for in the principles of implementation.

08.1.4 2007/2008

2007 DEED OF AGREEMENT

The 2007 Deed of Agreement (2007 Deed), executed by the CFA and UFU, is dated 22 November 2007.

Clause 12.1 of the 2007 Deed states that the parties will determine by agreement through EBIC the number of major current career fire stations.

Clause 12.2 of the 2007 Deed states that where a review of a brigade pursuant to clause 39 (Staffing) of the 2007 EBA determines that career firefighters and or fire officers are required, then the brigade administrative officer will be transferred to another brigade unless otherwise agreed between the CFA and UFU.

The 2007 Deed then incorporates Appendix C, relating to BASOs, of the 2000 EBA, which is set out earlier in this Chapter.

Community Education Firefighter/Fire Officer

Clause 12.5 of the 2007 Deed states that a Scheduled Award stream entitled 'Community Education Firefighter/Fire Officer' has been developed by the parties to cover appropriately qualified employees who were CSFs (referred to above) who deliver community education programs. Employees who deliver such educational training programs will have an appropriate Firefighting or Fire Officer rank as agreed by the CFA and UFU.

Dispute Panel

Clause 12.7 of the 2007 Deed establishes a Dispute Panel for the purpose of resolving disputes in respect of the matters dealt with in clause 39.7 (Processes for Reaching Agreement) and in clauses 47.1.1 – 47.1.6 (Training instructors/Training) of the 2007 EBA and clauses 12.1 to 12.6 (Staffing) of the 2007 Deed and shall replace the Board of Reference established pursuant to clause 45.7.2 of the 2002 EBA.

The Dispute Panel will be constituted by a chairperson and two other members, one nominated by the UFU and one nominated by the CFA. The current chairperson of the Disputes Panel nominated by the (former) Minister is Robert Merriman. In determining any dispute referred to it, the Dispute Panel will have regard to all of the circumstances and in particular:

- the CFA's statutory obligations under the CFA Act;
- the CFA's obligations under the OH&S Act;
- the efficient allocation of resources having regard to employee needs; and
- the terms of Clause 12.7 of the 2007 Deed.

Clause 12.7.11 of the 2007 Deed provides that both parties agree to abide by the Dispute Panel's determinations.

Incorporation of Terms of the 2007 EBA

Clause 19 of the 2007 Deed states that:

- If a term of the 2007 EBA, or any part of a term of the 2007 EBA (Term), is void, unlawful or otherwise unenforceable as being prohibited content:
 - (a) As defined in section 356 of the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (WR Act);
 - (b) As a result of any order, decision or declaration of a Court; or
 - (c) As a result of any amendment to the provisions of the WR Act or the Regulations made under the WR Act,then to the extent that the Term is void, unlawful or otherwise unenforceable as a term of the 2007 EBA, the Term shall be incorporated into and form a term of this Deed with effect from:
 - (a) In the case of an order, decision or declaration of a Court, the date the Term ceased to have full legal operation by reason of the order, decision or declaration; and
 - (b) In the case of an amendment to the provisions of the Act or the Regulations made under the Act, the date on which the amendment commences to operate.

Termination of the 2007 Deed

Clause 26 of the 2007 Deed states that the 2007 Deed will remain in force until:

- (a) It is replaced by another Deed made between the parties;
- (b) The parties agree in writing to terminate this Deed; or
- (c) The 2007 EBA is terminated in accordance with this Clause.

At any time after 19 April 2009:

- (a) Either party to this Deed; or
- (b) A valid majority of employees whose employment is subject to the 2007 EBA at that time (Valid Majority) may make application to an arbitrator for a determination that the 2007 EBA may be terminated.

Clause 26.8 of the 2007 Deed states that the parties agree that a breach or repudiation of this Deed by one party, whether a fundamental breach or not, shall not terminate this Deed nor shall it be grounds for another party electing to treat or treating this Deed as terminated.

The 2007 Deed was varied by the Amending Deed of Agreement, explained below.

SUPPLEMENTARY DEED OF AGREEMENT

A Supplementary Deed of Agreement was executed by the CFA and UFU on 21 January 2008. It states that:

- On or about 22 November 2007, the CFA made a union collective agreement with the UFU under the WR Act entitled 'Operational Staff Agreement 2007' (the 2007 EBA). The parties also made a Deed of Agreement on the same day (2007 original Deed).
- The CFA has not sought to have the 2007 EBA approved by its employees in accordance with Division 4 of Part 8 of the WR Act.
- The CFA is concerned that the 2007 EBA may contain prohibited content within the meaning of the WR Act and Regulations.
- The parties will on the date of this Deed send to the Workplace Authority Director a joint letter together with a copy of the 2007 EBA requesting that he/she examines the 2007 EBA and advise whether it is compliant with the WR Act and Regulations regarding prohibited content.
- If the Workplace Authority Director advises the parties that the 2007 EBA does contain prohibited content, the parties will within seven days of receiving that advice:
 - Make an amended union collective agreement (Amended Agreement) which will be identical to the 2007 EBA except that the prohibited content identified by the Workplace Authority Director will be removed; and
 - Make a deed amending the 2007 original Deed to include in it the removed content and to provide that references in the 2007 original Deed to the 2007 EBA will be read as references to the Amended Agreement.

WORKPLACE AUTHORITY ADVICE

On 11 February 2008, a Senior Legal Officer from the Workplace Authority wrote to the Executive Officer of Employee Relations at the CFA and advised that:

- The Workplace Authority has reviewed the 2007 EBA and has concluded that it contains prohibited content.
- Section 356 of the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* and Chapter 2, Part 9, Division 7.1 of the Workplace Relations Regulations 2006 set out those matters that constitute prohibited content. Several of those regulations are as follows:

- Regulation 8.5(1)(h) provides that a term of a EBA is prohibited content to the extent that it deals with restrictions on the engagement of independent contractors and requirements relating to the conditions of their engagement.
- Regulation 8.5(1)(i) provides that a term of a EBA is prohibited content to the extent that it deals with restrictions on the engagement of labour hire workers, and requirements relating to the conditions of their engagement, imposed on an entity or person of whom the labour hire worker perform work under a contract with a labour hire agency.

The Workplace Authority concluded that clauses 38.5 (Additional or New Allowances), 39.7 (Processes for reaching Agreement), 47 (Training instructors/Training), 48.5 (External Appointees) and Appendix F (Operations Officer Qualification) of the 2007 EBA contained prohibited content, and were unable to conclude whether clauses 39.82 (CSF Transitional Arrangement) and Appendix B (Resourcing of Training Delivery and Assessment) contained prohibited content. These clauses include:

- Clause 39.8.2, which states:
 - **Transitional Arrangements**
Should a current Community Support Facilitator who occupies one of these positions terminate their employment with the CFA then that position will only be filled with a career firefighter.

The Workplace Authority found that clause 39.8.2 of the 2007 EBA restricts the engagement of independent contractors and labour hire workers by specifying that only career firefighters are to fill certain positions and therefore breaches Regulations 8.5(1)(h) and (i).

- Clause 47, which states:
 - **Training instructors/Training**
CFA agrees in principle that all paid operational training and assessment shall be undertaken by full time personnel. However, there may be areas that require instructors to be other than full time. Employment of other than full time instructors shall be determined on an agreed needs basis between the parties. Such agreement will only be reached if it is established that such work cannot be undertaken by full time employees including the use of appropriately qualified firefighters and fire officers, In determining this matter, the parties will take into account:
 - The nature of the operational training required.
 - The training skills and operational competencies possessed by full time employees available.
 - The location at which training is required.
 - The number of instructors required to meet the need, and
 - The availability of volunteers.

The UFU's agreement to the use of other than full time instructors will not be unreasonably withheld.

The Workplace Authority found that clause 47 of the 2007 EBA imposes a restriction on the employer in who it may engage to perform training. Clause 47 requires consultation and agreement between the employer and the union before the employer can engage training providers who are not full time employees. As a result, the employer would need to acquire the UFU's consent before it could engage training providers who were independent contractors or labour hire workers. Accordingly, clause 47.1.1 of the 2007 EBA would restrict the employer's ability to engage these types of persons and therefore contravenes Regulations 8.5(1)(h) and (i).

AMENDING DEED OF AGREEMENT

In accordance with the Supplementary Deed of Agreement, the CFA and UFU made an amended collective Agreement (the 2008 EBA) and amended the 2007 Original Deed by executing an Amending Deed of Agreement on 14 May 2008, which inserts content identified as prohibited in the 2007 EBA, into the amended Deed.

Schedule B of the Amending Deed contains a consolidation of the 2007 original Deed as amended by the Amending Deed, now known as the 2008 Deed of Agreement.

2008 DEED OF AGREEMENT

The 2008 Deed of Agreement (2008 Deed) is dated 22 November 2007 and contains several new clauses as inserted by the Amending Deed including:

- 12.5.2 – Should a current CSF who occupies one of these positions terminate their employment with the CFA then that position will only be filled with a career firefighter.
- 12.7.1 – The Dispute Panel will be able to resolve disputes in respect of matters in Clauses 14.1 and 18A of the 2008 Deed.
- 14.1 - CFA agrees in principle that all paid operational training and assessment shall be undertaken by full time personnel. However, there may be areas that require instructors to be other than full time. Employment of other than full time instructors shall be determined on an agreed needs basis between the parties. Such agreement will only be reached if it is established that such work cannot be undertaken by full time employees including the use of appropriately qualified firefighters and fire officers, In determining this matter, the parties will take into account:
 - The nature of the operational training required.
 - The training skills and operational competencies possessed by full time employees available.
 - The location at which training is required.
 - The number of instructors required to meet the need, and
 - The availability of volunteers.

The UFU's agreement to the use of other than full time instructors will not be unreasonably withheld.

- 18A - The parties agree that any new allowance and/or variation to an existing allowances claim will be referred to the Disputes Panel for determination. Both parties reserve their rights to put their respective positions.

CFA/UFU OPERATIONAL STAFF AGREEMENT 2008

The CFA/UFU Operational Staff Agreement 2008 (2008 EBA) was signed by the CFA and UFU on 14 May 2008 and is comprised of six Sections, 76 Clauses and seven Appendices.

Lateral Entry

Clause 39.11 of the 2008 EBA states that where it can be demonstrated that no suitably qualified internal applicant exists and after advertising internally on two occasions, CFA will seek to fill the vacant position through lateral entry in accordance with this Clause. Prior to seeking external advertisement, CFA will consult with the UFU who will be provided with seven working days to offer suggested alternatives for consideration by CFA.

In the first instance, where there is a suitably qualified applicant for the position who is currently a paid firefighter or fire officer from another recognised fire service, that person will be appointed.

Where more than one such applicant applies, the appointment will be from amongst those applicants. Lateral entry will not be sought for positions below the rank of Qualified Firefighter with Leading Firefighter qualifications. Applicants through external advertisements must be able to demonstrate that they have the requisite skills, competence and experience to perform the tasks required of the position being advertised consistent with the key selection criteria of the position description.

In the case of Fire Officer 1, the applicant must have a minimum of five years of continuous experience as a firefighter, in addition to the required competencies. Where lateral entry from a recognised fire service occurs and provided that the applicant's skills and qualifications are current and they have recent service (in the last two years) an orientation course on appointment will be for one month's duration. Further to the orientation course, the parties agree that a "gap analysis" will be performed for the employee highlighting any CFA specific skills that need to be obtained and these will be obtained during the probationary period of six months. Such entrants will form part of minimum staffing after the one month's orientation course.

Operational Use of Instructors

Clause 48.9.1 of the 2008 EBA states that the role of instructors is the coordination, development/preparation and delivery of training consistent with their agreed position description. Instructors skills and experience may be utilized to mentor career staff or volunteers.

Clause 48.9.2 of the 2008 EBA states that an instructor will not:

- Perform operational response duties normally undertaken by Career Firefighters, Fire Officers, Operations Officers, Operations Managers and/or volunteers.
- Be a Regional Duty Officer or perform Regional Duty Officer (RDO) activities.

Clause 48.9.3 of the 2008 EBA states that instructors may be used in a functional or specialist role within an Incident Management Team (IMT) at a type 2 or 3 incident. The instructors must have the requisite qualifications and endorsement by the Chief Officer. When considering the requirement to utilise instructors in a functional or specialist role within an IMT, the Operations Manager should have regard for offering these operational opportunities to trained Firefighters and Fire Officers who require skills acquisition, skills maintenance, further experience and/or mentoring to become endorsed or maintain their skills.

Improved Skills Enhancement and Training Delivery Arrangements

Clause 49.1 of the 2008 EBA states that the joint consultative process to review a broad range of training and development related matters will continue. Specific matters to be addressed through this process include:

- The introduction of a system whereby employees will maintain skills and competencies, which are essential to the performance of their duties.
- The implementation of a voluntary interchange program to enable skills maintenance and contribute to employees promotability.
- Delivery of competency-based training and its associated assessment processes.
- Defining the skills required by each rank.
- Processes to enable career personnel to provide competency-based training and assessment for volunteers.
- The introduction of a staff development framework to facilitate career development opportunities and programs for employees covered by this agreement.
- Equitable, career and promotional advancement through skill attainment.

- The establishment of flexible arrangements for employees' attendance at specialized training programs.
- Career development programs off station.
- The introduction of a recognition of prior learning system which is acceptable to both parties.

CFA/UFU OPERATIONS MANAGERS/OPERATIONS OFFICERS ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT 2007 and OPERATIONS OFFICERS AND OPERATIONS MANAGERS DEED OF AGREEMENT 2008

The CFA and UFU have also executed an Enterprise Agreement and a Deed of Agreement for Operations Officers and Operations Managers. It is not necessary to set out the content of those agreements.

08.2 2010

FURTHER AMENDING DEED OF AGREEMENT AND CONSOLIDATED 2007 DEED OF AGREEMENT

CFA and UFU executed a Further Amending Deed of Agreement on 20 August 2010.

The Further Deed states that, on or about 14 May 2008, the parties made an Amending Deed of Agreement which had the effect of amending the 2007 Deed of Agreement. The amended 2007 Deed is referred to in the Further Deed as the Consolidated Deed. The parties now by this Further Deed vary the Consolidated Deed.

The Further Deed amends the Consolidated Deed (previously known as the 2008 Deed of Agreement):

- By amending the title to read 'Consolidated 2007 Deed of Agreement'.
- By deleting Clauses 26.1 to 26.8 of the 2007 Deed and inserting in place the following:
 - "26.1 This Deed will remain in force until:*
 - (a) it is replaced by another Deed made between the parties; or*
 - (b) it is terminated by Deed between the parties.*
 - 26.2 Any termination or variation or cessation of effect of the 2008 Agreement will not have the effect of terminating this Deed.*
 - 26.3 The parties agree that a breach or repudiation of this Deed by one party, whether a fundamental breach or not, shall not terminate this Deed nor shall it be grounds for another party electing to treat or treating this Deed as terminated."*

2010 DEED OF AGREEMENT

The CFA and UFU executed the 2010 Deed of Agreement (2010 Deed) on 20 August 2010.

Enhancement of Brigade Support

Clause 8.2 of the 2010 Deed states that existing employees employed as BASOs shall remain in employment under existing arrangements but shall be given the opportunity of enhanced career development. One such opportunity that shall be given is the opportunity to convert into an operational firefighting stream by undertaking a recruit and training course, the content of which shall be agreed by the CFA and UFU. The clause states that BASOs may choose to undertake this course at their own discretion. If a BASO successfully passes this course, they will be appointed as Leading Firefighter (Brigade Support). Any other opportunities will be by agreement between the parties.

Clause 8.4 of the 2010 Deed states that the parties agree that to facilitate career enhancement and ongoing increased brigade support, where after the date of the 2010 Deed, a BASO position becomes vacant and/or the CFA decides to appoint a person to a position of BASO, then the appointment to the position of BASO shall be in accordance with the position description developed between the parties.

Additional Staffing

Clause 10 of the 2010 Deed states that the parties refer to the Board of Reference pursuant to the 2007 Deed chaired by Robert Merriman and to the three decisions made by the Board of Reference (Dispute Panel). Clause 10 of the 2010 Deed varies the 2010 EA to give effect to those decisions. The parties acknowledge that the State of Victoria proposes to announce an increase in firefighter numbers. The parties agree not to vary the 2010 EA until after the State of Victoria's announcement.

Clause 10 of the 2010 Deed states further that following such announcement, the parties will vary the 2010 EA to insert the following additional clause 27.4, together with its subclauses.

Clause 10.4 of the 2010 Deed states that should the State of Victoria not make an announcement of increased firefighter numbers, and in any event prior to such announcement, clause 27.4 below forms an effective part of this Deed and is enforceable pursuant to the terms of the 2010 Deed.

"27.4. Additional Staffing

- 27.4.1. The parties are committed to protecting employee health, safety and welfare. During the life of this agreement, the current staffing ratios, locations and levels will be increased. Having reviewed the number and frequency of firefighter attendance at emergency calls throughout several locations in Victoria, and having regard to other relevant factors including population growth and increased risk factors, and to ensure the appropriate level of fire cover for the community, the Chief Officer has determined that additional employees are required as specified in Clause 27.4.2.*
- 27.4.2. The CFA will employ an additional 342 career firefighters over the next 6 years.*
- 27.4.3. The CFA will conduct a minimum of 3 recruit training courses per year, or a greater number of recruit training courses to be agreed between the UFU and the CFA to train the new recruits to give effect to Clause 27.4.2. Neither party will unreasonably withhold agreement for a greater number of recruit training courses per year.*
- 27.4.4. Each recruit training course will train a minimum of 30 recruits, or a greater number to be agreed between the UFU and the CFA. Neither party will unreasonably withhold agreement to a greater number of recruits per course.*
- 27.4.5. In addition, the CFA and the UFU agree to explore the possibility of holding additional recruitment courses, to be run either by the CFA or by the CFA in conjunction with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. Recruit training courses will continue to be run in accordance with this agreement until the 342 additional firefighters have been employed.*
- 27.4.6. At the conclusion of each recruit training course or as otherwise agreed between the CFA and the UFU, the CFA will deploy all qualified recruit firefighters following consultation in accordance with the recommendations of the Board of Reference.*
- 27.4.7. On or before September 1 of each year, the CFA will request that its employees approve a proposed variation to Schedule 1 of the agreement to record all deployments in the*

preceding year. For the avoidance of doubt, each variation will insert into Schedule 1 the deployments undertaken in the preceding year. Following each approval by the CFA's employees, the CFA and the UFU will take all necessary steps to cause Fair Work Australia to approve the variation to the agreement.

27.4.8. *In the event that the CFA has not been able to employ the additional 342 firefighters by the nominal expiry date of the agreement, the CFA undertakes to continue employing firefighters and conducting recruit courses in accordance with Clauses 27.4.3, 27.4.4, 27.4.5 and 27.4.6 until such time as the figure of 342 additional firefighters in Clause 27.4.2 is reached.*

27.4.9. *The UFU asserts that future growth in staffing levels is needed. As such the UFU reserves this matter as an item to be pursued for a successor agreement."*

Incorporation of Terms of the 2010 EA

Clause 14.1 of the 2010 Deed states that if a term of the 2010 EA, or any part of a term of the 2010 EA (Term) is void, unlawful or otherwise unenforceable:

- (a) As being an unlawful term as defined in section 194 of the *Fair Work Act 2009*; or
 - (b) As being a term that is not a permitted matter as defined in section 172 of the *Fair Work Act*;
or
 - (c) As a result of any order, decision or declaration of a court; or
 - (d) As a result of any order or decision of Fair Work Australia; or
 - (e) As a result of any amendment to the provisions of the *Fair Work Act* or Regulations
- then to the extent that the Term is void, unlawful or otherwise unenforceable as a term of the 2010 EA, the Term shall be incorporated into and form a term of the 2010 Deed.

CFA/UFU OPERATIONAL STAFF ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT 2010

The CFA/UFU Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement 2010 (2010 EA) was executed by the CFA and UFU on 3 September 2010 and is comprised of seven Parts, 164 Clauses and 15 Schedules. The 2010 EA came into operation from 28 October 2010, following approval by Fair Work Australia (FWA), and has a nominal expiry date of 30 September 2013.

The 2010 EA was made pursuant to the *Fair Work Act* and incorporates many clauses in the previous EBAs. Clauses that may have a direct or indirect impact on volunteers will be explored later in this Report.

Of interest are the following clauses:

CFA Policies

Clause 24.1 of the 2010 EA states that the CFA currently has a range of policies that affect employees covered by the agreement. Policy that is dealt with elsewhere in the 2010 EA may only be varied by agreement. Should the CFA elect to modify, delete or add to existing policy that affects employees then any change or addition will be the subject of consultation pursuant to Clause 13 of the 2010 EA. Should any policy be inconsistent with a term of this agreement, then it will be invalid to the extent of any inconsistency.

Safe Staffing Levels

Clause 27.1 of the 2010 EA states that, consistent with the Chief Officer's direction and for reasons including employee health, safety and welfare, the current staffing ratios, locations and levels as set out in Schedule 1 of the 2010 EA will be maintained as a minimum for the life of this agreement. Accordingly, CFA will employ at all times:

- A minimum of 99 employees each shift in accordance with Schedule 1 of the 2010 EA;
- The number and rank of employees allocated to the number and rank of firefighting positions at all given stations in accordance with the chart in Schedule 1 of the 2010 EA;
- The number and rank of employees allocated to any other position referred to in the chart in Schedule 1 of the 2010 EA.

Further, the CFA will not make any employee redundant, either by targeted or voluntary redundancy.

Clause 27.3 of the 2010 EA states that the parties acknowledge the need to increase firefighting resources and note that the Government is currently considering its response to the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. In particular, the parties note that the Commission's Final Report makes reference, at 10.6.2, to the need to increase the number of career firefighters and integrated stations. The parties will work with Government to respond to the Board of Reference and the Royal Commission with regard to this matter.

COMMENT

The Inquiry notes that the VBRC states in its Final Report at 10.6.2 that:

"Planning identifies the requirement for a further seven integrated stations by 2020, and a Board of Reference decision in 2009 identified the requirement for an increase in integrated stations and career firefighters."

Clause 27.4 (Additional Staffing) is inserted in the 2010 EA as set out in the 2010 Deed.

Secondment and Lateral Entry

Clause 28.1 of the 2010 EA states that it is the parties' intention that vacant positions within the CFA that can be filled by career firefighters/officers will be filled by CFA career firefighters/officers. However, there will be instances where short-term secondment is appropriate. Further, there may be instances where an internal CFA appointee cannot be found to fill a permanent vacancy, even after the provision of appropriate support and training.

Secondment

Clause 28.3 of the 2010 EA states that where the CFA has identified a need to second to a long-term vacant position, the following shall apply:

- The vacant position will be filled by secondment for no longer than two years;
- Secondment will only be into positions that hold the rank of Leading Firefighter, Station Officer or above;
- The person seconded into the position (the secondee) must be an operational firefighting employee of a recognised fire service. A 'recognised fire service' is a fire service of a government of Australia or New Zealand. It does not include a private firefighting service;
- The secondee must hold the same or equivalent rank as that of the position to which they are being seconded;
- The secondee will undertake a short course of about 3 to 4 weeks duration to ensure that they possess any CFA specific requirements and skills relevant to the position. These requirements will be as determined by Skills Australia. Once this course is completed, the secondee will form part of the CFA's minimum staffing complement. However, the secondee will not be counted towards the CFA's minimum establishment figures.

Lateral Entry

Clause 28.4 of the 2010 EA states that the CFA may only permanently fill a vacant position by lateral entry in accordance with the steps in this clause.

- The CFA must advertise any vacancy at least twice internally (i.e. to operational employees in one of the firefighting ranks).
- If there is still a vacancy, the CFA may second someone into the position in accordance with clause 28.3 above.
- If there is still a vacancy at the end of any secondment period, the position will be advertised internally once more. If there is no internal applicant, the position may be offered to the secondee on a permanent basis.

If there is no secondment, or if a secondee does not wish to take up the position on a permanent basis, then the CFA may seek external applications. The following conditions will apply:

- Lateral entry will only be into positions that hold the rank of Leading Firefighter, Station Officer or above.
- Applications can only be received from, and the position may only be filled by, an operational employee of a recognised fire service.
- Any applicant for such a position must hold the same or equivalent rank as that of the position being advertised.
- The successful applicant will undertake a short course to ensure that they possess any CFA specific requirements and skills relevant to the position. These requirements will be as determined by Skills Australia.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Clause 31.1 of the 2010 EA states that the employer will ensure that employees are not subjected to any form of harassment, that its employment practices are non-discriminatory and that all workers have equal access to multi-skilling, career path opportunities and all terms and conditions of employment.

Recruit Course

Clause 67.2 of the 2010 EA states that it is the intention of the parties that there will be no entry to the operational stream of firefighting other than through the recruit course. Accordingly, the CFA will not appoint, promote, progress or transfer a person to any rank referred to in this clause above, or to a position or classification holding any such rank, and no person may hold such a rank, position or classification, unless that person is (and immediately prior to the appointment, promotion, progression or transfer was) an operational employee:

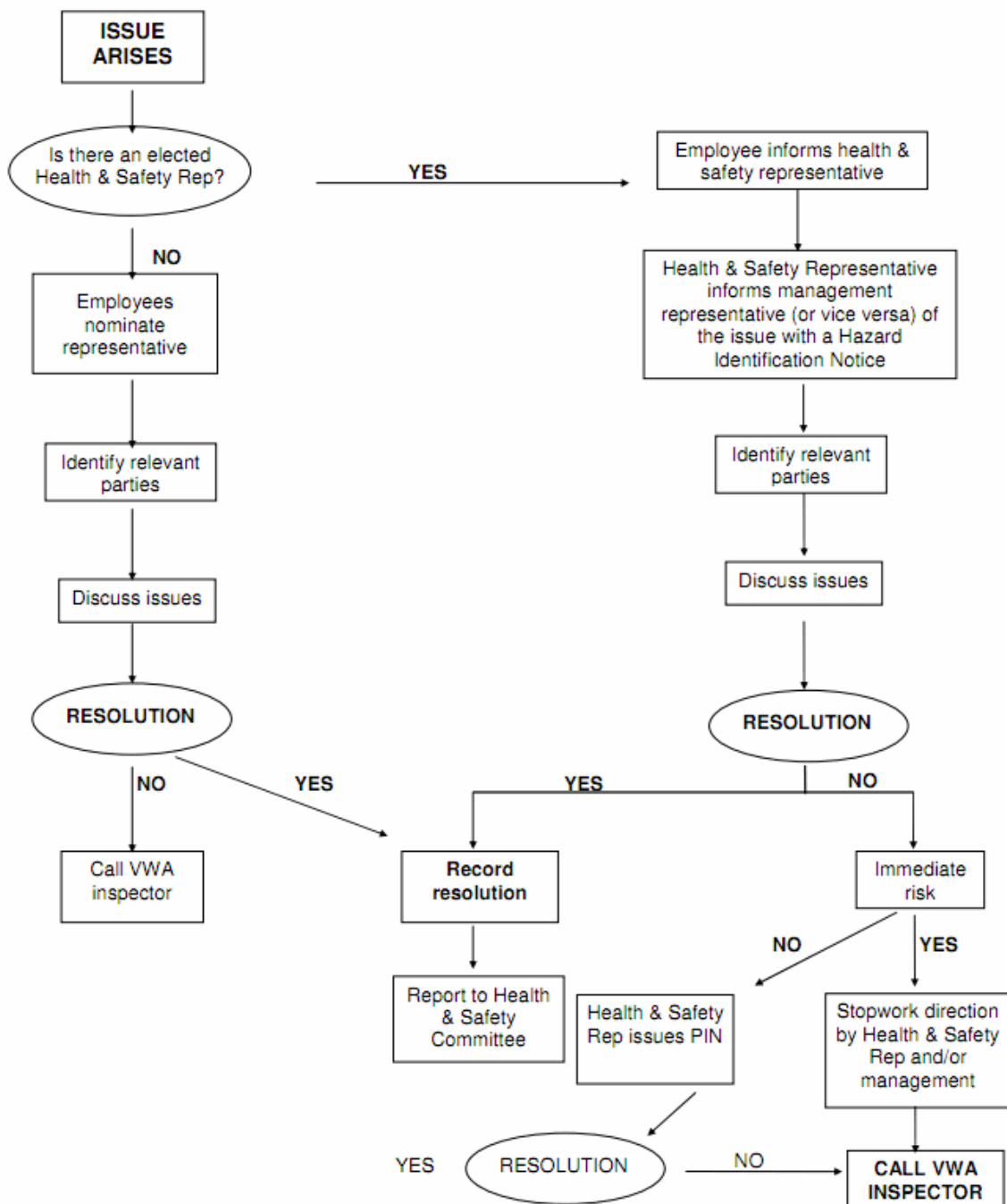
- (a) who holds a CFA rank (listed below) and has completed the service required to hold that rank as listed in clause 11 of the 2010 EA; and
 - Recruit.
 - Firefighter Level 1.
 - Firefighter Level 2.
 - Firefighter Level 3.
 - Qualified Firefighter.
 - Qualified Firefighter with LFF qualifications.
 - Senior Firefighter.
 - Leading Firefighter.
 - Station Officer.
 - Senior Station Officer.
- (b) holds the prerequisites for those ranks to which they are to be promoted, appointed, progressed or transferred; and
- (c) has completed any other necessary assessment and possesses any other necessary prerequisites for appointment, promotion, progression or transfer.

Occupational Health and Safety

Clause 32 of the 2010 EA states that the parties agree that an efficient fire service is one which is cognisant of the importance of a safe working environment. To facilitate such an environment the provisions of Schedule 3 will apply and be complied with. The parties agree to review Schedule 3 to the 2010 EA within six months from approval of the agreement.

Schedule 3 to the 2010 EA is the Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) Policy and Processes Agreement between the UFU and CFA. Schedule 1 to the OH&S Policy and Processes Agreement sets out a flowchart of the Issue Resolution Procedure for resolving any reported OH&S issue.

Diagram 16: OH&S Issue Resolution Flowchart - Schedule 1 of the Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Processes Agreement between the UFU and CFA



COMMENT

The Inquiry notes that the new Work Health and Safety laws that will come into operation on 1 January 2012 include volunteers in the definition of workers, thereby allowing volunteers to be elected as Health and Safety Representatives.

Community Education

Clause 71 of the 2010 EA states that the parties agree that a fundamental role of modern Firefighters and Station Officers is to provide community education on fire prevention and awareness. The parties therefore agree that career Firefighters/Station Officers or when such Firefighters/Station Officers are not available, volunteer Firefighters/Officers will be the deliverers of community education on fire prevention and awareness. It is further agreed that an Award stream entitled "*Community Education Firefighter/Fire Officer*" has been developed by the parties to cover appropriately qualified employees who were CSFs who deliver community education programs. Employees who deliver such educational training programs will have an appropriate Firefighting or Station Officer rank as agreed by the parties. Should a current employee who occupies one of these positions terminate their employment with the CFA then that position will only be filled by a Career Firefighter or Station Officer.

Day Staffing

Clause 80 of the 2010 EA states that a station may only be staffed on an agreed roster other than the 10/14 roster (8am to 6pm/6pm to 8am) where the 2010 EA so stipulates or where there exists a prior written agreement between the UFU and CFA to staff that station at a specified later time on a 10/14 roster. Any such written agreement reached about a date on which to staff a station on a 10/14 roster is enforceable as if it were a term of the 2010 EA.

Infrastructure

Clause 91 of the 2010 EA states that the parties have agreed to a template plan and guidelines for new integrated fire station design. That document is the Integrated Fire Station Design Guidelines 2004 or its replacement as agreed between the parties. The parties agree to abide by that document in all matters associated with fire station design and construction. An agreed copy of the template plan and guidelines will be provided to the President of FWA and placed on the file at the time the agreement is submitted to FWA.

New Appliances and Equipment

Clause 92 of the 2010 EA states that the CFA will use its best endeavours to develop within the first six months of the 2010 EA, guidelines for the design and specifications of appliances and equipment to be used in any station built after the date of approval of the 2010 EA.

Schedules

Schedule 5 of the 2010 EA sets out an Emergency Response Training Framework, which forms part of the 2010 EA.

Schedule 6 of the 2010 EA sets out the CFA UFU Joint Statement on Operational Training and Assessment. One of the objectives is that all operational training must equip career Firefighters, Station Officers and volunteers with the competencies, knowledge and skills necessary to operate on the fire ground in a competent and safe manner.

Schedule 15 of the 2010 EA sets out the Wildfire Duties, which will be used as guidelines only until they are replaced by the introduction of an endorsement process by the Chief Officer.

08.3 BOARD OF REFERENCE/DISPUTE PANEL DECISION

Introduction

Reference has already been made to the importance of transparency with respect to industrial agreements, and clauses in them have been referred to. As part of that review, there has been reference to the Board of Reference and Dispute Panel. An issue and concern that has been consistently raised by volunteers is a Dispute Panel decision in relation to the engagement of 342 additional career firefighters. Volunteers have expressed concern as to the effect that such engagement could have upon their involvement in the CFA and that they were not consulted in relation to such engagement. They felt that, under the Volunteer Charter, it was a matter upon which they should be consulted.

Consequently, in the interests of transparency and the facts being clear, a review of the Dispute Panel proceedings and decision is necessary and follows:

Establishment of the Board of Reference and Dispute Panel

Section 2 of the 2000 EBA established a Board of Reference to resolve disputes between the CFA and UFU, relating to staffing levels in new and current integrated stations, review of staffing needs at other fire brigades, and the employment of training instructors, by making recommendations to the CFA and UFU on a course of action to resolve matters. Subject to the 2000 EBA, the CFA and UFU agreed to abide by the recommendations of the Board of Reference. The 2002 EBA continued this arrangement.

The 2007 Deed established a Dispute Panel to replace the Board of Reference. The Panel consisted of an independent Chair nominated by the former Minister, being former Industrial Relations Commissioner Robert Merriman, CFA Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington representing the CFA and MFESB Operational Commander Ken Brown, representing the UFU.

Clause 12.7.10 of the 2007 Deed states that, in determining any dispute referred to it, the Dispute Panel will have regard to all the circumstances, and in particular:

- (a) the CFA's statutory obligations under the CFA Act;
- (b) the CFA's obligations under the OH&S Act;
- (c) the efficient allocation of resources having regard to employee needs; and
- (d) the terms of the clause.

The 2007 Deed states that both the CFA and UFU agree to abide by the Dispute Panel's determinations.

Dispute Panel Decision

In February 2008, the UFU instigated proceedings to the Dispute Panel regarding a review of staffing needs in 25 stations, of which five were already integrated and 20 were new locations identified for future integration. In March 2008, Mr Merriman commenced chairing a number of conferences dealing with those issues. CFA and UFU provided submissions and participated in conciliation and arbitration regarding those 25 locations, which failed to reach agreement.

The Dispute Panel issued a decision on 12 March 2009 and further decisions on 7 and 23 April 2009 and 18 August 2009. By majority decision, the Dispute Panel found that the following should apply to these stations:

1	Rowville	24/7
2	Warrandyte	Day going to 24/7
3	Pakenham	24/7
4	South Morang	24/7
5	Phillip Island	Seasonal
6	Mooroopna	Day going to 24/7
7	Ocean Grove	Day going to 24/7
8	Portland	24/7
9	Mildura	1 additional firefighter per shift
10	Lara	Day going to 24/7
11	Epping	CFA to forward letter to MFESB requesting support for Epping
12	Geelong West	Geelong City to increase by 2 firefighters per shift
13	Noble Park	Increase of 1 firefighter per shift in Springvale and Dandenong
14	Narre Warren	Casey East station to be manned 1+1, with transition to 1+1+2
15	Hastings	Day roster with progression to 24/7
16	Sale	Day roster with progression to 24/7
17	Warragul	Day roster with progression to 24/7
18	Lorne	Seasonal 24/7 roster
19	Echuca	No change
20	Melton	Increase of 1 firefighter per shift
21	Ballarat	Ballarat City to increase by 2 firefighters per shift
22	Werribee	Hoppers Crossing to increase to 1+1+2. CFA to develop a Strategic Service Delivery Plan to address fire service delivery into the Werribee area.
23	Sunbury	Increase to 1+1+2.
24	Mornington	Increase to 1+1+2.
25	Diamond Creek	Increase to 1+1+2 in Eltham. CFA to develop a Strategic Service Delivery Plan to address service delivery into the Diamond Creek area.

Note: 1+1+2 in this context means 1 Station Officer, 1 Leading Firefighter and 2 Firefighters

The Panel also determined that the CFA must develop a Volunteer Development Program in consultation with the UFU and the Volunteer Association to enable adequate resources to accomplish the outcomes above.

The Panel acknowledged its determinations would require significant financial resources for infrastructure and employee costs, and such funding would be a matter for Government.

In its decision on 18 August 2009, the Dispute Panel stated that it was informed of the existence of the CFA Regional and Provincial Growth Strategy, which included the Panel's determinations and proposed an increase of 684 Operational Staff.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE CFA

2009

CFA Information Paper – Dispute Panel Impacts Phase 1

On 25 May 2009, following the Dispute Panel's determinations, the then Chief Officer submitted a Confidential Information Paper to the CFA Board. The CFA has provided the Inquiry with a copy of the Paper.

The Paper noted that the Dispute Panel determinations would *“have a significant impact on the Volunteer Charter and values”* and *“... may also have a significant impact on volunteer morale and motivation, which may in turn diminish volunteer availability and capacity. Impacted volunteer brigades will require support in regard to future integration and change management.”*

The Paper also noted that the impact on CFA recruitment planning would be significant as it takes eight years to build a recruit to Fire Officer level, therefore a detailed workforce plan would be required.

The Paper acknowledged that CFA was currently challenged in its ability to provide a service to certain areas of the outer metropolitan area, where growth is rapid.

The Paper also stated that, *“while the Dispute Panel determinations do not include any timeframes for possible deployment of any additional staff, the current (2010) EA negotiation environment, coupled with impending State elections in 2009 creates an opportunity for industrial bodies to influence Government on the matter of timeframes and funding arrangements.”*

The Paper concludes that the CFA Board should be aware that a risk was *“the final decisions being taken out of CFA’s control, e.g. decision and/or determinations made by Government in collaboration with industrial bodies.”*

Chief Officer’s 3-Stage Plan

At the July 2009 CFA Board meeting, the then Chief Officer provided a 3-stage plan for future requirements for additional operational staff to ensure CFA could fulfil its service delivery responsibilities over the next ten years. The 3-stage plan outlined three stages of career firefighter increases as follows:

- Stage 1 257 additional firefighters and 110 additional instructors and support staff.
- Stage 2 215 additional firefighters and 20 additional instructors and support staff.
- Stage 3 212 additional firefighters.

In addition, the then Chief Officer sought support for resources to his Top 10 areas of Rowville, Casey East, Warrandyte, Pakenham, Mildura, Portland, Geelong West, Noble Park, South Morang and Ocean Grove. Of the ten locations, Mildura and Portland were already integrated with the remainder, fully volunteer stations.

In November 2009, the then Chief Officer provided to the CFA Board revised priorities with the key addition of Eltham to the Top 10 areas. The CFA Board supported the then Chief Officer’s request to Government to seek funding for his 3-stage plan.

The CFA submits to the Inquiry that its position was that all manning needs would be established by the Chief Officer’s designation of need. The CFA observes that the UFU saw the Merriman Dispute Panel outcomes as the driver.

Government Funding Request

In November 2009, the CEO of the CFA wrote to the Executive Director of the Department of Justice seeking further advice of the Department’s consideration of funding for *CFA Operational Priorities for Outer Metropolitan and Regional Growth (Merriman Dispute Panel Outcomes)* for incorporation in its planning and budgeting processes.

The letter enclosed a *Summary Table of Indicative Costs to Implement the Dispute Panel Outcomes in Three Stages*. It provided for 684 operational staff and 130 training instructors and support staff over three stages, with a total estimated cost of \$412.68 million (Capital and Once-off costs).

The Table notes that the costs presented provide a preliminary indication of the financial impact of the proposals and that more detailed investigation, planning and analysis would be required given the significance of the increase in operational personnel to be recruited, trained and supported by CFA.

2010

On 27 August 2010, the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services announced a \$131 million package for the recruitment of 342 additional permanent firefighters at CFA over the next six years and 100 at MFESB to *“give our firefighting agencies the additional frontline firefighters they need to protect our community into the future”*.

Clause 27.4 of the 2010 EA signed by the CFA and UFU on 3 September 2010 and approved by FWA on 21 October 2010 provides for CFA to employ an additional 342 career firefighters over the next six years, and has been set out earlier in this Chapter.

The 2010 Deed of Agreement was signed by the CFA and UFU on 20 August 2010.

As noted earlier, Clause 10 of the 2010 Deed states that the parties refer to the three decisions made by the Board of Reference/Dispute Panel. Clause 10 of the 2010 Deed varies the 2010 EA to give effect to those decisions. The 2010 Deed states that the CFA and UFU acknowledge that the State of Victoria proposes to announce an increase in firefighter numbers and agree not to vary the 2010 EA until after the State of Victoria’s announcement.

Clause 10 of the 2010 Deed states further that following such announcement, the parties will vary the 2010 EA to insert additional clause 27.4, together with its subclauses.

Clause 10.4 of the 2010 Deed states that should the State of Victoria not make an announcement of increased firefighter numbers, and in any event, prior to such announcement, clause 27.4 forms an effective part of the 2010 Deed and is enforceable pursuant to the terms of the 2010 Deed.

2011

Since the development of CFA’s 3-stage plan by the then Chief Officer, there has been an interim Chief Officer who was of the view that there should be a re-engagement of what a resource allocation model should consider, that is, the Continuum of Support, referred to in Chapter 18.

The current Chief Officer is undertaking a project, which seeks to set a direction for resource allocation. This is further explored in Chapter 11.

The CFA advises that the 342 new paid firefighters are to be recruited and trained over a six year period. 25 recruits graduated in June 2011 and another 25 new recruits have commenced training.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria Submission

VFBV have submitted that they are deeply concerned that the process and decision of the Dispute Panel sets a precedent for determining future paid staffing decisions. They believe the Dispute Panel decision overrides the statutory role of the Chief Officer and CFA in relation to operational staffing and resource deployment and causes CFA to surrender operational decisions to an

external industrial relations panel. VFBV submit that implementation will be costly and may force diversion of funds from resourcing volunteers to pay for paid staff decisions.

VFBV contends that there was no consultation with them, as volunteer representatives, prior to the decision being made to recruit additional paid firefighters, clearly in breach of the consultation requirements in the Volunteer Charter. The VFBV raised its concerns with CFA on 9 April 2009 and noted that, although they support the current integrated model, they do not support industrial agreements that override the statutory role of the Chief Officer and the CFA to determine operational staffing and resource deployment.

In its response to the VFBV, CFA advised that the allocation of paid staff to brigades was a treatment option that would be considered only after brigade support and viability initiatives were first actively pursued in accordance with the principles of the Continuum of Support, which is outlined in Chapter 18.

COMMENT

It is clear that the changing risk profile in Victoria, with the development of new urban areas and extension of urban growth boundaries will place significant pressure on the CFA to ensure its service delivery standards are maintained. Inevitably, this will result in more paid firefighters being required to meet the service needs. The issue is the process by which that is determined and how and by whom the decision is made.

There can be no doubt that the engagement of additional career firefighters may affect the involvement of volunteers. Consequently, having regard to the Volunteer Charter, this is a matter upon which volunteers can reasonably be expected to be consulted. The processes for addressing service needs and allocating resources must be clear and transparent. In my view, a decision such as this which involves an important allocation of resources and possible consequences on volunteer involvement should be made by the CFA Board and Chief Officer and not by a Dispute Panel or Board of Reference formed under an industrial agreement. Having regard to the Charter, such a decision should involve consultation with the VFBV and volunteers.

09. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION

09.1 INTRODUCTION

It is apparent that Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) laws have potential to affect the involvement of volunteers in the CFA. Consequently, it is necessary to make some reference to them and in particular, to the proposed national harmonisation of OH&S legislation. A review of that area follows.

Currently, all states and territories are responsible for making and enforcing their own work health and safety laws. Although there are many similarities between the laws, there are also some differences that can cause confusion.

In July 2008, the Council of Australia Governments signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement for Regulatory and Operational Reform in Occupational Health and Safety. The Agreement commits all State, Territory and Commonwealth governments to implement nationally uniform OH&S legislation.

One set of Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws throughout Australia will ensure there is a consistently high level of WHS standards and protection for all Australians wherever they work, and will, over time, reduce compliance burdens for business, particularly for businesses that operate across borders.

Safe Work Australia was established on 1 November 2009 as the new independent body to drive the development and implementation of the model WHS laws.

The model WHS laws developed by Safe Work Australia will consist of the model WHS Act, supported by model WHS Regulations and model Codes of Practice that can be readily adopted around Australia. This requires each State and Territory to pass their own laws that mirror the model WHS laws and adopt them by the end of December 2011. Victoria has played a key role in what the Act looks like, which will make moving to the new laws easier for Victorian employers and workers.

Following public comment, the final version of the model WHS Act was published by Safe Work Australia on 26 November 2010 and will replace Victoria's as of 1 January 2012. Public comment on the model WHS Regulations and priority Codes of Practice closed on 4 April 2011. The development and implementation of further model Codes of Practice will continue beyond January 2012.

Current System

In Victoria, CFA volunteers are covered by the current *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (OH&S Act). Section 23 of the OH&S Act requires the employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons, other than employees of the employer, are not exposed to risks to their health or safety arising from the conduct or the undertaking of the employer. This includes volunteers. Section 144(5) of the OH&S Act expressly excludes volunteer officers from liability under the OH&S offence provisions.

09.2 IMPACT OF NATIONAL HARMONISATION OF OH&S LEGISLATION ON CFA

Volunteers as Workers

The most significant change to the existing OH&S regime will be that, under section 7 of the Model WHS Act, volunteers, as well as employees, will be included within the definition of 'worker'. This will have considerable impact on the CFA and will ensure that volunteers receive the same level of statutory OH&S protection as employees.

As a worker, CFA volunteers and employees will have a duty under section 28 of the WHS Act to:

- (a) take reasonable care for his or her own health and safety; and
- (b) take reasonable care that his or her acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons; and
- (c) comply, so far as the worker is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that is given by the person conducting the business or undertaking to allow the person to comply with the WHS Act; and
- (d) co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedure of the person conducting the business or undertaking relating to health or safety at the workplace that has been notified to workers.

Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking

In all current OH&S Acts, employers have the primary duty of care. In the Model WHS Act, the duty of care provision applies to 'a person conducting a business or undertaking' (PCBU). This is a much broader definition and will be a change for most jurisdictions. The primary duty is to workers engaged in work, to workers whose activities are influenced or directed by the PCBU, and to others as a result of work carried out as part of a business or undertaking. This, therefore, includes not only an agency's own workers, but also those who are working on deployment from another agency.

Offences

Section 34 of the Model WHS Act exempts volunteers and volunteer officers from the offence provisions of failing to comply with health and safety duties including reckless conduct, except for the duties in section 28 as listed above. This is to ensure people are not deterred from volunteering on community boards by the prospect of prosecution when something goes wrong. This reflects the current position under the Victorian OH&S Act. Volunteers will still owe general duties of care under laws of negligence and related legislation (e.g. Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)) in their capacity within the organisation.

However, officers of the CFA (such as Board members) may be individually prosecuted under section 27 for failing to exercise due diligence to ensure CFA complies with its duties and obligations under the model WHS Act. The officer can be found guilty of an offence, even if the CFA, as the PCBU, is not.

Health and Safety Representatives

As workers, volunteers will be able to participate in elections as a Health and Safety Representative (HSR), and if elected, will be able to issue prohibition, infringement and provisional improvement notices.

In accordance with the model WHS Act, CFA must establish a health and safety committee constituted of health and safety representatives to facilitate co-operation between the CFA and workers in instigating, developing and carrying out measures designed to ensure the workers' health and safety, and to assist in developing WHS standards, rules and procedures.

Consultation

Another area to be considered is the duty imposed by section 47 of the WHS Act on CFA, as a PCBU, to, so far as is reasonably practicable, consult with its workers (employees and volunteers) who are, or are likely to be, directly affected by a matter relating to work health or safety, with significant penalties for failing to do so.

Consultation with workers will be required in the following matters:

- when identifying hazards and assessing risks to health and safety arising from the work carried out or to be carried out by the CFA;
- when making decisions about ways to eliminate or minimise those risks;
- when making decisions about the adequacy of facilities for the welfare of workers;
- when proposing changes that may affect the health or safety of workers;
- when making decisions about the procedures for:
 - consulting with workers; or
 - resolving work health or safety issues at the workplace; or
 - monitoring the health of workers; or

- monitoring the conditions at any workplace under the management or control of the CFA; or
- providing information and training for workers; or
- when carrying out any other activity prescribed by the regulations.

Other Obligations

An incident ground is a workplace and in an emergency situation, it may not be possible to abide by the Regulations and Codes of Practice as drafted. Exemptions for emergency services exist in some current OH&S legislation, however, the only exemption articulated in the draft WHS Regulations relates to Confined Spaces.

Under the model WHS legislation, CFA must, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the provision of adequate facilities for workers, including toilets, drinking water, washing facilities and eating facilities.

Under the model WHS legislation, CFA must ensure that an adequate number of workers are trained to administer First Aid at the workplace, or workers have access to an adequate number of other persons who have been trained to administer First Aid in the workplace.

Work, Health and Safety Issue Resolution

Section 81 of the WHS Act applies where a matter about work health and safety arises at a workplace or from the conduct of a business or undertaking and the matter is not resolved after discussion between the parties to the issue. The parties must make reasonable efforts to achieve a timely, final and effective resolution of the issue in accordance with the relevant agreed procedure or if there is none, the default procedure set out in Part 2.2 of the WHS Regulations.

Regulation 2.2.1 states that the matters to be taken into account include the following:

- the number and location of workers affected by the issue;
- any relevant accepted industry practice, if that practice is consistent with the WHS Act and Regulations;
- the requirements for the management of risks under section 17 of the WHS Act;
- what (if any) temporary measures are required;
- what (if any) further information is required;
- a method and timeline for resolution of the issue;
- whether any other persons may reasonably be required to assist the early resolution of the issue; and
- who is to be responsible for implementing the resolution of the issue on behalf of the person conducting the business or undertaking.

As soon as reasonably practicable after the resolution of an issue, the PCBU must ensure that details of the agreement between the parties are brought to the attention of the workers affected by the issue and a copy of the agreement is forwarded to any relevant HSR. Any of the parties to the resolution of an issue may forward a copy of the agreement between the parties to any union or employer organisation that represents the party.

09.3 CFA SUBMISSION TO SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA

CFA will be introducing eight OH&S Officers across the organisation to support the introduction of the new national WHS legislation, and the implementation of safety systems and activities at all levels of CFA.

In its submission to Safe Work Australia, CFA stated that it considered the potential impacts from volunteers being deemed a 'worker' had not been fully considered and that the draft WHS Regulations (as at 31 March 2011) will place barriers on an emergency service's ability to meet its legislative obligations to protect life and property.

The implications that may arise under the Model WHS Act as identified by CFA include:

- Due to the number of brigades, it is possible the number of HSRs in CFA could increase from 57 (staff only) to include over 1,200 volunteer HSRs. This may impose a burden on volunteers to comply with additional obligations and duties to meet compliance, training and consultative requirements as a HSR. The cost (\$800 per person), location (metropolitan & regional centres) and timing (five day initial course, one day refresher) of the HSR training are impediments to this. As volunteers are not employed by CFA, it may be unlikely that their employer will release them to attend this training. The WorkSafe approved courses do not offer options such as e-learning or distance education and this may significantly disadvantage volunteer HSRs, particularly those in rural areas.
- CFA has a large number of rural fire stations that are only a garage or shed to house the fire appliances for access by local volunteers and may not be used often. Currently, there are 250 rural volunteer stations not fitted with a toilet, 100 rural volunteer stations without power and 1,100 volunteer stations not fitted with facilities such as showers or change rooms. CFA submits that the cost impact of fitting out such stations would potentially be unjustifiable and clarity on what a workplace relates to is required.
- Under the model WHS legislation, CFA must ensure that an adequate number of workers are trained to administer First Aid at the workplace, or workers have access to an adequate number of other persons who have been trained to administer First Aid in the workplace. The implications of such a requirement may mean that CFA will need to significantly increase the number of volunteers trained in First Aid (currently 7,500) to ensure a qualified First Aider is available on each crew at an incident.
- Industrial representatives have maintained their right of entry into a workplace for health and safety grounds but volunteer representatives have not been allocated the same rights despite volunteers now being deemed workers.

The Model WHS Act and Regulations are still subject to change following the closing of public submissions in April 2011.

COMMENT

It is not known at this stage what, if any, changes may be made as a result of the matters raised by the CFA in its submission to Safe Work Australia. However, they appear to me to be matters of substance.

It is not possible for me to take this matter any further as part of this Inquiry. However, there are clearly a range of implications that will arise from the new national Work Health and Safety laws, including the impact on volunteer involvement. This is a matter that will need to be closely monitored by the Government, CFA, VFBV and UFU.

10. CFA DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information is the lifeblood of an organisation. It cannot be an effective and efficient organisation if information is not available about all aspects of its operations. Information can tell management what is working and what is not; what needs to be changed and what can be left alone; what are the priorities and the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation.

The CFA is such an organisation where information is critical. It is a complex organisation involving over 60,000 people across the State, nearly all of whom are acting in a volunteer but vital capacity. Effective management of such an organisation is inevitably difficult and challenging. Its role and the effective discharge of it are of critical importance to the community as evidenced by the catastrophic events of Black Saturday.

Another aspect that is critical to an organisation such as the CFA is communication within the organisation. That is, keeping these 60,000 people well informed of what is happening in the CFA, what affects them and obtaining their input and feedback so that management can make the best decisions.

For an organisation like the CFA, effective communication with its volunteers across the State is a major challenge. That communication includes being able, where practicable, to deliver materials and training by electronic means, minimising inconvenience to volunteers and maximising their availability and motivation to be involved.

Computer and communications technologies are constantly converging. They are growing at an almost breathtaking pace. No more is this illustrated than by the Federal Government embarking upon the establishment of a National Broadband Network (NBN).

It is hard to conceive of an organisation that would benefit more from a NBN than the CFA – over 1,200 brigades spread across the State involving 60,000 people.

Information gathering and recording and effective communication have been consistently raised in this Inquiry.

Volunteers believe there are deficiencies in the capture, storage, availability and management of information in the CFA. This, they believe, adversely affects their ability to discharge their role as a volunteer, for example, in respect of training. It leads to a feeling of frustration and lowers morale.

Volunteers believe that communication within the CFA is deficient. They are not sufficiently informed of what is happening and are unable to have any influence in decisions that affect them. Again, they believe this adversely affects their ability to discharge their role and leads to a feeling of frustration and lowers morale.

These are matters that are addressed further in this Report. However, because of their importance, a meeting was held with officers of the CFA to discuss the initiatives being taken in these areas.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF MEETING

I met with Mr Mark Connell, Director of Asset Management and Mr Michael Forshew, Executive Manager of Technology Services at CFA. Mr Lex de Man was also present.

The focus was on the future use of information and communications technology in the CFA. I outlined the issues that had been raised by volunteers. They readily appreciated that those were issues that need to be addressed and were being addressed. Possible solutions were discussed in a frank exchange of views.

The following are noted from the discussion:

- The CFA vision is reliable internet connection between all CFA locations. Currently, there is the Firenet Private Network (with MFESB) and connection to various sites such as Regional/District offices and ICCS.
- In November 2009, the CFA negotiated with its hardware suppliers, a special deal for volunteers to purchase selected Dell equipment at the same price as the CFA Corporate (Dell Agreement).
- The Email for Volunteers Project - Live@CFA - launched in October 2009 and is sponsored by Microsoft. It provides for an email account for each volunteer, and distribution lists. The CFA and VFBV collaborated in the development.
- The CFA Connect Website was established to provide concise and relevant information to volunteers in a similar way to internet-based newspapers, as well as provide a central hub to focus the CFA's social media activity.
- Brigades Online, the CFA's internal web service, was first conceived ten years ago. It has been refreshed to provide a more contemporary look and feel, and is integrated with Live@CFA.
- The following are underway:
 - Human Capital Management System (HCMS). Fully integrated system supporting the whole volunteer life cycle from a HR perspective. Progressive in implementation over two years.
 - Volunteers Support Portal - Provides a single point of entry into systems to support volunteer activities e.g. training record.
 - Brigade Internet Connectivity – Would allow brigades access to CFA Corporate pricing for internet connectivity.
- The following opportunities have been identified:
 - NBN – Viable alternative to commercial offerings and would reduce cost of being a volunteer.
 - Online Training – Follow up and refresher.
 - SKYPE – Improve communication channels.
- The following problems have been identified:
 - Insufficient funding base
 - NBN roll out timetable is uncertain. Government may require a whole of government approach which might delay any roll out.
- The following current symptoms demonstrate the need for HCMS:
 - Lack of an available 'single view' of staff and volunteers.
 - Lack of integration across core HR business processes.
 - Emergence of 'technical' solutions rather than strategic business platforms.
 - HR systems are not linked to mature reporting capability.
 - Key process information not visible across the organisation.
 - Lack of information to support effective decision making for people management.

COMMENT

I reiterate my earlier comments about the importance of making full use of information and communication technology. I was impressed by the presentation of the CFA officers. I believe they also understand the importance. I fully support the initiatives that are underway and those that have been identified. HCMS and the use of the NBN or some other form of Wide Area Network are, in my view, essential for future strategic planning for the CFA. I appreciate that costs are involved, but initiatives such as those, are vital to the sustainability of the CFA model, as they facilitate the effective involvement of volunteers and the attractiveness and positives of having such a role.

RECOMMENDATION 3

- A. The CFA continue to explore and develop initiatives with modern information and communication technologies to maximise the benefits that they may bring to volunteer involvement in the CFA.
- B. The Government adequately resource such initiatives.

11. THE CFA CHIEF OFFICER – SERVICE STANDARDS – SERVICE DELIVERY – SERVICE DECISION MAKING

The role of the Chief Officer (CO) of the CFA is a statutory position under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*. The CO is responsible for operational aspects of the organisation and has to work closely with the Chief Executive Officer and the CFA Board.

The CO holds a vital position in the CFA. A valuable and comprehensive meeting was held with Euan Ferguson, the Chief Officer, as part of this Inquiry.

Brief Summary of Meeting

I opened the meeting with the CO by noting that from the consultations to date, I had the impression that volunteers feel undervalued, that they are not looked after by the CFA and feel that there is a lack of appreciation of their culture. The retention of volunteers appears to largely depend on how the CFA operates. I noted that I found training to be a significant issue. I also noted that the burden of detailed prescriptive arrangements, such as the Standard Operating Procedures appeared to be onerous and a disincentive for volunteers.

The CO agreed with my observations and expressed the view that the CFA is too centralised. He noted that there are three factors that define the CFA:

- Size – over 1,200 brigades.
- Diversity (age, occupation etc.).
- Geographic distribution (location).

The CO provided a brief background of his experience, which is extensive.

- Commenced as CO of CFA in November 2010.
- Previously, nine years as CO in South Australia of which seven years he was both CEO & CO.
- Prior to that, eight years with CFA including as Operations Manager and Deputy Chief Officer.
- Prior to that, 17 years in forest fire with Victorian Forests Commission.
- Eight years in Army Reserve.
- Six years on Defence Reserves Support Committee.

- Past President and Chair of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC).

The CO addressed the following areas:

Career Members

- It is crucial to foster a volunteer friendly culture in career members. CFA need staff with technical and professional firefighting skills but more importantly, persons familiar with the people culture.
- Career members in the CFA must have skills such as conflict resolution and brigade management, not just training in combating fires and emergencies. The number one skill that senior officers in the CFA - Operations Officers and above - must have is people skills. Others can provide the technical skills.
- CO agreed that volunteers do, and have reason to, feel second class. He feels that he has a different mindset to others in the CFA. For example, as CO, he has to make decisions everyday and often has to ask that things be re-worked to take into account the effect on volunteers.
- A culture has developed in the CFA that has primarily arisen from the single-tier entry to the organisation. There has to be consideration given to reintroducing lateral entry to ensure people interfacing with volunteers will have the right skills and mindset. In the 1990s, the adoption of the current single-tier entry had an extremely negative impact on the culture of CFA staff. There is light at the end of the tunnel if this can be solved. Sometimes, there is a risk that a narrow mindset develops in CFA career members who have a career based predominantly in fire stations. This is not insurmountable. There needs to be a change in the current industrial arrangement to allow lateral entry.
- Some volunteers see volunteerism as the first step in their career progression to become a CFA employee. Whilst CFA encourages volunteers to apply for positions with the organisation, the entry requirements are very objective and no particular weighting is given to volunteerism as a pathway to a career as an operational firefighter and other paid positions within CFA.

Relationship with Government

- The broader tension between central Government and the organisation is an important aspect. Members of the 1,220 CFA brigades have an obligation/nexus to their communities and those communities then feel they have ownership and pride in those members. However, the Government imposes change, often in the form of more onerous requirements such as the new OH&S regime or mandatory logbooks, and expects compliance. CFA members sometimes become unintended collateral damage between the Government directions and their base as a community organisation.
- There is then a tension between falling in line with what Government imposes, as if the CFA was an extended Government department, or rejecting or influencing the Government proposal for a valid reason. The CFA organisation has sometimes not advocated strongly enough in this aspect. Twenty years ago, the CFA Board was better at articulating the impact of government proposals on 'rank and file' volunteers. In the past, the CFA has reinforced its position as a statutory authority and that government proposals have to fit the community base and the culture of the CFA.

Mission Statement

- In the recent past, the lack of a mission statement for the CFA has been an issue.
- There is a purpose statement in CFA's last Corporate Plan but it is too touchy-feely. The lack of a clear mission means there is no strategic leadership to members. In this regard, the CFA

has failed their members. However, value statements are now being developed. The philosophy of 'One CFA' is very important.

Decentralisation

- There are real opportunities to improve Command and Control in the CFA. If it is too centralised, it may not work in responding to multiple concurrent large and catastrophic incidents. Decentralised command and control, such as providing members with delegated decision making authority, means it is more likely that they will use their initiative and intuition and there will be well developed processes and structures that will work better in large incidents.
- The CO is an advocate of the concept of 'Mission Command', a style of military command developed by the Prussian Army in the 1920s, which is a decentralised form of command where subordinates, understanding the commander's intention, their own mission and the context of that mission, are told the outcome/purpose/end state they are to achieve, and the reason why it needs to be achieved is articulated clearly. Those subordinates are then able to decide within their delegated freedom of action how best to achieve their mission.
- This concept of 'Mission Command' will work more effectively than a hierarchical army and textbook operation which is overly prescriptive and inflexible. 'Mission Command' is a military doctrine and it assumes trust and ongoing communication between subordinates and their senior officer. It assumes people are well trained and there is a mutual understanding about the reason for the mission. This concept drives decision making down to the lowest applicable level, to the volunteers. The CO has received overwhelming support in CFA for the 'Mission Command' concept. The South Australian (SA) Country Fire Service (CFS) is also adopting the philosophy of 'Mission Command'.
- In SA, the CFS has promoted and enlarged the role of the Group. The Group Officer makes decisions on the training courses to be run, any extension to buildings, vehicles needing service etc. The Group is responsible for managing Level 1 Incidents and managing the transition to a Level 3 Incident. In Victoria, CFA has taken the Group out of the chain of command and marginalised the most locally connected and experienced people, and have not replaced them.
- There are three roles that a Call-taking and Dispatch centre should do:
 - Maintain an accurate database of where brigades are.
 - Take emergency calls.
 - Dispatch brigades.
- But then, urban brigades will turn up at the incident and ask for ambulance, police or catering to be dispatched to them, and VicFire will start managing the incident, which should not be happening. In this sense, 'Mission Command' will achieve a significant change of mindset, that is, decentralisation.
- The number of Standard Operating Procedures is excessive. Once the culture associated with 'Mission Command' is in place, there really only needs to be a set of best practice training guides with only a small number of rules and a set of principles. It is more effective to teach about decision making, for example, listing key principles and common errors and providing an explanation of how to avoid making those errors.
- The CO highlighted two pieces of work available on the Royal Commission website that are relevant to the concept of decentralisation in an operational crisis management context, which is a key to how the CFA should run as an organisation:
 - *Organizing for effective emergency management* by Professor Paul t Hart, School of Politics and International Relations, Australian National University - 13 April 2010.
 - *Organizing Response to Extreme Emergencies* by Herman B. Leonard, John F. Kennedy School of Government and Harvard Business School, Harvard University – April 2010.

Training

- CFA has suffered from not having a home for training; it is fractured.
- There are three primary forms of training:
 - Situation, task-based training – e.g. Breathing Apparatus, Hazardous Materials (Hazmat) etc. – bound up in the National Framework.
 - Incident Management training.
 - Leadership training.
- The CFA currently runs the FireLine Leadership Program', which was selected by the CFA to support volunteer leadership development to meet both brigade and fire ground leadership needs. The Program was developed in the USA and ten programs have been conducted in the last two years. The CO believes that the CFA should investigate running such a program cheaper and better by breaking it down into different modules and 'Australianising' it.

Technology

- The CO agrees that CFA technology is deficient and needs improvement, but there should not be too much focus on technology, at the risk of taking the focus away from people getting out there. It should be complementary, not overtake it.

Consultation

- A number of joint VFBV/CFA committees work reasonably well. District Planning Committees are, by and large, a good basis for volunteer involvement and interaction. However, the CFA lacks a single central consultative/advisory forum.
- In SA, there was a Chief Officer Advisory Council, comprised of 35 people of which half were volunteers (made up of senior operational volunteers and volunteer association representatives) and half CFS Managers (Regional Managers, Regional Commanders, Operational Managers, Directors). The Council met once every two months, where the managers would explain what they were currently doing. The volunteers would then have the opportunity to ask for more information or put forward their views. In this way, they would get instant feedback, positive or negative, and feel they have been listened to and their views considered. The Managers would then understand that there is not just the one organisation view, their people must be taken into account.
- Half the agenda for the Council meetings would focus on what the CFS is currently doing; the other half would provide opportunity for debate on issues. If the issue could not be resolved, it could be referred off to another specialist committee. The minutes for the Council meeting would then be published. This facilitates communication and shows that the operation of the organisation is an inclusive process – a fundamental tenet/principle of the organisation. The Council is really shaping the culture of the CFS and emphasises that the most important person in the organisation is the person on the frontline.
- The CFA lacks a similar statewide committee, which could prove highly conducive to consultation. At the moment, the CFA and VFBV Boards meet and it can be inconclusive and some discussions can be uncomfortable.
- The CO has had some discussions with Andrew Ford, CEO of VFBV regarding a similar statewide committee, such as a Chief Officer Advisory Forum, which could be referred off to existing Joint and District Planning Committees. The CFA Board is supportive of the idea and discussion on it is progressing.

Surge capacity

- It is important to remember that CFA volunteers are also available as a surge capacity for the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFESB), not just for CFA. Their surge capacity is transparent of organisational boundaries.

Dandenong Fire – Case Study

This is set out as an example of how a major incident was handled well through an integrated force consisting of volunteer and paid firefighters.

- On Thursday 19 May 2011, at approximately 8.00pm, a fire at TriTech Lubricants factory on Williams Road in Dandenong South was reported to Triple Zero, most likely by a passer-by who saw flames or smoke rising from the site.
- The call went to VicFire, either at the Tally Ho or Ballarat call centre, and two brigades would have been alerted and dispatched. The Dandenong Brigade responded with two pumpers and an aerial appliance. The first pumper would most likely be staffed with career firefighters, the second with volunteers. As the aerial appliance only has two seats, it would most likely be manned by career firefighters.
- On arrival, the front office was observed to be on fire, there was a northerly wind and the roller doors of the factory were closed.
- Initial lines were set up to direct water onto the front office area. Attempts to access the building were then initiated via quick cut saw through the roller doors. By the time the roller doors were opened, the fire had built within the factory and when air rushed in, the fire became well and truly involved. It was observed that there were multiple cylinders of 20-metre high, 200 litre tanks filled with 700,000 litres of flammable petroleum-based oils and lubricants which then started exploding and fuelling the fire.
- CFA teams then withdrew the appliances. The Incident Controllers planned their strategies and repositioned the appliances. Additional pumpers were then called in.
- At 9pm, the following were present at the scene:
 - 10 pumpers.
 - 3 aerial appliances.
 - 1 MFESB pumper
 - 1 hose layer appliance.
 - 1 catering unit manned by volunteers.
 - 1 Protective Equipment Unit manned by volunteers.
 - 1 Hazardous Materials Incident Unit.
 - Police units setting up roadblocks.
 - Melbourne Water cutting into concrete to increase water supply.
 - Environment Protection Authority (EPA).
 - Ambulance Victoria.
 - Local Government.
 - 1 MFESB Commander as Liaison Officer.
- The CFA on-call duty officer, usually an Operations Officer, went to the District Incident Control Centre and called another Operations Officer to become the Incident Controller. When the second Operations Officer arrived at the scene, he or she assumed control from the Officer in Charge of the first pumper that arrived at the scene and become the Incident Controller.
- There were two other Operations Officers who acted as a Sector Commander and in the Incident Management Team (IMT). One of the responsibilities of the Operations Officer in the IMT is to generate warnings in the media, such as smoke plumes and to close windows and doors.
- The Regional Commander contacted other brigades and arranged move-ups, involving movement of resources to the incident and then to brigades.
- Phase two of the response occurred at around 1.00am, when the hose line was established, issues were managed and the volunteers could then be rotated around to relieve other volunteers. This is an example of how the capacity of volunteers can be utilised.

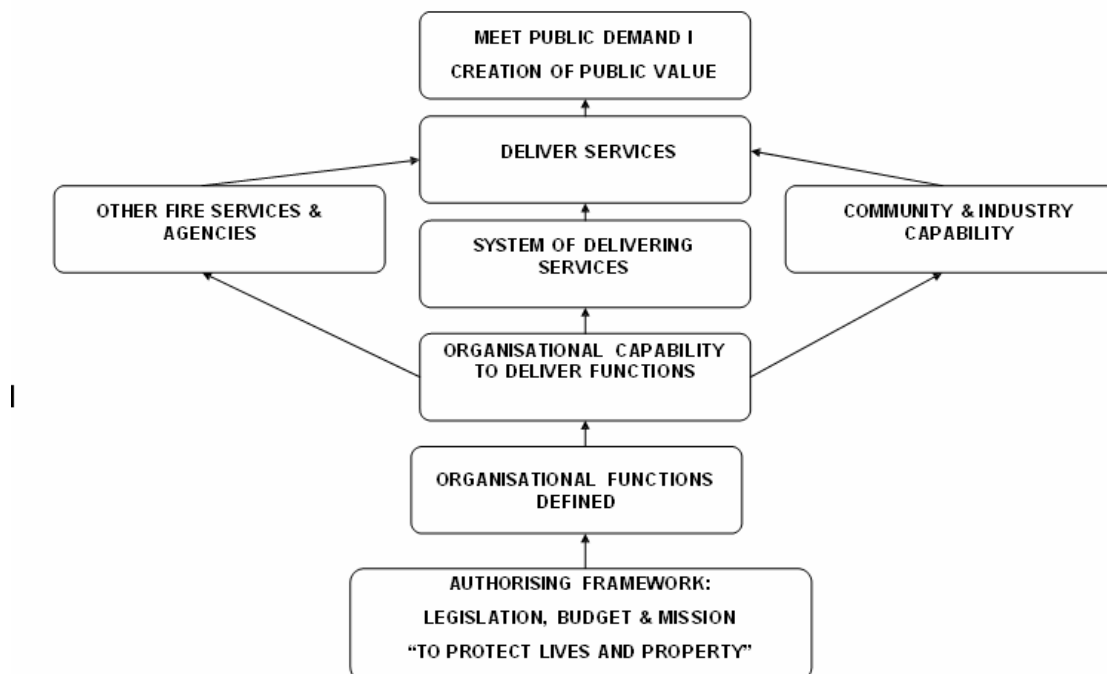
- Four owners of adjoining properties came on the scene to ascertain the safety of their properties.
- A major clean-up operation was initiated. The CFA spoke to the EPA regarding the run-off. Due to the potential environmental impact, there was a deliberate decision not to use foam until there was more foam on the scene. A small amount of foam was used to stop the blaze spreading to surrounding factories in the industrial area, including a nearby glass factory which housed highly flammable hydrogen gas on-site.
- Over 130 firefighters were involved in the incident response and it took eight hours to control the fire.
- Once the incident was safe, there was a de-briefing process:
 - After-action review (not indoctrinated yet but will be) within six to 12 hours of the brigade returning. This would involve reviewing what went well and what could be done differently. This is a non-judgemental process and captures lessons very quickly.
 - A formal de-brief process also occurs in the IMT, individual brigades, at the Group level, Police, EPA and local government. Each will have various lessons learned.

Overall, the CO felt it was a very well managed incident. It included a wide range of participants, including volunteers.

Structure of the CFA

- The CO provided a draft new CFA Service Delivery Model that seeks to instil a service delivery ethos in the organisation. At the moment, it is just a 'fire service'.
- The Model outlined below illustrates at a high level, the nature of CFA's core business, which delivers a wide range of services to Victorian communities, both emergency and risk mitigation focused.

Diagram 17: 'Supply' component of the Service Delivery Model



- The CO highlighted the book *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government* by Mark H. Moore, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University as relevant to the development of the draft CFA Service Delivery Model.

- The organisational structure of the CFA should not be triangular; it should place the volunteers at the top.
- The CFA has six broad functions that form the emergency management principles of 'preparation, response and recovery' and seeks to deliver organisational and community capability:
 - Risk management.
 - Community capability building.
 - Leadership.
 - Incident response management.
 - Informing and warning.
 - Recovery.
- Organisational capability can be differentiated between core and non-core capability, for example, the MFESB are leaders in search and rescue; this is considered a non-core capability for the CFA.
- The CO is committed to developing a transparent, robust and understood framework.

COMMENT

I was impressed by how quickly the Chief Officer had been able to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the CFA - how quickly and clearly he had developed a clear vision for the future and the need for the organisation to adopt such a vision – and the logical and professional way he has approached decision-making, service delivery and operating standards. Most importantly, I was impressed by his frankness and his emphasis on consultation, transparency, inclusiveness, mission and service. His views are further referred to when considering the various areas the subject of the Inquiry. What the Dandenong fire illustrates is that the model of one integrated force (volunteer and paid members) can serve the community very well.

CFA Submission – Service Delivery and Capability Development

The CFA submission to the Inquiry outlined Service Delivery and Capability Development and reviews matters that were covered by the CO in my meeting with him. Therefore, there is no need to go over it in detail but specific points are referred to, adding to the matters raised by the CO.

- It is confirmed that a priority of the CO is to review and articulate CFA's service delivery strategies. It is a work in progress.
- Service delivery models in the CFA have evolved over many years. At the direction of the CO, the CFA has set out to refine a service delivery model, which is clear, risk based and transparent. It must describe how services are delivered and how decisions are made in the allocation of resources.
- The model is still under development and the CFA, applying the Charter, will work closely with volunteers in its ongoing development.
- CFA has in place a set of Service Delivery Standards (SDS) for its brigades. They can assist the CO to assess the performance and viability of brigades.
- The CFA monitors brigade service delivery via reports to the CO, the Executive team and the CFA Board. It is acknowledged that more work is required to develop reporting tools that give a clearer picture of service delivery problems and brigade viability issues before they become critical to public safety.
- Operational principles and objectives for resource allocation have been considered.

The following are proposed in the CFA submission for the service delivery model:

- Resources and actions allocated to brigades are scaled to risk and demand.
- Primacy of life and safety of firefighters are paramount.
- The capacity for mutual support.

- Mobility, speed of response and travel times will underpin resource positioning.
- Resources committed will be appropriate to the situational risk.
- CFA has an integrated model of membership. Volunteers work alongside career members.
- Career members will provide increased local and technical expertise to volunteers working in highly complex risk environments.
- CFA career members will take into account requirements of the shift model.
- The CO must contend with a range of information in order to make sound decisions to meet his statutory responsibilities and must keep the CFA Board informed of his decisions who must be satisfied that services are being met and planned for appropriately.

The CFA submission identifies additional drivers of the service delivery model:

- CFA has been subjected to many inquiries and formal reviews in the last 15 years.
- Expectation of mutual funding of upgrade initiated projects.
- Funding initiatives may not match CFA operational priorities.
- Time taken to develop new concepts to operational implementation.
- The concept of appliance based service as compared to the integrated model.
- Funding of some projects may be incomplete.
- Lack of investment in building maintenance.

The CFA states in its submission that consultation with volunteers and operational staff will progress the proposed model for service delivery. In particular, the prioritisation criteria for major resource investment needs more work. Presently, the process is more qualitative than quantitative. Preferably, future resource decisions would be based more fully on evidence and data, and less on subjective judgements.

COMMENT

Based on what I have learned from the conduct of this Inquiry, I support the initiatives being developed by the Chief Officer and the CFA in relation to service delivery and standards, decision-making and allocation of resources. The development of models, standards and processes that are evidence based should, in my view, result in better decisions, better standards of service and better allocation of resources. They should also facilitate the better utilisation of volunteers and enhance their feelings of value and importance. Full and frank consultation with them in the development of these initiatives is essential.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The CFA and the Chief Officer continue to develop the initiatives outlined in relation to service delivery and standards, decision-making and allocation of resources.

12. DEFENCE RESERVISTS

Defence Reservists play a critical role in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). There are similarities in the role and position of volunteer firefighters and Reservists. Consequently, it was felt that it would be helpful to consider how Reservists are managed within the ADF. A telephone conference was held with Brigadier Bill Sowry and some material subsequently provided by the ADF.

Defence Reservists join the Army, Navy or Air Force as part-time members of the ADF. There are about 45,000 active and standby Reservists, representing about 45% of the total Force.

Recruitment of Reservists

After submitting an initial application online or through a local unit, the applicant will attend a Your Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) session at a Defence Force Recruiting Centre, which includes an Aptitude Test, Medical Interview and an interview with a Careers Counsellor to establish the role the applicant is most suited to.

On successfully completing the YOU session, the applicant will attend an Assessment Session, which involves a Medical Assessment, a Psychological Interview and a Defence Interview, which assesses the applicant's ability to withstand the demanding requirements of ADF service. Successful applicants will then complete an initial six-week recruit training course, a modified version of the training course for full-time soldiers.

Each local unit has a Recruiting Officer. However, corporate information is centralised at Defence Force Recruiting. The Workforce Planning Branch will set annual targets for recruitment. Local units have some flexibility but will work towards the Workforce Planning level. Units have autonomy but are overseen by the centralised organisation.

The expectation is that every Reservist will, over five years, serve on at least one operation. However, there is no obligation for Reservists to serve any particular length of time.

Australian Defence Force Cadets

The ADF Cadets is a community-based youth development organisation for 13 to 18 year olds, focused on Defence customs, traditions and values. Cadets receive a uniform and undertake various activities such as learning drill, communications, First Aid, navigation, orienteering and safe weapons handling and visits to military bases.

There are 22,000 cadets around the country, with 450 Units. 25% of Reservists will have had cadet experience and 12% of cadets will have enlisted into the ADF. 40% of Air Force members and 80% of those holding senior positions in the Air Force were cadets. Cadets serve longer in the ADF and achieve more senior ranks. There is no requirement for cadets to join the ADF unless they wish to do so. ADF Cadets aim to be inclusive of all young people and staff, including those with disabilities and health conditions.

As the ADF Cadets is a non-profit, partially funded organisation, parents and guardians are encouraged to support the unit through membership of the support committee or by attending working bees and fundraising events.

Support for Reservists and their Employers

The ADF provides a comprehensive program of support for Reservists and their employers.

In 2001, the Australian Government introduced the *Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act 2001* to protect Defence Reservists undertaking various forms of reserve service. The legislation makes it an offence for an employer to discriminate against, disadvantage, hinder or dismiss an employee or prospective employee for rendering Defence service. The legislation makes it mandatory for employers to release their Reservists for service and training.

The Office of Reserve Service Protection (ORSP) was established to provide advice and assistance to Reservists, their units and employers in dealing with the provisions of the legislation. The ORSP is also able to receive, investigate and manage the resolution of formal complaints made by Reservists under the legislation.

The Defence Reserves Support Council (DRSC) was established to enhance the availability of the Reservists by promoting the benefits of employing members of the Reserve. DRSC members are volunteers and include representatives from industry, small business, trade unions, youth and other interested community groups. DRSC members are selected in recognition of their place in the community and their ability to advocate on behalf of ADF Reserves. Each State and Territory has committees of the DRSC.

While members of the DRSC are engaged often because of their status in business or the community, they have no military rank equivalency. The Mission of the DRSC is, 'to enhance the availability of the Reserves Component of the ADF by promoting the benefits of Reserve Service to, and by establishing a flexible partnership with, the community in general and employers in particular'.

The Defence Force carries out a range of Employer Engagement Activities that aims to enhance the availability of reservists by developing community and employer support for the Reserve Force. Such activities give employers of Reservists an insight into the types of training and skills used and benefits gained through being a Reservist that are transferable into the workplace.

The ADF Employer Engagement Program includes:

- Employer Challenge Days and Exercise Executive Stretch, which is aimed at senior, middle and line management, are challenging and enjoyable activities within a safe and controlled environment, held on one day during the week or over a weekend. Activities include leadership, quick decision exercises and visits to technical training facilities, and may include fire weapons training.
- Boss Lift, a longer activity where Defence takes employers to visit ADF personnel on exercises and operations within Australia and overseas to learn first-hand about what the ADF does. For example, employers have travelled to the Solomon Islands and Malaysia.

The Employer Support Payment (ESP) Scheme provides financial assistance to eligible employers to help offset the costs of releasing employees for most categories of ADF service. ESP is paid at a set weekly rate (currently \$1243.10 per week) regardless of the employee's salary and there are no restrictions on the way employers can use the money. The Reservist must have served a qualifying period of two weeks in a financial year, with a minimum period of claimed Defence service of five consecutive days. Reservists are paid when they are utilised. Self-employed Reservists are also eligible to claim ESP payments but additional criteria apply.

The ADF Supportive Employers Program is contacting employers across Australia asking them to publicly pledge their support for Reservists by endorsing this statement:

"Thousands of Reservists, who are members of the Navy, Army and Air Force, have served in Australia and overseas in recent years. When called upon, these men and women serve alongside their colleagues in the Permanent Forces with courage and dedication, and often at considerable personal sacrifice. We admire their commitment and are determined to support all employees in the Reserve."

The Reserve Force Health Care and Injured Reserve Policy details a process that Reservists should follow to achieve a better health outcome, should they be injured or become ill as a result of their Reserve duty.

Training of Reservists

Reservists undertake the same training as full-time soldiers to reach the same competency requirements but they might not have as many competencies. Training for Reservists above basic training will be dependent on the motivation of the Reservist and availability of training. Flexibility is generally available for people whose civilian occupations do not allow them to fully participate in the training requirements.

Annual service commitments vary, depending on the role undertaken by the Reservist, their time availability, and the needs of the Service. Higher readiness roles generally require a greater annual commitment. A 20-day minimum service period in each financial year establishes a Reservist's eligibility for Long Service Awards, Health Support Allowance and subsidies under the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme.

Other Issues of Interest

The ADF is a fully integrated force – the total force - as opposed to regular and Reservists. The reality is that, in operations, it is obvious who is, or is not, a Reservist. Mutual respect has built over time and the relationship between Reservists and permanent members is a good one. It is understood that the ADF can only maintain the tempo of operations by having Reservists.

In terms of advancement through the ranks, each rank has a series of training courses and qualifications associated with it. Such courses for Reservists have the same content as those for permanent members but are delivered differently to allow for flexibility. Once qualified, they can be recommended for advancement by their Commanding Officer.

Reservists are able to advance to senior roles based on their skill sets. This requires a higher level of training and commitment on the part of the Reservist.

The ADF facilitates, rather than inhibits, their Reservists from transferring into a permanent role, and supports a meritocracy where the best person for the job is hired. Reservists can move from part-time to full-time service at different stages of their career to undertake specific duties or to participate in operational deployments, and then return to their civilian vocation.

Of the 19,000 Reservists in the Army, 35% are ex-permanent members and the rest, new recruits. Of the 6,000 Reservists in the Air Force, 60% are ex-permanent, with 40% new recruits. Of the 6,000 Reservists in the Navy, 95% are ex-permanent members.

The Defence Reserves Support – Victoria provided a package of helpful material:

- The Reservist Handbook provides reservists with information about their rights and responsibilities. It complements the Employer Handbook. The Reservist Handbook is comprehensive, easy to read and understand. It communicates well with the Reservist.
- The Employer Handbook aims to inform employers of Defence reservists about their rights and responsibilities. It does this comprehensively and admirably.

Strategic Reform Program – Force 2030

The Strategic Reform Program undertaken by the ADF is a decade-long campaign of reform, consisting of 300 separate initiatives managed in 15 individual 'reform streams', to build a stronger ADF – Force 2030 – that will provide the capabilities and supporting infrastructure that will keep Australia secure well into the future.

Key features of the Reserves reform package include:

- Developing a Civil Skills Database to capture the civilian skills and qualifications held by members undertaking Reserve service which, if known to the ADF, can be used to enhance its overall operational capability;
- Improved delivery of Reserve training to reduce training wastage; and
- Increasing the number of permanent force members who transfer to the Reserve when they complete full time permanent service. This provides for more direct knowledge transfer to the Reserves, reduces ab initio training costs and enhances the overall capability of the Reserves.

COMMENT

Volunteers are critical to the CFA. Reservists are critical to the ADF. That they are critical is reflected in the approach taken by the ADF. It is a holistic approach on the basis that it is one total force not two. There are many lessons to be learned from the Defence Reservist experience that are applicable to the CFA volunteer experience. There are differences but there are many similarities. The ADF approach to employers has great relevance to the CFA. The co-operation of employers is vital to the delivery of a sustainable volunteer model for firefighting. The ADF Cadet Scheme has relevance to the need for the CFA to be able to tap into young members of the community and retain them. The cross-over from cadet to Reservist to permanent member in the ADF is impressive and compelling. It signals a direction in which the CFA needs to go.

The ADF experience will be utilised throughout this Report when addressing the issues and areas that arise.

RECOMMENDATION 5

- A. The CFA, in consultation with employers and volunteers, explore the establishment of employer consultation and support mechanisms along the lines of those developed by the Australian Defence Force.**
- B. Consideration be given to enactment of legislation along the lines of the federal legislation relating to employers and Defence Reservists.**
- C. Consideration be given to the establishment of an Employer Support Payment Scheme along the lines of that operated by the Australian Defence Force.**

COMMENT

As I have already said, the employer consultation mechanism used by the ADF is impressive and appears to be very positive. There are significant differences between the position of Reservist and the position of volunteer. For example, more volunteers are self employed. However, notwithstanding this, I believe that there are real benefits to be gained by exploring such an initiative.

The protection of volunteers in relation to their employment is not a matter that was often raised in this Inquiry. However, one never knows what effect such a matter may have on volunteer recruitment and participation. I believe that it is worthwhile to explore the feasibility of such legislation which applies, for example, to jury service.

Allied to these issues is the financial effect on employers when volunteers serve particularly for lengthy periods, such as during a major fire campaign, which may be interstate. Consequently, exploration of the possible establishment of a fund to reimburse employers in certain circumstances is worthwhile in the public interest.

13. CFA – THE CULTURE – IDENTITY – VISION – MISSION – VALUES

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The CFA is a public statutory body that provides a vital emergency service to the community. It is, in reality, owned by the community. CFA is part of the community, who have a direct involvement in it through its 59,000 volunteers.

Such a body needs a clearly defined Mission. It needs Values and it needs to have an ingrained culture. These should be embedded in the organisation – its soul. They guide its operation from Board level to the firefighter on the ground. In whatever they are doing, they are as one – One CFA.

The importance of this was stressed by the Chief Officer (CO) at the meeting I had with him. As he said, the CFA is not just a body responsible for the prevention and suppression of fires. There is a need to explore these matters, as they are, in a sense, at the heart of what this Inquiry is about.

These issues were raised at the consultations and in submissions. Volunteers wondered whether the CFA was really a volunteer service supported by career staff or a career service supported by volunteers. They had a feeling it had become the latter. They felt their contribution was not valued, that they were being treated as second class. One volunteer questioned why the word 'volunteer' needed to be on his jacket. He has a point.

13.2 VFBV SUBMISSION

The VFBV, in its submission, addresses these issues. It is helpful to refer to their position.

- The CFA's volunteer based and community embedded service model is fundamental to achieving community based responsibility for their own safety and engagement with local communities.

COMMENT

Based on what I have learned from the conduct of this Inquiry, I would agree with this statement.

- The CFA's volunteer-based resource model is the only practical and economically viable service model capable of providing the geographic spread, scale and contingent capability required for Victoria's fire and emergency role situation.

COMMENT

Although it has not been the function of this Inquiry to investigate other service delivery options, based on what I have learned, I would agree with this statement.

- There needs to be a shared commitment and priority to maintain, encourage and strengthen the capacity of volunteers to delivery CFA services.
- CFA culture, leadership and human resource management are keys to maintaining and strengthening the community's understanding of, confidence in, support for and active participation in the volunteer based emergency service model for Victoria, which is consequently, fundamental to the future success of CFA.

COMMENT

I have referred to the sustainability of the model. What is described is, in my view, a necessary part of sustaining the model.

- Achieving an appropriate CFA organisational culture and providing sound organisational leadership driven by a commitment to principles and policy designed to achieve a successful volunteer based organisation are critical.

COMMENT

Based on what I have learned from the conduct of this Inquiry, I would agree with this statement.

- CFA governance arrangements must ensure optimal development and utilisation of every volunteer's capacity, least possible impost on a volunteers time, best volunteer personal satisfaction and motivation to continue contribution, and protection for volunteers who provide their services in good faith.

COMMENT

I do not disagree with this as an 'in principle' objective but it must all be subject to what is reasonably practicable.

13.3 CFA SUBMISSION

The CFA submission addressed a range of important issues relating to the culture and identity of the CFA and it is helpful to refer to their position.

Integrated Approach

- The CFA model provides for an integrated approach where staff provide support to volunteers to meet the CFA's service delivery responsibilities.
- This includes integrated brigades that are an important component of CFA firefighting.
- The CFA acknowledges that its people are its greatest asset and that it is vital that the CFA values, nurtures and develops its people.

COMMENT

I strongly agree people are the CFA's greatest asset and must be looked after.

- At the 'shop floor' level, the job is done with a level of respect and goodwill for others as CFA members go about their duties. However, at a more strategic or representative level, there are greater challenges. There is a diversity of views and passions among the members but all need to hold true to the notion of belonging to the one CFA. The cultural focus should be on developing a culture of respect and transparency.

COMMENT

These statements accord with my experience in conducting this Inquiry and I generally agree with them.

VFBV – Industrial Agreements

- The CFA acknowledges that a key area of difference with the VFBV has arisen from the CFA negotiation of successive industrial agreements for career firefighters with the UFU that the VFBV strongly believes infringe on the rights and responsibilities of volunteers. Many of the points of concern in the VFBV submission can be traced back to industrial agreements negotiated over ten years ago. A complexity for management is federal legislation. CFA faces complexities in working with both Federal and State law, which prescribes how CFA engages with its members and makes key decisions.

COMMENT

I refer to the comments I make when addressing this issue later as part of a consideration of consultation. I also refer to what I have said in introducing the review of industrial agreements in Chapter 8. This is a difficult area. The CFA has obligations to its volunteers under State law. It has obligations to its paid personnel under federal industrial law.

It will soon have obligations to both under the national harmonisation of OH&S laws. All those obligations have to be discharged. Inevitably, there will be tensions that have to be resolved. This is where an underlying culture and values are important. Based on the information gained by this Inquiry, volunteers perceive that the UFU has too much influence and the position of volunteers has been adversely affected. Whether that perception is in fact right or wrong, and I make no finding either way, their morale is inevitably affected which in turn impacts on their commitment to serve. To overcome this, transparency and better communication and consultation with volunteers and the VFBV by the CFA is essential. However, it all needs to be kept in perspective with the focus on the future rather than the past.

Volunteers and Career Staff Working Together

- CFA points out that integrated brigades are essential to CFA's service delivery and the CFA is committed to the integrated brigade model.
- It submits that, overall, it works well and the shared arrangement is mutually beneficial. It is acknowledged that tensions exist but over time, they can be worked through.
- The CFA recognises that in accordance with the recent amendment to the CFA Act, the emphasis of support for volunteers needs to be better developed in the CFA culture. The role and responsibility of all CFA people to support volunteers has not received enough emphasis and is an aspect CFA can improve on.

COMMENT

Based on what I have learned from the conduct of this Inquiry, I agree with these statements. The shared arrangement can work well and there can be difficulties and tensions. These can arise from personality clashes and in the end, what is critical is strong leadership. There is much less likelihood of there being difficulties if there is strong leadership, whether it be at brigade, Group, District, senior management or Board level.

Leadership and the CFA

- The CFA acknowledges the importance of leadership and refers to recent comments on leadership by the CO on the CFA Connect website. It is helpful to set them out.

“It is my belief that, as a leader in CFA, we are first, and always, a leader of people. All CFA members who are in positions of authority, or who exercise leadership in emergency circumstances, need to bear this in mind. If we should fail in any area, it should never be in the leadership of our people. Leadership often brings rank and privilege. But do not strive for, or glorify these things. Instead, focus firmly on the great (and often onerous) responsibility and accountability that comes with command and leadership. Leaders in CFA should strive to be the very best that they can be.”

“...One of the most effective ways of exercising leadership is through physical presence. To move amongst our people, immersing yourself amongst them. To meet in the same place as our people, to look them in the eye and to have the courage to explain, to discuss and to debate is an essential attribute of leadership in CFA.”

“...Through discussion and dialogue, by debating and explaining, we have a unique opportunity to shape the intent, attitude and culture of CFA and the actions of our people. To actively listen, to seek out alternate views and to account for challenges gives a greater understanding of what we are trying to achieve. Feedback, even diverse or unexpected views, makes us stronger individually and as an organisation.”

- Reference is made to the single-tier entry system introduced in the 1990s following industrial negotiations. This is discussed when reviewing recruitment arrangements. Some of the longer term impacts of this change have now been identified with the need to appoint new leaders.
- Consequently, it is recognised that through no fault of their own, many new middle level managers have a limited understanding of modern approaches to managing and leading and most likely a relatively homogenous understanding of the CFA as an organisation. The CO (as he indicated to me) has identified this as a contemporary organisation challenge. CFA has to invest heavily in leadership education and experience.
- CFA believes that it would be of benefit to re-introduce elements of two-tier entry but recognises that any changes will need the strong involvement of the UFU.

COMMENT

Lack of leadership was a matter consistently raised by volunteers at consultations and in submissions - the need for leadership at the different levels, with managers having the necessary people skills and being the right person for the job. This was also referred to by Regional Managers in the discussions I had with them. It cannot be stressed enough. I agree with the clear views of the CO. I agree that some change in relation to single-tier entry needs to occur. I appreciate that this involves the UFU. However, it is in the interests of their members that people holding leadership positions are the right people for these positions. The need for strong effective leadership in the CFA from top to bottom cannot be over emphasised and is one of its biggest challenges.

13.4 A STATEMENT OF VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

A clearly defined statement of Mission, Vision and Values, in a large organisation such as the CFA, is critical to ensure members of the organisation understand that their behaviour, and consequently, the culture of the organisation, must align with that statement. Values serve as the compass for decision-making and bring a sense of unity.

The Vision, Mission and Values for the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia is a relevant example and is as follows:

Our Vision

- A safer community.

Our Mission

In partnership with the people of Western Australia to:

- Improve community safety practices
- Provide timely, quality and effective emergency services

Our Values

- Put the community first
- Work together as a committed team
- Respect and value each other
- Continuously improve our services
- Act with integrity and honesty
- Have open and honest two-way communications
- Strive to keep ourselves and others safe

Such values seek to highlight the need for all members to treat each other with respect and decency; emphasise the value of self discipline, accountability and dependability; require that all members work to help others improve their capability and that the ultimate responsibility is always the commitment to serve the community.

13.4.1 A SUGGESTED STATEMENT

The CFA Board has approved the following Vision and Mission for the CFA.

What we are CFA is a community based fire and emergency services organisation

Vision Working together with Communities to keep Victorians safe from fire and other emergencies

Mission To protect lives and property

I understand the CFA is currently developing value statements. Based upon what I have learned from the conduct of this Inquiry and over 30 years as a public office holder, I offer the following for consideration.

Our Vision

- A safer community by working together with Communities

Our Identity

A Public Authority that is:

- A community based fire and emergency service organisation
- A volunteer based organisation in which volunteer officers and members are supported by employees in a fully integrated manner

Our Mission

- To protect lives and property.
- To provide timely, quality and effective fire and other emergency services
- To improve community safety

Our Values

- Put the community first
- A commitment to safety, best practice and improvement in the delivery of services
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Inclusiveness
- Mutual respect
- Integrity and Honesty
- Fair Leadership

These values embody the need for members to treat each other with respect and decency, to be transparent and accountable in their actions and be committed to best practice and the safety of the community.

PRINCIPLES

As the CFA is a volunteer based organisation, I think it is necessary to include in the statement of Vision, Mission and Values, some general principles that have particular application to volunteers, and which support and complement the principles in the Volunteer Charter. The Fire Services Commissioner (FSC), Craig Lapsley, in his submission to the Inquiry, suggested that the following principles should apply:

- Volunteers perform critical roles in the service delivery of the fire services within Victoria.
- Volunteers operate in both urban and rural environments, including metropolitan, regional and rural areas across Victoria.
- Volunteers be trained and skilled to deliver all facets of service delivery including: Emergency Response, Incident Management, Training, Community Safety, Brigade Management, etc.
- A volunteer service delivery model that is supported by an integrated service delivery model be maintained and enhanced that builds volunteers and career firefighters to work together in delivering services to the community.
- Volunteer leadership and management programs be developed and delivered resulting in transferable skills from volunteers work environment to volunteer activities.
- Recruitment/retention strategies and processes be developed that support gender and demographic diversity.
- Volunteers be recognised and valued for their local knowledge, local networks and connection to their local community.
- Volunteers be involved in decision making by inclusion in management committees and structures of CFA at State, Region, District and brigade levels.
- CFA career staff (operational and administration) be briefed and trained on the importance, culture and mode of operation of volunteers to enable an increased understanding by career staff resulting in an increased involvement of volunteers. A training and education package be developed and delivered as a core component of all CFA employees.

The FSC also suggested the following as a principle to apply:

- Remove any 'excluding' clauses in internal management policy, procedures and industrial agreements that restrict the participation of volunteers from any service delivery elements.

The basis of the FSC suggesting this principle is appreciated. However, I do not feel it appropriate to include it with the other principles. The situation with respect to existing clauses that affect arrangements is dealt with later in this Report when considering those arrangements.

COMMENT

This is not a definitive statement of Vision, Mission, Values and principles, but is offered as a basis for discussion between the CFA and its members, volunteer and paid, and their representatives. The adoption of an appropriate Statement that reflects the CFA culture is, I believe, of critical importance. Once embedded in the organisation, it would form part of all position descriptions and key selection criteria. In that way, it would require employees to be committed to it, as would volunteers, in being members of the CFA.

I appreciate that any changes to clauses in industrial agreements would have to be in accordance with law and subject to negotiations with the UFU. The following could be considered as a principle in relation to volunteers:

“that before entering into any arrangement in relation to employees which may adversely affect the involvement of volunteers, the CFA consult with the VFBV in relation to that possible effect, and in reaching any decision, take into account any views of the VFBV and volunteers and weigh them in the balance when reaching any decision.”

SUMMARY BY FIRE SERVICES COMMISSIONER

In conclusion, I find myself in agreement with the following summary set out in the FSC’s submission.

“The future fire service delivery model in Victoria will require a volunteer and career integrated service delivery model that harnesses and captures the involvement of volunteers. The success of this is to build on the strengths of CFA volunteers and ensure that the volunteer structure is supported by an integrated career and volunteer service delivery model. To achieve this will require a harmonised approach between the volunteer representative bodies and industrial bodies, to better understand and respect the needs of each other but more importantly focus on the service to the community.

There will be a need to embrace innovation, new ideas and new models that challenge the current ‘norm’. The adoption of new innovative ideas will assist CFA step into the next generation. The integrated service delivery model is a key to success, however, the integrated model will need to evolve and embrace new approaches and opportunities.

Involvement of volunteers in all facets of fire service delivery is a fundamental that will support building capacity, capability, interoperability and sustainable outcomes. Although this Inquiry is focused on CFA, there is a need to acknowledge that agencies such as MFESB and the Department of Sustainability and Environment also work closely with volunteers in everyday service delivery and some of the principles listed also apply to those agencies”.

RECOMMENDATION 6

- A. The CFA, in consultation with its volunteers and employees, determine and adopt a statement of Vision, Mission and Values.
- B. Position descriptions and key selection criteria require knowledge of, and commitment to, this statement.
- C. Membership of the CFA by a volunteer be on the basis of the volunteer being committed to this statement.

14. RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS – ARRANGEMENTS AND ANALYSIS

14.1 INTRODUCTION

This is an important area that was the subject of much input in the consultations and submissions. Details of the issues raised at consultations and in submissions will follow. The arrangements will then be considered and, where appropriate, comments and recommendations made.

14.2 ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN CONSULTATIONS

The consultations held by the Inquiry raised many issues regarding the recruitment and, particularly, the retention of volunteers in CFA. Some attendees were concerned about the sustainability of their brigades and the CFA. It is important to note the issues below as they provide a valuable insight into what brigades are experiencing and what they believe could be done to ensure volunteers join, and stay, in the CFA.

Issues raised during consultation were:

- *Surge of interest in volunteering after major incidents* - Some brigades suspend recruitment immediately following major incidents to wait for the 'rush of blood' to settle as such recruits often do not stay, usually after they realise the extent of the training and commitment involved and the change in lifestyle required.
- *Be welcoming to new volunteers* - It is important that brigades are welcoming to new volunteers who may be intimidated and overwhelmed.
- *Recognition of the community service the volunteers provide*
 - There is a perception in Victoria that CFA is only active during summer when wildfire is present, and people are not aware that the CFA serves and protects the community on a daily basis.
 - The CFA has a significantly lower profile compared to that of other emergency services such as VICSES and Ambulance Victoria.
 - There is also a misperception that outer metropolitan areas, such as Cranbourne and Dandenong, are served by the MFESB. This perception has to change.
- *Raise profile of CFA* - the marketing, advertising and media profile of CFA should be raised to highlight the benefits and attractiveness of being a CFA volunteer, in terms of the skills they acquire, such as leadership, which could be transferred into their workplace and personal life.
- *Cap on number of members*
 - Numbers of members in brigades is a brigade by brigade issue, it may need to be a CFA issue.
 - Rural brigades generally do not have waiting lists of potential volunteers; this is a more common situation in outer metro brigades.
- *Volunteer turn-over*
 - The reasons that volunteers leave differ in outer metro areas and rural areas. Often, volunteers leave outer metro brigades to experience a sea change, for education, or a change in work circumstances. Often, they leave for positive reasons such as marriage and children, causing them to move to regional centres.
 - The 'churn' or turnover rate of brigades can be variable. Often, membership levels will stabilise over a few years but may then experience a significant drop off in numbers. Brigades do, and should, devote a substantial effort into retaining volunteers, as it would be a significant loss if a volunteer leaves after all the training and effort invested in them.

- The perception of any discrimination between career staff and volunteers will also cause volunteers to leave.
- Dissatisfaction caused by conflicts, factionalism, exclusion or bullying, leaders who were autocratic, used favouritism, or were incompetent, negative impacts of other volunteers who were lazy, unsafe or troublemakers can also cause volunteers to leave.
- *Ensure continuity* - There is a culture of taking people off the books. The CFA should have some sort of alumni process.
- *Exit survey* – formalise exit survey process, should be standardised.
- *Ageing population* - Rural brigades are substantially comprised of over 60s. There is difficulty in recruiting younger people to join their local brigade in rural areas as the youth leave to attend university or migrate towards regional centres where there may be more work opportunities and services.
- *Ethnic diversity* - Important to tap into migrant and ethnic communities, especially in the outer metro areas. They are a potential source of a new pool of volunteers. However, there are cultural ‘impediments’ or lack of understanding about the role of volunteers in their local fire brigade and a lack of awareness that the CFA service is provided by the community. Often, their first reaction when they hear a siren is fear. In some brigades, they are successful in recruiting volunteers from ethnic minorities, and while there are some that commit to their brigade and stay for several years, there are some new recruits that leave after only several months, or did not attend any training. It may be more feasible for CFA to target the second generation of migrants who may be more receptive to the idea of volunteering as a firefighter.
- *Schools*
 - There may be a possibility of bolstering recruitment of volunteers through targeting students in secondary schools. The success rate of such a recruitment method varies and in some cases, no members are gained, as the students then leave rural areas to attend university in Melbourne. In other cases, they may gain two or more volunteer members. It is undetermined, but should not be underestimated, the effect of these school campaigns on students who retain an interest in the CFA and then join a CFA brigade in another part of the State or at a later stage of their lives.
 - Youth crew or primary/secondary/tertiary mentoring program – in 12 months, those participants will acquire First Aid, Minimum Skills and Low Structure qualifications.
 - Department of Education should target secondary school students and incorporate CFA Minimum Skills training into the curriculum.
 - Should target over 17, as 16 year olds will be busy with VCE.
- *Junior Development Program*
 - The juniors who join their local brigades as adult volunteers often then leave to attend university in Melbourne. Often the youth are not interested in taking leadership roles and join to be actively putting out fires. It may be helpful to develop social networks such as youth groups to assist in retaining young persons.
 - It may also be beneficial to target those who come back from university for summer holidays.
- *Focus on adult generation*
 - While it is worthwhile for CFA to put effort into recruiting young people, it would also be beneficial to actively focus on the 30 to 40 year old age group who may have a mortgage and are settled within the community, while also taking into account their young family commitments.
 - Women in this age group are a potentially untapped resource and would be beneficial to actively target this demographic, especially those mature-aged, whose children have grown up and left home, or full-time stay-at-home mums.

- *Incentives for a volunteer*
 - Some volunteers believe that the probationary period, Minimum Skills course and excessive training requirements, and the time and imposition on their lives that this causes could be a disincentive for new recruits.
 - The vast majority of young people join CFA to serve the community, but also to experience the thrill of responding to incidents and want to play an active role as soon as possible. To ensure that these volunteers remain active, it is vital to keep them entertained, as well as minimise any delays in processing their application.

14.3 ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN SUBMISSIONS

The submissions received reflected many of the issues raised in consultations. As a result, it is not necessary to repeat them. However, there were several pertinent points made:

- *Delays in course availability* - Significant time gaps in the provision of available courses cause frustration and disillusionment in new and potential members. The perception is that this is partly due to priority being given to paid staff; no one disputes the need for paid staff to be given adequate training. Another potential reason is that new training requirements are imposed without sufficient resources being made available for them.
- *Delays in Minimum Skills course* - Particular concern with the often-long wait (up to six months) for the Minimum Skills course. This affects brigades' ability to recruit new volunteers as many are unwilling to wait that long. This will require an increase in the number and frequency of various training courses, and consequently require more resourcing, both financial and personnel – aided by recognising qualifications of some volunteer trainers.
- *Lack of applicants* - Brigade is ageing as not enough recruits coming through the door. Likely reasons for potential applicants not applying are:
 - Not an attractive option, especially for younger generations.
 - Never really thought about it.
 - Not knowing what volunteering in CFA entails with respect to time and commitment.
 - Fear of death or injury from fighting fires.
 - Presumption that there are enough volunteers.
 - Do not want to spend time in non-core activities such as fundraising.
- *Unattractive website* - The website should be revamped as it does not provide information on what a volunteer is about and is unappealing.
- *Succession planning* - There is no formal talent identification or succession planning process in CFA. There should be a process in place for managers to identify persons with potential for development to leadership positions.
- *University group* - There needs to be a unit set up at universities as an interest group to allow CFA members to stay in touch and be able to turn out when they are in CFA areas.

14.4 THE ARRANGEMENTS

Volunteers are crucial to the delivery of fire and emergency services in Victoria. The central strength of the CFA model is its response capability. CFA volunteers, with the support of career staff, have the flexibility and mobility to be deployed around the State providing rapid surge capacity. The recruitment and retention of volunteers is vital to maintaining and strengthening the sustainability of brigades and the CFA model.

While it is useful to measure the value of volunteers in economic value, the true value of volunteerism cannot be captured in dollar terms. Across Victoria, the social value that CFA volunteers contribute towards creating and maintaining dynamic, engaged and resilient communities is significant.

14.4.1 RECRUITMENT

Research has shown that emergency services volunteers, both in Australia and overseas, are primarily motivated by a sense of community responsibility, as well as by the excitement of the role, a sense of achievement, the social interaction and camaraderie, joining family and friends who are volunteers, and being able to learn new skills, enhance the protection of their own property and help others.

CFA volunteer recruitment is primarily managed at a brigade level, so that it can be targeted to the local community. Recruitment usually takes place either through a rolling intake, which suits smaller rural brigades, or through a recruitment campaign of four to six weeks, involving specifically targeted activities.

The CFA Resource Management System (RMS) records that 1,972 volunteers were recruited in 2008, 3,008 in 2009 and 1,984 in 2010. Approximately 30% of these recruits were female.

To become a CFA volunteer, an applicant can make a new member enquiry to their local brigade, submit a volunteer enquiry form on the CFA website or call the CFA recruitment Information Line. CFA Member Services then puts the enquirer in touch with a representative from their local brigade, where they can have a chat and learn more about being a CFA volunteer.

Schedule 5 of the CFA Regulations sets out model rules for brigades. Clause 6(b) of Schedule 5 states that 'Membership of a brigade may be refused where the CFA considers that the person is not a fit and proper person to be a member of the brigade'.

CFA carries out a National Police Record Check as a part of all applications for CFA membership to assist in determining whether an applicant is a 'fit and proper person to be a member of the brigade'. A National Police Record Check is also carried out if a member transfers between brigades.

The process for applying for membership of a CFA Brigade is set out in the *CFA Procedure – Volunteer National Police Record Check*. A summary of the procedure is as follows:

- An officer of the brigade interviews an applicant for membership. The applicant is asked about their motivations and goals for joining the CFA and the brigade.
- The Brigade Management Team determines the applicant is suitable for the role.
- If suitable, the applicant must complete a Brigade Registration Form, which includes an authority for CFA to obtain a National Police Record check and possible medical check.
- The brigade conducts a vote on whether to support an application for membership.
- The Operations Manager for the Region in which the brigade is located can approve/disallow the application for membership. This authority is delegated by the Chief Officer.

Once accepted, a member commences a six-month probationary period as a CFA member. This probationary period is intended to provide an opportunity to determine whether an appropriate match has been made between the new member and the brigade. The period also allows time for induction and training and for the new member to assess whether the volunteering role is suitable for them.

A new member will only receive a set of Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) upon completion of Minimum Skills Wildfire Firefighter Training. Until then, they are unable to respond to incidents with other members of the brigade.

Upon completion of the probationary period, the brigade advises the applicant whether probation has been successful, and if not, it decides whether to extend the probationary period or whether the new member is not suitable to be a brigade member. If successful, the new member becomes a full CFA member. Some brigades can, from time to time, impose their own ceiling on the number of members according to their capacity to accommodate members.

Table 18 below shows that CFA's overall volunteer membership has remained relatively steady since 2006.

Table 18: Operational and Non-Operational Volunteer Numbers 2006-07 — 2009-10

Annually	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Operational Volunteers	35,114	35,290	36,004	36,736
Non-Operational Volunteers	24,395	23,566	22,939	22,444
Total	59,509	58,856	58,943	59,180

CFA has produced a comprehensive 'Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Guide' to assist brigades with volunteer recruitment and retention strategies through the provision of tools, templates and guidance information. The Guide was created in consultation with volunteers and staff from across Victoria, as well as interstate fire services.

The Guide notes that when recruiting volunteers for integrated brigades, it is important to ensure they understand the brigade has career firefighters and this may impact on their opportunity to participate in emergency response.

The model of the CFA, where volunteers are supported by career staff in integrated stations is so that career staff support volunteers in the provision of services to the community, to ensure that any potential service gaps are met. This is reinforced in their position descriptions. The support provided to volunteers by the CFA is explored further in Chapter 18.

A function of the recently established CFA Operational Training and Volunteerism Department is the development of a revised statewide CFA volunteer recruitment strategy. Its purpose is to ensure CFA as a whole remains sustainable in future, and is working towards a volunteer base that reflects the diversity of the communities they serve.

14.4.2 RESIGNATIONS

In 2010, 4,071 volunteers either resigned, transferred to another brigade or retired or are deceased. According to the Guide, reasons why volunteers resign include:

- Time demands – the main reason why people leave. Research by the Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre (Bushfire CRC) has shown the three main areas why volunteers resign are work commitments (51%), family commitments (25%) and personal commitments (21%).
- Training demands.
- Negative brigade issues - a significant number leave due to negative brigade issues. They describe authoritarian leadership, favouritism, feeling excluded, personality clashes and conflict among brigade members.
- New interests.
- Moved from brigade area.
- Ageing volunteer population.

Since 2000, the average number of resignations from CFA, including transfers, per annum has been 4,650. The Guide notes that exit surveys or interviews can be conducted if a member resigns, as they provide vital information about what the brigade is doing well and build on that, and what they need to improve on.

However, exit interviews or ways of receiving other formal feedback from volunteers who have resigned are not mandatory in the CFA. At present, the New South Wales Rescue and Fire Service is the only fire agency in Australia that asks volunteers who leave the organisation to complete an exit survey questionnaire as a matter of routine in order to track reasons why volunteers leave. This procedure has enabled some potentially damaging administrative and supervisory difficulties to be resolved speedily.

COMMENT

Inevitably, in an organisation like the CFA, volunteer resignations will occur for a variety of reasons. However, it is important that, in a systemic way, the CFA capture information as to why volunteers have resigned. That does not occur at the moment, with any capture of information being ad hoc. It is necessary that the CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, develop a systemic exit strategy, which ensures that relevant information is captured consistently across all brigades.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, develop a systemic exit strategy, which ensures that relevant information is captured consistently across all brigades.

Volunteer Brigade Transfer Process

There is no provision in the CFA to enable a volunteer to transfer from one brigade to another. For example, if a volunteer moved to another suburb, he or she would have to resign from his or her original brigade, be de-registered and then undertake a police check and the six-month probationary period at their new brigade regardless of their experience as a volunteer in their previous brigade. Volunteers who wish to return to their previous brigade will then be unable to do so, as they have resigned. This has been attributed to CFA's Resource Management System (RMS), which is outdated and cannot support a transfer process.

CFA is currently developing a new Human Capital Management System (HCMS), accompanied by a new web based Volunteer Support Portal, which will provide much improved functionality for CFA volunteers, including the management of brigade transfers for CFA members. These initiatives will provide the necessary records maintenance to support a transfer arrangement.

COMMENT

A major grievance of volunteers at consultations and in submissions was the lack of an appropriate volunteer brigade transfer arrangement in the CFA. It is clearly a source of great frustration that needs to be rectified. The development of the necessary record maintenance capacity will enable this to be done, and it should be a priority.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, develop and introduce an arrangement whereby a volunteer can transfer from one brigade to another and still remain a member of the CFA, without the need to resign.

14.4.3 RETENTION

The Bushfire CRC, as part of its Enhancing Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Project, produced a Report to the CFA in November 2009 - *Third and Final Survey of New CFA Volunteers: The First Three Years with CFA* - which analysed data from a survey of 346 CFA volunteers who joined between April 2005 and March 2006, after they had completed three years of service. Among other issues, the Report found that:

- Respondents reported spending around 17 hours per month volunteering with CFA. Most of this was responding to incidents, training or completing assessments, or involved in administrative duties.
- The main factor reported to limit participation in CFA was competing demands from paid work or business. Over 80% of respondents in this survey were members of the labour force.
- For incidents during business hours, self-employed respondents reported turning out to a higher proportion of callouts than did employees. Employees' limited availability during working hours appeared to be due to constraints from their employers, colleagues or work responsibilities that could not be postponed to respond to an incident.
- Other common barriers were family commitments and frustration with perceived CFA bureaucracy. Among the least limiting factors reported were the complexity of CFA work, and distress at dealing with injury or death at incidents.

Respondents in that survey were also asked how much certain factors would make it easier to volunteer. These responses are shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Factors that would make it easier to volunteer with CFA

	Number of respondents	Percent		
		Much/ a bit easier	Not easier	Do not know
During local bushfires, I did not have to worry about leaving my property or family unprotected when I turn out with CFA	224	69.6	22.8	7.6
I could catch up with training or assessments at neighbouring brigades or online if I miss a session	243	66.3	25.1	8.6
If more training and assessment were available via distance education	256	62.1	29.3	8.6
The atmosphere in the brigade was more harmonious	201	59.7	36.3	4.0
My employer supported me turning out to routine callouts, not just major incidents or large bushfires	154	56.5	36.4	7.1
My employer had a better awareness and understanding of CFA and the role of volunteers	157	55.4	41.4	3.2
I could notify my brigade or Group of my availability for strike teams	248	55.2	38.7	6.0
There was better leadership in the brigade	200	53.0	40.0	7.0
CFA activities took less of my time	238	50.0	45.4	4.6

As part of CFA's New Member Tracking Project (McLennan, Birch, & King, 2006), completed survey returns from current CFA volunteers who had been members for 12 months were analysed. Brigade climate and leadership, and benefits of being a CFA volunteer, were found to be related strongly to satisfaction with volunteering, and the level of satisfaction with volunteering was, in turn, linked strongly with intention to remain a CFA volunteer. This is consistent with both common sense observations, and findings from much of the research on employee turnover: being a member of a well led, inclusive, and harmonious volunteer brigade is associated strongly with higher levels of both satisfaction and commitment to remaining a volunteer.

COMMENT

The findings of the Bushfire CRC relating to the retention of volunteers reflects the matters raised in consultations and submissions. Based on the information that has been gathered in this Inquiry, I am in agreement with the findings of the Bushfire CRC relating to the retention of volunteers.

14.4.4 THE FUTURE

At first glance, CFA's overall membership statistics show a slight but steady increase over the years. However, these figures cannot be examined in isolation from the changing nature of our communities. The changing demographic and economic circumstances of Victoria may represent a longer-term threat to volunteer firefighter numbers in the future.

For the year ended 30 June 2010, the population of regional Victoria grew by 1.4% to 1.47 million persons, an increase of 20,300 persons over the previous year. The fastest growing local government areas in regional Victoria were Wyndham, Whittlesea, Casey and Melton, all located on Melbourne's urban fringe. The regional centres of Greater Geelong, Ballarat and Greater Bendigo accounted for 36% of population growth in regional Victoria in 2009-10.

'Victoria in Future 2008' by the Department of Planning and Community Development has predicted that Victoria's population is projected to grow to 7.395 million by 2036, an increase of 1.845 million or 33% from 2010. Regional Victoria's population is projected to grow by over 400,000 between 2010 and 2036.

Strong population growth can be expected in regional centres, which have diverse employment opportunities and services, coastal areas, which are popular locations for sea changers such as young families and retirees, and tree change and other 'lifestyle' locations such as rural areas around Melbourne and the regional centres, as well as the Alpine areas and the Murray River.

Decreases in population are projected in many parts of western Victoria, in dry land farming areas. This is mainly due to an ageing population and to migration to large regional centres. While regional Victoria already has an older than average population, there are significant geographical variations. Regional centres tend to have the youngest populations. Remote and some coastal locations tend to have the oldest populations. It is projected that, by 2036, the population aged over 65 will represent 21.6% of Victoria's population compared with 13.3% in 2006.

It is estimated that metropolitan Melbourne's population will exceed 5 million by 2026. The impact of these projections includes:

- Urban Growth Boundaries extended to include an additional 41,663 hectares of land and some 26,000 hectares for development with 15,500 as open space. All of this extension is located in the CFA fire district.

- Changes to the current risk profiling of volunteer fire brigades, such as moving from a 'Wildfire' risk to 'structural' risk, as a result of the Government's current estimation for 284,000 new houses in the expanded growth areas within the CFA fire district.
- An increase in incidents and an impact on service delivery capability, as investment in urban renewal increases housing density, commercial zoning and road congestion.
- The development of new urban areas now and in the future that will retain significant amounts of vegetation and create an expanding boundary of interspersed natural and developed tracts of land. These 'peri-urban' areas are among the most vulnerable in the world to bushfires and are subject to increasing risk because of climate change. This risk causes increased hazard to human populations, property and to natural systems.

The National Bushfire CRC produced a Report in June 2004 - *Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers: Rural Fire Services' Issues and Initiatives* - which found that in new housing developments on capital city and large regional centre urban/rural fringes, a sense of community is weak, with low levels of the kinds of 'social capital' in the form of social networks and a lack of social cohesiveness that leads to community volunteering generally.

Further, the Bushfire CRC Report states that social research has shown that the present trends evident in the world of work will continue, making it possible that emergency services volunteering will prove to be difficult for many potential volunteers to undertake, regardless of their motivation to do so. Such trends include decreasing job permanency and increasing job insecurity, more short-term contract employment, greater casualisation of the workforce, more self-employment, and a proliferation of small niche-type employers with fewer employees and smaller margins.

In addition, there is suggestive, not definitive, evidence from some community non-governmental organisations that 'tomorrow's volunteer' may be more discriminating, less likely to have the time and inclination to make a regular, ongoing commitment to a volunteering organisation, less altruistic, seeking short-term, well-structured, time-limited and flexible volunteering opportunities, and be more motivated by self-serving considerations in choosing when, where and how to volunteer.

The suggestions are that traditional 'community service' motivations may be diluted to some degree by a more hard-headed approach to volunteering that looks to opportunities for professional development and career enhancement. These predictions, if proved true, will present a serious challenge to volunteer-based fire services such as the CFA, whose cultural and operational traditions will conflict with such a pattern of volunteering motivations.

The CFA's 'Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Guide' notes that the changing nature of volunteerism has led to the possibility of CFA considering flexible volunteering models such as:

- Episodic volunteers – short term or seasonal, ongoing commitment for defined period of time.
- Spontaneous volunteers – when disaster strikes, fill roles and personnel gaps if trained to do so; and
- Corporate volunteers – using time and skills of staff in corporate environment.

COMMENT

The changing circumstances of Victoria further emphasises the need for CFA to ensure it remains attractive to future potential volunteers, and more critically, that the CFA volunteer based model that provides such valuable services is sustainable into the future.

14.4.5 WOMEN AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

There is scope to build on existing diversity in brigades by focusing on increasing female membership and culturally diverse members to align with broader community demographics and allow CFA to continue to be connected to changing communities.

By drawing on a wider range of recruits, including women, fire agencies can tap into a larger pool of young, fit and healthy volunteers. This may help lower the median age of volunteers and have positive impacts not only upon service delivery, firefighter health and safety, but also upon the public image of the fire services.

80% of CFA's volunteer base is male and predominantly white Anglo Saxon. 45% of the 11,900 female members are operational. As at May 2011, the percentage of females who are Brigade Captains is 1.5%. The percentage of females who are Captains and Lieutenants is 3.67%. 98 % of CFA operational staff is male with no female members in operational leadership roles. 49% of CFA's non-operational staff are female.

The proportion of female volunteers has steadily increased from 18.4% in 2006-7 to just above 20.3% in 2010-11; this is shown in Table 20 below.

Table 20: Female Volunteers 2006-7 — 2010-11 (*2010-11 figure as at May 2011)

Annually	Number Female Volunteers	Percentage Female Volunteers
2006-7	10,921	18.4
2007-8	10,971	18.6
2008-9	11,379	19.3
2009-10	11,762	19.8
2010-11*	11,895	20.3

There may be some attitudes within brigades that women should be in support roles. If this is the case, those attitudes should be addressed to ensure women have the opportunity to be utilised to the best of their capabilities.

The CFA submission to the Inquiry states that, while the trending increase in female membership is positive, there is ongoing change required to ensure that women are represented more equally in a wide range of key roles across the organisation. Senior CFA leaders have recently noted publicly that given talent is spread equally across gender, CFA must admit that their assumption of operating within a truly meritocratic organisation is fundamentally flawed.

The Bushfire CRC has found that, among the factors that discourage women from volunteering are limited knowledge of the roles available to women in the fire services, concerns about the physical demands of the job, and competing time commitments of family and work. Among the factors that discourage women from continuing to volunteer are difficulties with the shape and size of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). For example, for standard shaped over pants to fit around a woman's hips, they are often too long in the leg and inside leg. The low inside leg makes it awkward for women to step up onto large tankers. Other difficulties are with equipment being heavy, awkward to use, or stowed too high on trucks; and a rejection of women's ability as firefighters by a small but vocal minority of male firefighters.

Australia's volunteer fire agencies have taken a number of initiatives aligned with the research findings. AFAC is working with manufacturers of PPE to introduce a more diverse range of size and body shape of firefighter clothing that will better accommodate the needs of women. Firefighting vehicles are now being designed with the guidance of ergonomics experts to ensure that firefighters, including women, can use them safely and comfortably. Equipment is being introduced that has fewer requirements for physical strength to suit a broader range of users. Carbon-fibre BA cylinders being introduced by many agencies are much lighter in weight and place fewer physical demands on the wearer.

Building cultural and ethnic diversity for some brigades is increasingly important to reflect the communities they service. It is clear that there is low ethnic diversity in the CFA. This may be attributed to cultural issues in areas where there is an influx of new residents through migration who may not be familiar with, or aware of, the role of volunteers in providing the CFA services.

COMMENT

The CFA should ensure it is informed of these new initiatives developed by AFAC and take action to adopt them. Community education programs to specifically engage culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities should be further developed by the CFA to address the importance of ethnic diversity.

Based on the information gathered in this Inquiry, I am of the view that women are currently an untapped resource. It is essential that the CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, develop initiatives and strategies that facilitate the involvement of women as volunteers in the CFA at all levels.

RECOMMENDATION 9

- A. The CFA further develop community education programs to specifically engage culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities to address the importance of ethnic diversity.**
- B. The CFA ensure that it is informed of new initiatives being taken by AFAC for women and take the necessary action to adopt them.**
- C. The CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, develop initiatives and strategies additional to those being taken by AFAC, that facilitate the involvement of women as volunteers in the CFA at all levels.**

14.4.6 YOUTH

CFA defines 'youth' as members aged 11 to 24 years. Within this contingent, 11 to 15 year olds are referred to as juniors, and members 16 and above are then seniors, effectively regular brigade or operational members. As at May 2011, CFA had a youth membership of 8,878, including 6,499 members aged 16 to 24 years old and 2,379 junior members aged 11 to 15 years old. Over 25% of these members are female.

The Junior Volunteer Development Program (JVDP) is a youth development program run by CFA volunteers that provides a wide variety of activities for children aged 11 to 16. The JVDP is delivered by approximately 150 CFA brigades, and the objectives of the program are to:

- Provide young people with a sense of place in their community and an awareness of the need for, and benefits of volunteerism.
- Enhance personal values such as commitment, responsibility and respect for self and others.

- Increase the opportunity for future recruitment and volunteer involvement, whilst making a proactive contribution to the safety and well being of Victorian communities.

Juniors are involved in a number of activities including team building activities, practical skills activities, fundraising, First Aid, community service, sporting and social activities, and excursions. The JVDP supports brigades in conducting the program by providing Youth Development Training for leaders, First Aid Level 1 courses for juniors, funding for activities and excursions, and polo shirts, caps and overalls for all junior participants.

JVDP is not a firefighting program; juniors can choose to become operational members of their brigade when they turn 16. While these programs are not simply aimed at recruiting new CFA members, they do have a positive impact in this regard for many brigades. Program analysis in 2008 found that almost all brigades with 16 to 21 year old members also had a juniors program, and that 86% of those 16 to 21 year olds were originally juniors.

In 2008, CFA held a statewide Youth Forum attended by 60 18 to 24 year olds, from brigades across the Regions and the following opportunities were identified by CFA for consideration:

- A 'bridging' focus around age 15 where the JVDP becomes more Minimum Skills focused and involves more interaction with senior members, so juniors are able to make a more informed decision about becoming a firefighter;
- The development of an intermediate program along Army Cadet Force lines;
- Use of social media and communications technology to maintain contact with youth during the tertiary education years;
- More short term volunteering options that are outcome focused;
- The introduction of flexible membership such as allowing 'summer firefighters' and supporting leave of absence;
- Appealing brigade social occasions for juniors, for example, a fireman's ball rather than a casserole night;
- Improved youth consultation, for example, establishment of positions on CFA consultative committees for a 'Gen Y' or youth representative;
- Regional Youth Support Networks to assist isolated young members;
- Changes to brigade election processes that allow greater meritocracy and address the ongoing nomination of incumbents over many years;
- Merit not tenure based access to training;
- Improved online training opportunities;
- Improved leadership development opportunities for youth; and
- Activities/workshops designed to break down intergenerational barriers.

COMMENT

The involvement of young people in the CFA was consistently raised at consultations and in submissions. Concern was expressed that more was not being done to engage young people as volunteers, and retain them. Based on the information obtained by this Inquiry, I am in agreement with the views expressed. There is a need for the CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, to develop initiatives and strategies that will maximise the involvement of young people as volunteers and their retention as volunteers. In my view, this is of vital importance to the sustainability of the volunteer model. An example of an interesting initiative is the Defence Force Cadet Scheme. There may be lessons to be learned from that scheme. I am not in a position to take this further but do emphasise its importance. There may be scope to work with schools and education institutions to develop appropriate arrangements.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, develop initiatives and strategies that will maximise the involvement of young people as volunteers and their retention as volunteers.

14.4.7 SUCCESSION PLANNING

The sustainability of CFA and the volunteer model is a critical issue. Younger CFA members are often reluctant to take on the significant commitment of being in a senior volunteer position. It is important that the CFA undertakes talent development and succession planning to ensure there are future leaders to replace the current ones, who are, as evident from the consultations, rapidly ageing.

Succession planning is a process of identifying and developing internal experienced and capable people with the potential to fill key leadership positions in the organisation. Fundamental to the succession-management process is an underlying philosophy that talent in the organisation must be developed for the greater good of the enterprise.

Research on talent development indicates that clear objectives are critical to establishing effective succession planning. These objectives tend to be core to many or most companies that have well-established practices:

- Identify those with the potential to assume greater responsibility in the organisation.
- Provide critical development experiences to those that can move into key roles.
- Engage the leadership in supporting the development of high-potential leaders.
- Build a data base that can be used to make better staffing decisions for key jobs.

These additional objectives may also be embedded in the succession process:

- Improve member commitment and retention.
- Meet the career development expectations of existing members.
- Counter the increasing difficulty and costs of recruiting externally.

14.4.8 STRATEGIC PLANNING

The 2004 Bushfire CRC Report states that long-term strategic planning concerning volunteer recruitment, training and retention requires good quality data and a powerful and flexible centralised data analysis system. Without such, effective planning to respond effectively to emerging volunteer trends is difficult, if not impossible. Data focusing on the characteristics of their current volunteer workforce such as age, length of service, role within their brigade, level of work-related education and training, employment status and employment industry sector would assist in this regard.

The 2004 Bushfire CRC Report provided the following suggestions for each rural fire service in Australia to consider, having regard to their particular situation and circumstances:

- Establish a Volunteer Development Working Group to identify and address issues for the agency associated with volunteer recruitment and retention.
- Undertake an audit of how effectively the agency is implementing the generally accepted three key elements of 'valuing' volunteers in order to retain them;
 - soliciting and listening to their view and suggestions;
 - providing opportunities for meaningful personal and professional development;
 - recognising publicly volunteers' contributions within the organisation and the wider community.

- Devote more resources to:
 - establishing, or reviewing, benchmarks for minimum and maximum desirable member levels for brigades, having regard to the kinds of risks a brigade is likely to face in meeting the needs of its community; and
 - monitoring effective volunteer numbers in relation to likely demands.
- Improve the quality and usefulness of the agency's volunteers database for strategic planning purposes.

COMMENT

Based on the information obtained in this Inquiry, I am in agreement with the suggestions made. I believe it would be beneficial for the CFA to take these suggestions on board in their strategic planning.

15. RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS AS EMPLOYEES – ARRANGEMENTS AND ANALYSIS

15.1 INTRODUCTION

This is another important area that was the subject of consistent comment at the consultations and in submissions. Concerns were raised that volunteers were disadvantaged in relation to gaining employment with the CFA. The issues raised at consultations and in submissions will first be considered, followed by matters raised in the submissions of the VFBV and the CFA. Finally, the arrangements will be considered and where appropriate, comments and recommendations made.

15.2 ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN CONSULTATIONS

The view was expressed consistently across the consultations that the 2010 Enterprise Agreement (EA) between the CFA and UFU restrict volunteers from being recruited as CFA employees. That was the perception of volunteers. In the consultations, I emphasised that this was not an Inquiry into the industrial agreements. Arrangements in those agreements may affect volunteers in a number of ways and on that basis, I noted the Inquiry would be looking at arrangements and their effect on volunteers.

Issues raised in consultations relating were as follows:

- No provision in the EA for operational firefighters to undergo RPL/RCC to gain entry as a senior level firefighter.
- Promotion should be based on merit and not artificial impediments that are discriminatory and fail to give equal opportunity to all applicants.
- Some younger CFA members have joined CFA as a volunteer with the sole purpose of becoming a CFA career firefighter in the future and intend to use their volunteer experience as a stepping stone to becoming a career firefighter. The restrictions in the selection criteria listed in the EA prevent these fully qualified and skilled members from fulfilling their career aspirations.
- Volunteers with the experience should be able to sit on interview panels, especially for positions that are intended to support volunteers such as for Operations Managers, who will be dealing primarily with volunteers. For BASOs, volunteers will often be asked to sit on that interview panel. Volunteers are not included on the interview panel for career firefighters.

- Volunteers are able to accumulate considerable depth of experience, knowledge and skills throughout the years and would be well placed to play a role in educating the community regarding fire prevention and awareness.
- There is a shortage of staff across the board – must have lateral entry to fill those vacancies to ensure sustainability.
- Many Operations Officers are not exposed to the CFA structure with no understanding of the culture of the organisation.
- Recruiting of career firefighters is currently a very selective process. There is no feedback to Regional Managers, who are not asked even if listed as a reference by a volunteer applicant.
- CFA is becoming a project-focused organisation with contractors and secondments with no commitment to the culture of the organisation.
- The selection criteria for career staff should emphasise knowledge and understanding of the CFA culture and service delivery model.

15.3 ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN SUBMISSIONS

Submissions received by the Inquiry were perceptive in their assessment of the effect certain clauses in the CFA/UFU industrial agreements had on CFA volunteers. Issues raised reflected those mentioned in consultations. Of note from the submissions are the following issues:

- Under the old two-tier entry program, volunteers had the opportunity of recruitment either through the general firefighter recruitment program or if they were appropriately skilled, competent and qualified, had the opportunity to apply for and be appointed to operational positions (previously known as Assistant Regional Officer, now known as Operations Officer).
- The main purpose of these positions was to provide operational leadership and support to volunteer brigades. This process of two-tier entry is now closed and volunteer competencies and skills are not recognised, supported or fostered to enable volunteers to be recruited into Operations Officer positions.
- The result of this is that volunteers have been significantly disempowered and CFA now struggles consistently to find good quality Operations Officers that understand the needs and issues of volunteers, particularly of regional and isolated parts of Victoria. As these staff are often the vehicle for conveying volunteer ideas, opinions and positions, it is important that these staff are able to work well with volunteers and understand issues that are particular to the situation of volunteering, such as timing.
- Instructors are not able to laterally transfer into the operational firefighter stream. They have no career path outside of this stream. This seems to be an anomaly as they apparently have sufficient skill and knowledge to teach firefighting and incident management skills.
- There would be a number of volunteers with the appropriate training and assessing qualifications, and subject expertise, to be considered as appropriate instructors for CFA. Most of these members are genuinely not interested in ultimately transferring to operational firefighter status.
- Long-term vacancies (particularly Operations Officers and instructors) affect the level of service and support provided to volunteer fire brigades and personnel.
- CFA continues to fill some long-term vacancies through higher duties and overtime resulting in significant budget pressures for the organisation. Not filling these positions also impacts on productivity, welfare and service delivery of those existing staff resulting in a 'revolving door' workforce across CFA, which is undermining stability and confidence in the Operations Directorate.
- Volunteers should have a 'positive weighting' applied to their application to join CFA staff. It is an indictment on CFA that volunteers are not given an opportunity to a 'developed' career pathway.

- Brigades should have a suitably qualified representative on a selection panel of staff recruitment for their own stations.
- Volunteers with the appropriate qualifications and competencies should be allowed to apply for an appropriate operational position, commensurate with their qualifications, skills, competency, knowledge and proficiency.
- It is of concern that highly qualified and experienced volunteers are not given recognition for competencies that they already hold when they gain employment as a recruit firefighter.

15.4 VFBV SUBMISSION

VFBV provided a comprehensive analysis of various clauses in the 2010 EA that may affect CFA volunteers, which has been useful in providing the overview of arrangements made by CFA for the recruitment of volunteers as employees.

Relevant issues VFBV has noted in their submission to the Inquiry are as follows:

- VFBV believe that appointments to all CFA positions should be made on merit, based on appropriate qualifications/competencies and relevant experience, a demonstrated understanding of, and commitment to, CFA as a volunteer-based organisation and relevant experience of CFA volunteerism.
- It would be of benefit to CFA if it assisted interested volunteers to undertake required training and provided opportunities to gain experience to meet selection criteria for appointment to operational staff positions within CFA.
- Discrimination and resulting arrangements which serve to limit or restrict potential volunteer utilisation are inappropriate and ultimately destructive to a volunteer-based organisation.
- In the past, senior experienced volunteers have been employed by CFA as Operations Officers along with others who have come from the ranks of paid staff. This mix of backgrounds at this level of operational management and coordination helped maintain the unique CFA culture.
- Restrictions on the use of volunteer instructors and assessors have directly contributed to delays in the provision of training.
- In a decentralised organisation like CFA, there are benefits to being able to employ local staff for positions like training instructor based on part time or casual work, which may be the most effective and efficient way of providing training and assessment for volunteers at some brigades.
- Flexible arrangements could be attractive to existing firefighters who are parents of young children, have emerging personal commitments that impact full time work, have left the job through retirement or experienced volunteers with other part time interests, including those who have retired early under state superannuation arrangements from education and training positions. Such flexible employment arrangements can be mutually beneficial; good for the part-time instructors' commitments and good for CFA in the provision of instructors at volunteer friendly times.

COMMENT

Based on the information obtained in this Inquiry, I am in general agreement with the points made in the VFBV submission.

15.5 CFA SUBMISSION

The CFA submission to the Inquiry was comprehensive and proved very helpful in outlining arrangements relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. In terms of the recruitment of volunteers and CFA employees, the CFA noted the following:

- The addition of volunteers to the staff of the organisation is to be encouraged, and contributes to the organisation's strength in supporting volunteers.
- CFA offers a diverse number of career paths for staff, from delivery of community safety programs to human resource management or vehicle mechanic, and much more. CFA acknowledges that there are some conditions within the 2010 EA that provide practical limitations for any person, including volunteers, wishing to take up a number of operational roles.
- Since 2000, many volunteers have applied, and successfully been accepted as entry-level career firefighters within CFA. Of the 451 career firefighters employed since 2000, 290, or 64% of positions were awarded to volunteers (or people with a history as a CFA volunteer).
- Employment and selection of career firefighters is conducted on merit. Other operational positions covered by the 2010 EA carry additional conditions for employment. Direct entry to these roles is known as 'lateral entry' and under the 2010 EA, specific conditions must apply before lateral entry applications may be considered by CFA.
- In effect, the opportunity for volunteers to apply for any operational role other than recruit firefighter is very limited, and there is little history available to illustrate otherwise. CFA acknowledges this as a current employment constraint for a smaller contingent of volunteers who might wish to take up an operational role within CFA, such as an instructor role, however the various conditions of the CFA/UFU 2010 EA do apply.

COMMENT

The acknowledgement by the CFA of the limited opportunity for volunteers to apply for an operational role other than recruit firefighter is important and accords with my analysis of the arrangements.

15.6 THE ARRANGEMENTS

On 27 August 2010, the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services announced a \$131 million package for the recruitment of 342 additional permanent firefighters at CFA over the next six years. CFA is actively in the process of recruiting 342 firefighters by 2016 and will conduct a minimum of three recruit courses per year.

CFA volunteers can gain significant skills and knowledge through training and practical experience over the years. A change in their personal circumstances may result in some volunteers wanting to apply to join CFA as a paid staff member, in positions such as a career firefighter, training instructor, community education firefighter, Operations Officer or Operations Manager.

The CFA/UFU Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement 2010 (2010 EA) lists the conditions of employment and covers the CFA, UFU and *"all employees who are engaged in or performing work that is or may be performed by an employee engaged in a classification or occupation referred to in the Agreement."* Part A of the 2010 EA applies to all employees. The subsequent Parts B to G then apply respectively to firefighters and station officers, Operations Managers and Operations Officers, Communications Technical Services Officers, Protective Equipment Department employees, Practical Area Drill employees and Fire Services Communication employees.

Part 3 of the 2010 EA notes that *"it has been designed to maintain a highly skilled and motivated workforce, which ensures the provision of a professional integrated fire service delivering high quality service to the community"*.

Under the 2010 EA, career firefighters are able to progress in the CFA according to the ranks below:

Rank	Qualification
Recruit Firefighter	Undertaking recruit training course
Firefighter Level 1	Completed recruit training course
Firefighter Level 2	Completed one year service and requisite modules
Firefighter Level 3	Completed two years service and requisite modules
Qualified Firefighter	Completed three years service and requisite modules
Qualified Firefighter with Leading Firefighter Qualifications	Eligible for promotion to Leading Firefighter.
Senior Firefighter	Employee appointed to this classification, equal of a Leading Firefighter.
Leading Firefighter	Qualified firefighter who has completed all Leading Firefighter qualifications and assessment and Firefighter 1, 2 and 3 modules.
Station Officer	Appointed officer who has completed minimum five years service, with at least one year as Leading Firefighter, and completed relevant modules. Includes employees employed as Fire Officer 1.
Senior Station Officer	Appointed Officer who has completed minimum one-year service, and has been a Station Officer. Includes employees employed as Fire Officer 2
Fire Officer 1	Appointed Officer who has completed minimum five years service, with at least one year at Leading Firefighter, and completed relevant modules
Fire Officer 2	Appointed Officer who has completed minimum two years service as Fire Officer 1, and completed relevant modules

15.6.1 RECRUIT FIREFIGHTERS

There is evidence that a strong percentage of career staff are either current or former volunteers. Table 21 shows the percentage of volunteers recruited from 2005 to May 2011.

Table 21: Career Firefighter Recruitment 2005-2011

Database	Applicants	Volunteers	% of Volunteers in Pool	Recruited	Volunteer Recruits	Percentage of volunteers recruited
2005	673	336	50%	20	16	80%
2006	535	236	44.1%	40	26	65%
2007	269	95	35.3%	40	26	65%
2008	436	158	36.2%	20	15	75%
2009	654	207	31.65%	20	11	55%
2010	359	109	30.3%	50	20	42%
Feb 2011	356	121	34%	25	11	44%
May 2011	677	192	28%	25	12	48%
Total to date	3959	1454	36.7%	240	137	57%

CFA conducts an extensive screening process prior to selection for a career firefighting role. This process incorporates:

- National Criminal Record Check;
- Two levels of interviews, of which the final interview panel includes a psychologist;
- Referee checks;

- Aptitude testing, which includes verbal, numerical and mechanical reasoning;
- California Psychological Inventory test. The results of this test are incorporated into the interview process by a CFA psychologist. The test results are used to validate information gained during the interview and application process.

CFA career firefighters are also subject to a six-month probationary period. The recruit training course is approximately 16 weeks long and comprises practical and theoretical instructions.

Clause 67.2 of the 2010 EA provides that there will be no entry to the operational stream of firefighting other than through the recruit course. Therefore, the CFA cannot appoint, promote, progress or transfer a person and no person may hold such a rank, position or classification, unless that person is (and immediately prior was) an operational employee.

COMMENT

The impact of clause 67.2 of the 2010 EA is that volunteers who may have accumulated significant firefighting experience and the commensurate skills and knowledge over the years they have served as a volunteer, will only be able to start their career as an employed firefighter, as a recruit, with the corresponding salary level, regardless of their skills and abilities. No weighting is given to their volunteer experience when applying for a career position.

Understandably, this situation has been of concern to volunteers. I am not privy to the reasons or justification for this clause. However, in my view it inevitably inhibits the recruitment of volunteers as employees and leads to an understandable feeling by them of not being valued and appropriately recognised. In my view, this arrangement needs to be revisited by the CFA with the UFU. I appreciate that it is part of an industrial agreement and therefore any change to the current situation would need to be negotiated with the UFU.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The CFA revisit with the UFU the arrangement relating to the recruitment of volunteer firefighters as an employee.

15.6.2 LATERAL ENTRY

Clause 28 of the 2010 EA states that it is the CFA and UFU's intention that vacant positions within the CFA that can be filled by career firefighters/officers will be filled by CFA career firefighters/officers.

The 2010 EA notes that there may be instances where an internal CFA employee cannot be found to fill a permanent vacancy, even after the provision of appropriate support and training. Clause 28.4 of the 2010 EA provides that the CFA may only permanently fill a vacant position by lateral entry in accordance with the following steps:

- CFA must advertise any vacancy at least twice internally to CFA operational firefighters
- If there is no suitable applicant, CFA may second someone into the position in accordance with Clause 28.3, discussed below.
- If there is still a vacancy at the end of the secondment period, the position will be advertised internally to CFA operational firefighters once more. If there is no internal applicant, the position may be offered to the secondee on a permanent basis.
- If there is no secondment, or the secondee does not wish to take up the position on a permanent basis, then the CFA may seek external applicants.

External applicants must be an operational employee of a recognised fire service. Lateral entry will only be into the rank of Leading Firefighter or above and the applicant must hold the same or equivalent rank as that of the position being advertised.

COMMENT

The issue of lateral entry was consistently raised at consultations and in submissions. Volunteers expressed concern that the arrangements that apply are too restrictive and prevent volunteers from being recruited when they could be the most suitable person for the position. This is particularly the case with management positions. It is a matter that is referred to by the Chief Officer. Again, I am not privy to the reasons why this arrangement was made.

However, on the basis of the information gathered by this Inquiry, I am of the view that this arrangement is contrary to the best interests of the CFA, in that it inhibits the ability of the CFA to appoint the most suitable person to the position. One Regional Manager informed me that, if not for the lateral entry restriction, he would be able to fill vacant management positions that had been vacant for more than 12 months by suitably qualified local persons without further delay. In my view, this is an unacceptable situation and the CFA needs to revisit this arrangement with the UFU. It is appreciated that any change to the current arrangement will have to be by negotiation.

15.6.3 OPERATIONS OFFICERS/OPERATIONS MANAGERS

Clause 120.1 of the 2010 EA states that all internal appointees to the ranks of Operations Officer or Operations Manager must hold all Station Officer competencies and the competencies of the underpinning ranks.

Clause 122 of the 2010 EA regulates lateral entry to positions of Operations Officer and Operations Manager. The provisions of this Clause require that:

- CFA demonstrate that no suitably qualified internal applicant exists;
- The position must be advertised internally on two occasions;
- If there is no suitable internal applicant, then proceed to either appoint an internal person who does not meet all of the requirements for appointment, or lateral entry of an external applicant in accordance with, the outcomes of consultation between the CFA and UFU, of a competency based lateral entry process.
- If the parties cannot agree on this process then Fair Work Australia (FWA) will determine this process. Such a FWA determination shall only be effective for the life of the 2010 EA.

There are 94 Operations Officer positions at CFA today. In the past two years, 16 people have been newly promoted to this rank, 13 people have left these roles (due to promotion or resignation) and 19 Operations Officers have transferred within the rank to a new location.

COMMENT

Currently, there is a very high turnover of Operations Officers in the CFA, with some only lasting less than six months. This significantly affects brigades. In my view, the impact of clause 122 of the 2010 EA is to inhibit the appointment of suitably qualified volunteers to the role of Operations Officers and Operations Managers, who have a very important role in the management, leadership and support for volunteers and their brigades.

15.6.4 SECONDMENT

The 2010 EA notes that there will be instances where short-term secondment (no longer than two years) to a long-term vacant position may be appropriate. Clause 28.3 of the 2010 EA provides that such a secondee must be an operational firefighting employee of a recognised fire service of a government in Australia or New Zealand, not including private firefighting services. Secondment will only be into the rank of Leading Firefighter or above. Secondees must also hold the same or equivalent rank as that of the position to which they are seconded.

Secondment of Instructors

Clause 99.18 of the 2010 EA allows for the filling of vacant instructor positions by way of secondment for a period not exceeding two years. Clause 99.18.5 states that secondment for the purposes of Clause 99.18 means secondment of a CFA employee into the position of instructor.

COMMENT

The comments made in regard to lateral entry apply to secondment.

RECOMMENDATION 12

The CFA revisit with the UFU the arrangements relating to lateral entry and secondment.

15.6.5 COMMUNITY EDUCATORS

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC), in its Final Report, stated that:

“The Commission considers that volunteers have unrivalled access and credibility in local communities and are therefore in a very good position to meet and communicate with local residents. In this context, the revised [bushfire safety] policy will require a whole-of-workforce approach: all firefighters will become communicators of the message and will need to have a sound knowledge of the bushfire safety policy and be able to discuss it with members of the community. This will allow firefighters to better harness local resources and will result in communities and individuals becoming less dependent on the State, more ‘fire adapted’, and more responsible for their own safety.

This expanded education role could place strain on CFA volunteers, who expressed concern about already being stretched when trying to meet community demands. A revised mix of paid and volunteer positions might help to resolve this. Ultimately, a number of specialists are probably required to run education programs, but all firefighters might be asked questions from time to time and need to be able to respond to those questions properly.”(1.8.2 – Volume 2, VBRC Final Report).

Clause 71.3 of the 2010 EA recognises that a fundamental role of firefighters and Station Officers is to educate the community on fire prevention and awareness.

The CFA and UFU agreed in the 2010 EA that career Firefighters/Station Officers or when such staff are not available, volunteer Firefighters/Officers, will deliver community education on fire prevention and awareness. This clause differentiates between community education on fire prevention and awareness and the delivery of special community information campaigns that do not have an educational (i.e. training) component.

An Award stream of 'Community Education Firefighter/Fire Officer' was developed in the 2010 EA to cover appropriately qualified employees who were Community Support Facilitators (no longer referred to in the EA). The 2010 EA states that should a current employee who occupies one of these positions terminate their employment with the CFA, then that position will only be filled by a career firefighter or Station Officer.

COMMENT

This was an issue raised in submissions and at consultations and is clearly of concern to volunteers as it inhibits their ability to hold these positions. Similar considerations apply as apply to lateral entry and secondment. The comments I have made in relation to those arrangements equally apply to these arrangements. There is no need to repeat them. It is appreciated that where career staff are unavailable, volunteers may be able to provide community education. However, in my view this is too restrictive.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The CFA revisit with the UFU the arrangements relating to Community Education Firefighters/Fire Officers and the use of volunteers in this role.

15.6.6 RECRUITMENT OF INSTRUCTORS

The role of instructors is the coordination, development, preparation and delivery of training consistent with their agreed position description.

It is relevant to refer to the clauses relating to recruitment of instructors in the 2008 EBA, as they are broadly similar to those in the 2010 EA. Mr Lex de Man, in his witness statement to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, provided a useful review of the impact of those clauses on the recruitment of instructors and resulting long-term vacancies.

The 2008 EBA clauses relating to recruitment of instructors were 47.3.5, 48.2 and 48.3. They address Training instructors/Training, Classification/Recruitment and Selection, and Recognition of Prior Learning/Recognition of Current Competency. There is no need to set the clauses out.

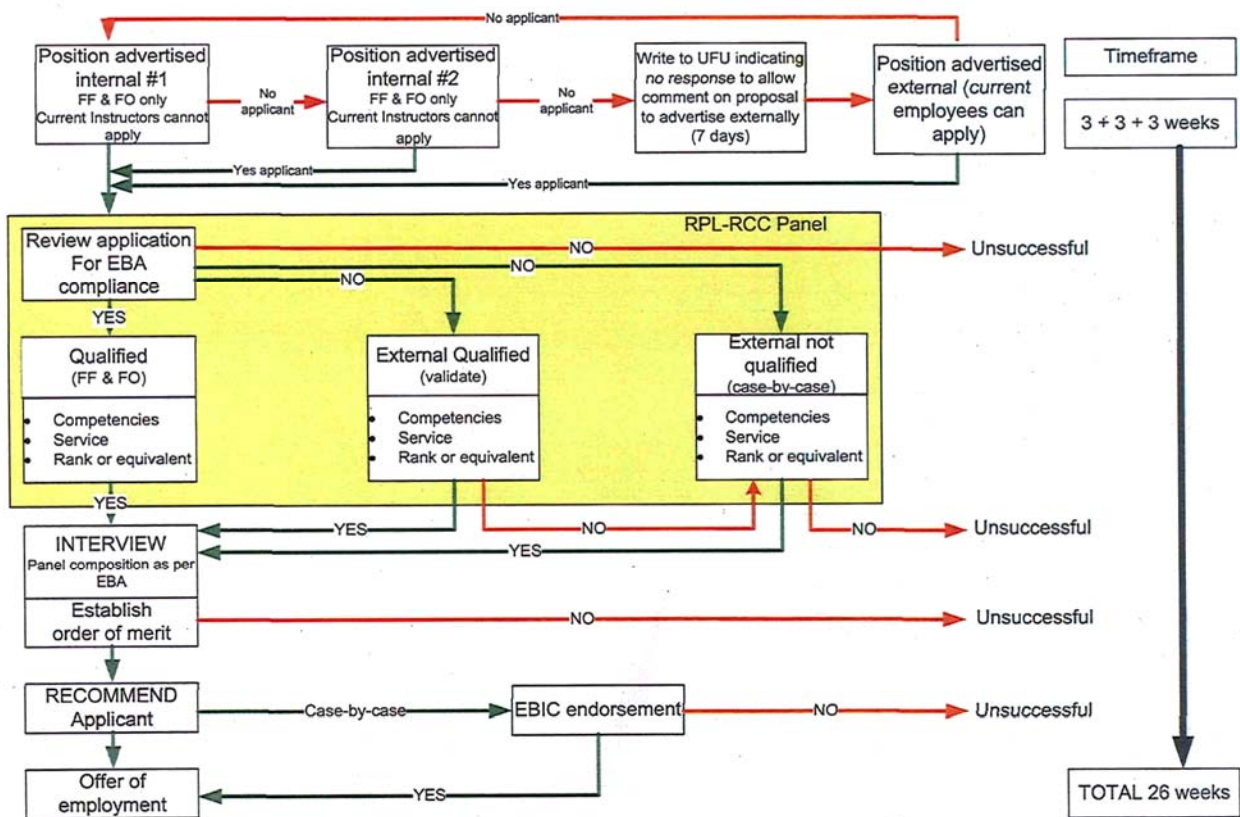
Mr de Man points out that often, a lengthy process has to be followed under the 2008 EBA to appoint new instructors:

- All appointments must be advertised internally and filled by career personnel who meet the agreed selection criteria.
- A position must be advertised twice internally before it can be advertised externally. The process to recruit externally could take up to six months.
- The qualifications and competencies of external applicants are required to be validated by a mandated RPL/RCC Panel. The members are a Chair from an academic institution agreed by the parties, a representative of CFA Management and a UFU nominee.
- External applicants are required to have the technical and management skills and experience commensurate with that of a Leading Firefighter.
- All applicants must have as a minimum, the practical experience, skills and qualifications as a career firefighter required to be eligible to transfer or seek promotion to the rank of Leading Firefighter or equivalent established by RPL.

There are additional requirements for the position of Structural and/or Fiskville instructor, which relate to at least five years career service in a recognised fire service or equivalent established by RPL. There are also additional requirements for the position of Wildfire instructors.

Diagram 22 below depicts the instructor selection process according to the 2008 EBA, as at April 2010, a process that could take up to six and a half months before an offer of employment is made.

Diagram 22: Instructor Selection Process, as at April 2010



Mr de Man identifies the limits that these requirements place on the ability of volunteers to be employed as instructors in the CFA:

- The CFA Leading Firefighter assessment is an internally run process for CFA career members wishing to be eligible for promotion to the rank of Leading Firefighter. Volunteers are not able to undertake the course.
- Service as a volunteer is not recognised in the instructor recruitment process.

Mr de Man identifies the following consequences of the 2008 EBA:

- Since the introduction of instructors in 2001, the CFA has struggled to fill instructor positions with some being vacant for up to 12 months, for example:
 - Of 30 Wildfire instructor positions, one was vacant for 3 months, one for 8 months and two 14 to 15 months.
 - Of 38 Structural instructor positions, eight were vacant for less than ten months, two for 11 – 13 months, three for 16-20 months and one 25 months.
 - A further nine Structural instructor positions were vacant at the time he made his statement. Six had been vacant for less than 12 months, one for 16 months, one for 37 months and one for 64 months.

Mr de Man points out that volunteers were restricted from being appointed to instructor positions due to the nature of the selection criteria. He adds that, at the time, the CFA had 68 instructors with nine Structural instructor positions to be filled.

Mr de Man states that the 2008 EBA, at the time, was being renegotiated between the CFA and UFU. That renegotiation resulted in the 2010 EA. The 2010 EA provides for a similar process for the recruitment of instructors as that in the 2008 EBA, with some differences. They are set out in clause 99.6 of the 2010 EA and the differences can be summarised as follows:

- Current CFA instructors employed on a full time basis who can demonstrate a minimum of five years service as a professional firefighter and meet the key selection criteria are eligible to fill a position of instructor under the 2010 EA. Externally appointed instructors must apply within their own stream; and
- The instructor interview panel, under the 2010 EA, includes a representative of employees nominated by the UFU.

COMMENT

The evidence of Mr de Man is consistent with the matters raised at the consultations and in submissions. Concern has been expressed about the lack of instructors, the number of positions not filled, the delay in filling positions and the inability, or overall impossibility, of volunteers being appointed to be instructors. These matters have a significant impact on the delivery of training to volunteers and are examined further in Chapter 16 in that context and further comments and recommendations made.

15.6.7 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING/RECOGNITION OF CURRENT COMPETENCY

Although service as a CFA volunteer is not recognised in the instructor recruitment process, it appears that volunteers are able to apply for instructor positions, through the recognition of prior learning process. An independent Recognition of Prior Learning/Recognition of Current Competency (RPL/RCC) Panel has been established under clause 99.7 of the 2010 EA for the purposes of validating the competency and experience of individuals either seeking to apply for an instructors position or for currently appointed instructors to validate their capability to deliver specific training modules outside of the appointed stream.

The membership of the Panel consists of a Chairperson, who is a member of an academic institution conversant with RPL/RCC principles and competency based training and is nominated following agreement by the CFA and UFU, a CFA management representative and UFU nominee, both of whom must be conversant with RPL/RCC principles, competency based training, the Public Safety Training Package and their application within CFA.

According to Clause 99.7.5 of the 2010 EA, the Panel judges RPL/RCC against the competencies and experience equivalent of:

- Recruit level competencies;
- Minimum five years career firefighting experience;
- Appropriate structural modules to at least Leading Firefighter level;
- Wildfire modules to at least Leading Firefighter level; and
- Certificate IV Workplace Assessors and Training qualifications.

All judgements by the Panel are made by consensus. Applicants deemed eligible by the Panel for consideration as an instructor will be accredited before being eligible to apply for an advertised vacant instructor position. A successful external applicant for the position of instructor through the RPL process cannot laterally transfer into an operational firefighting role other than by agreement with the UFU. A Wildfire instructor, without a rank of Qualified Firefighter with Leading Firefighter qualifications, cannot laterally transfer into an operational role at any time.

COMMENT

The RPL/RCC process was a significant source of concern in the consultations and submissions. The effect of the RPL/RCC process set out in the 2010 EA in the context of training is reviewed in Chapter 16 and a recommendation made.

15.6.8 RESTRICTION ON PART-TIME OR CASUAL EMPLOYMENT

Clause 29.2 of the 2010 EA states that the CFA will not employ an employee on a part-time or casual basis, and no employee may hold a position on such a basis.

COMMENT

I am not privy to the reasons or justification for this arrangement. However, it seems to me to be too restrictive and inhibits the CFA in being able to best resource the needs of the organisation. In my view, the CFA should revisit this restriction with the UFU.

RECOMMENDATION 14

The CFA revisit with the UFU the arrangements relating to the employment of part-time and casual employees.

16. TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS – ARRANGEMENTS AND ANALYSIS

16.1 INTRODUCTION

In an organisation like the CFA, training is critical. Firefighters, whether they be volunteer or paid, have to be trained to acceptable standards and need to be trained for a range of capabilities. Their skills need to be assessed and maintained. Their lives and the lives of others can depend on their skills and how well they have been trained.

Training has been the subject of a great deal of comment and criticism in the consultations, as apparent, and in the submissions. The basic message is that it needs to improve - it needs to be better. Nevertheless, it is important to keep these comments in perspective. The training of up to 59,000 volunteers is a complex undertaking and challenge. Many other areas are affected by training, including recruitment, deployment and utilisation. The focus in this Report is on the concerns that are raised about those arrangements and the issues to which they give rise, and possible solutions and improvements.

The skills a volunteer requires from training depends on their role, whether the role is operational or non-operational. Operational volunteers who respond to emergencies are firefighters. Non-operational volunteers undertake other roles such as administrative functions.

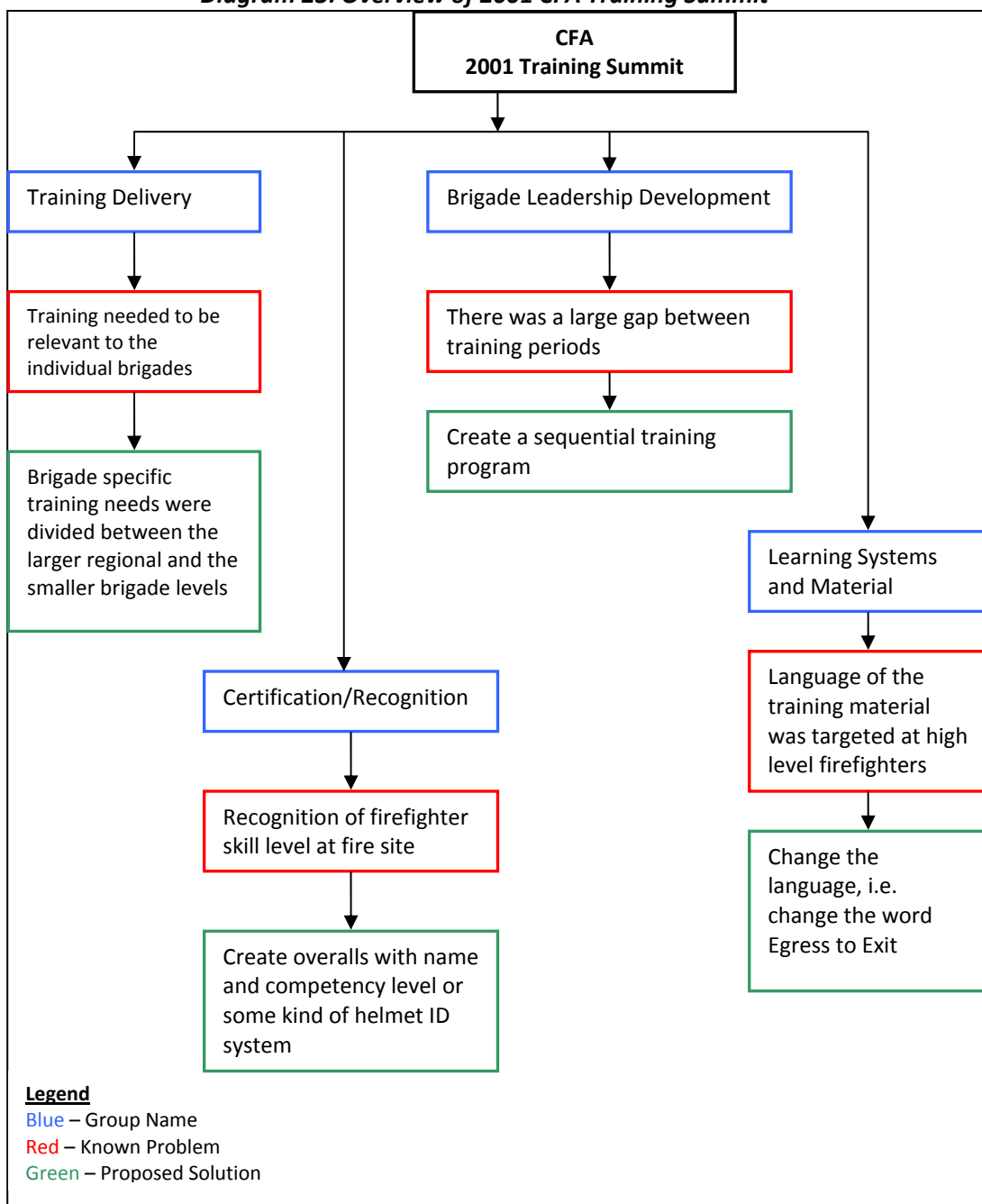
Account is taken in training arrangements of the competing interests of volunteers. Consequently, some training is conducted on weeknights and weekends. Issues have been raised in this Inquiry about the flexibility and availability of training at times convenient to volunteers.

Training takes place at brigades but also on a large scale at regional training centres. There are seven such centres located in the State with the largest, and most centrally located, being at Fiskville, near Ballarat. These facilities are not only used by volunteers but also by career firefighters and officers. Volunteers train in close to real life situations to thereby gain hands-on experience. As earlier stated, I visited the CFA Training College at Fiskville and the Field Training Grounds at Wangaratta and Sale.

Issues have been raised about the location and availability of training facilities for volunteers and particularly their ability to attend if considerable travel is required.

A Training Summit was held by the CFA in 2001. The purpose was to address the major issues facing the training program. Major issues were addressed rather than problems at the brigade level. The Summit is referred to in a report on training (the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) Report) considered later, and a helpful general overview produced. That is reproduced below.

Diagram 23: Overview of 2001 CFA Training Summit



The WPI Report states, with respect to follow up after the Summit:

“After the Summit was completed, the solutions decided upon were largely left in the hands of brigade captains to act upon. Since there was no central CFA department responsive for following through with these tentative solutions, it is difficult to determine what suggestions had been implemented and which have not yet been put into practice. For this reason, the CFA does not know what problems still exist and what new problems have arisen since 2001” (P9).

Although this Inquiry is concerned with the training of volunteers, it is relevant to make some reference to the arrangements that apply to career firefighters. The position can be briefly stated as follows:

- Skills profiles for CFA career firefighters are contained in the enterprise agreements between the CFA and the UFU.
- These frameworks provide a training regime that assists career members and officers achieve nationally recognised qualifications.
- Full-time training programs are usually undertaken at Fiskville.
- Candidates qualify for attendance at a programmed assessment after the successful completion of the relevant skills profile and a development program at Fiskville.
- Leading firefighters and fire officer assessments are based on an individual’s ability to apply their skills and knowledge to the key areas set out in the relevant position description.
- Assessments are a combination of written assessments and oral presentations, along with practical demonstrations designed to assess a candidate’s ability to manage both the practical operational and non-operational aspects of various roles. Assessments are divided into core tasks and non-core tasks.

A clear career pathway is provided for career personnel. The career officer’s skills profile mirrors that set out in the enterprise agreements; the skills profile of volunteers are determined by the risk profile of the brigade with which they are registered.

Career members and volunteers have opportunities to participate in training to acquire or maintain skills. CFA holds training courses regularly as part of its learning and development program.

Mr de Man in his witness statement to the VBRC, which has been referred to earlier, was asked by the VBRC to comment on statements by Mr Allan Monti and Mr Allan Small, both experienced volunteers, to the VBRC in relation to difficulties volunteers face in obtaining qualifications and accessing training. His response is important. He states:

“CFA needs to ensure that its training regime is flexible so as to accommodate suitable times for its members to undertake training. CFA needs to identify the type of training required so that those who would benefit from the training are given every opportunity to undertake the training. It is also important that the training is delivered in a manner and at a time that will facilitate this. Ideally, each volunteer would have their own identified training pathway.”
(P41)

Mr de Man makes the point that although the majority of fire ground management positions are filled by volunteers, there are less as a proportion within Incident Management Teams (IMTs). He states that more must be done to improve training opportunities for volunteers particularly with the increased requirement for IMT staffing. He stresses however, that training quality must not be compromised and both career members and volunteers should be given the same standard of training. He adds:

“CFA will need to address how best to promote further training to volunteers to build capacity and to ensure that both operational and volunteer needs are being met” (P42).

The utilisation of volunteers in IMTs is explored further in Chapter 17.

16.2 ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN CONSULTATIONS

A summary has been set out earlier of the matters raised at the consultations. In essence, the issues identified can be listed as follows:

- The planning and organisation of training
 - Haphazard – ad hoc – poor, in contrast with career member training.
 - Who is responsible for it? How is it developed?
 - The role of Groups and District Planning Committees.

- The delivery of training
 - Scheduling – times and days. (Needs to be convenient to volunteers).
 - Location – the one-hour rule. (Motivation to attend reduced by time to travel).
 - Duration – hours vs. days. (Should be shorter and sharper).
 - Not consistent – varies from Districts and instructors. (Confuses and frustrates volunteers).
 - Too much theoretical, not enough practical. (Need more practical).
 - Use of volunteers as instructors and assessors. (Not enough).
 - Use of career instructors at integrated stations and neighbouring brigades.
 - Availability of instructors – career and volunteer. (Lack of availability).
 - Availability of Fiskville, Regional Field Training Grounds and props – access to ‘hot fire’ training. (Lack of availability).
 - Availability of roadside burning exercises. (Lack of availability).

- The type of training
 - Minimum Skills – is it necessary for all?
 - Should Minimum Skills be based on risk profile of brigade?
 - Availability of specialist skills training – e.g. First Aid, Breathing Apparatus, Driver, Incident Management Team, Incident Control Centres. (Lack of availability).
 - Lack of operational ‘team’ training for volunteers. (More is required).
 - Lack of leadership and management training for volunteers. (More is required).

- Skills maintenance training
 - Where possible, should be done at brigade by volunteer instructors. (Needs to occur more).
 - Advanced skills should be done by volunteer instructors, including at Field Training Grounds. (Not occurring).
 - Needs to be properly recorded. (Not occurring).

- Recognition Of Prior Learning/Recognition Of Current Competency (RPL/RCC)
 - Process too convoluted and complex.
 - Not efficient and consistent.
 - Too hard – lose interest – easier to do course instead.

- CFA/UFU industrial agreements
 - Issues were raised about the effect of these agreements on volunteer training particularly with respect to availability of instructors and the use of volunteers as instructors.

- Possible solutions – training

A range of solutions were offered at the consultations. In essence, they can be summarised as follows:

 - Training should be on a needs basis. Horses for courses.
 - Should be comprehensively planned, based on their needs.
 - There should be flexible delivery.
 - There should be substantial use of volunteers in delivery.
 - It should be adequately resourced.
 - It should be standardised.
 - It should be properly recorded.
 - It should make full use of modern technology in delivery and recording (NBN and information technology – interactive).
 - Use should be made of TAFE system and secondary schools.

16.3 ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN SUBMISSIONS

The great majority of submissions were from volunteers and brigades. Many are detailed and quite comprehensive. Training is a subject addressed in nearly all of them. It is apparent that a lot of consideration has been given to submissions. A good example is the very comprehensive submission for the Upper Beaconsfield Brigade that not only raises issues but also makes recommendations as to how they might be addressed. This is done in other submissions, as well as being done at the consultations.

Essentially, the same or similar issues are raised in the submissions to those raised at the consultations. There is no need to repeat those identified earlier.

However, it is helpful to note the following:

- Concern about the content of the Wildfire Firefighters Learning Manual and the suitability of the written test.
- Decentralisation of the organisation of training.
- Remuneration or reimbursement for volunteer instructors.
- Lack of transparency by the CFA in the organisation and allocation of training.
- Pathways for more advanced roles are not provided for volunteers.
- Inequities in how training funding is distributed across the State.
- Brigades lack the IT equipment to take advantage of opportunities from modern communication technology.
- There is a need for training with some brigades in non-fire related emergencies, for example, floods and rescue.
- There are now two distinct groups who have different training needs – rural and urban.
- Many courses are not volunteer friendly, in terms of scheduling.

- Cancellation of courses occurs at short notice (a brigade gave an example of a course being cancelled the day before when 15 members had made arrangements to attend, including a bus and meals).
- Volunteers have completed the Workplace Trainer/Assessor course but are not utilised.
- Training is not sufficiently resourced.
- There is not enough First Aid training available.
- There is not enough Structural Training available.
- Hot fire training restricted to Field Training Grounds.
- Priority is given in training to paid employees.
- There is no career path for instructors or performance review.
- The process for volunteers to become accredited instructors is too onerous.
- The perception that volunteer training is inhibited unfairly by industrial agreements.

COMMENT

To put it in colloquial terms, “the song” being sung in the submissions is essentially the same as that “sung” at the consultations and contained within the Garnock Report, which will be reviewed later. The song involves many and varied issues and concerns. They cannot all be answered in this Report. The challenge is to get the fundamentals right and establish a road map that can be followed in relation to training that is based on those fundamentals.

16.4 SOME EVIDENCE TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION ABOUT TRAINING ISSUES

It is relevant to refer further to the statement by Mr Allan Monti to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC). At the time, he had been a CFA volunteer for over 22 years and held the rank of First Lieutenant at Somerville Fire Brigade and a number of other qualifications. He is currently an Executive Officer of the VFBV.

Issues that Mr Monti raised relating to training:

- Willing, capable and experienced volunteers experience difficulties in undertaking CFA training at senior levels.
- For the 2009-10 season, ten volunteers were endorsed as a Level 3 Incident Controller compared to 60 career firefighters.
- If the objective is to have well trained volunteers, there is no point offering programs at times or in formats that put them beyond the reach of volunteers.
- Training needs to be delivered at times that take advantage of when volunteers are most likely to be available.
- Many CFA decisions regarding courses relate to the number of available trainers – volunteers and paid. The numbers need to be increased, particularly of volunteer trainers. They can negate much of the need for travel and enable delivery modes to be designed around local needs.
- There have been many years of tension between competing interests over this issue. The UFU has been concerned that volunteers who operate alongside their members are trained to a standard that ensures the safety of their members. VFBV agrees that volunteers must be well trained.
- Successive industrial agreements contain conditions which require the UFU’s agreement regarding the selection, employment and deployment of paid trainers and, therefore, control over CFA regarding the manner in which operational training will be provided by paid personnel.

- In a modern industrial relations context, the issues relating to the management and deployment of an overwhelmingly volunteer-based emergency response service are complex. At a local level, lines of demarcation can play out in a way not intended.
- It is his view that, over time, the effect has been to:
 - Reduce the availability of training to volunteers.
 - Restrict the CFA's ability to develop a training delivery capability and flexibility required to train volunteers.
 - Restrict the CFA's ability to engage suitably qualified and experienced volunteers into paid training roles, either as full time instructors or sessional instructors. Result is to limit the number of available instructors and limit the number of places available.
 - Facilitate a preference for paid staff to take up the limited opportunities at senior management level because of the timing and mode of delivery – during weekdays.
 - Diminish the desire of volunteers to continually improve their skills through training.
 - Diminish the overall depth of the fire service.

Similar matters were raised by Mr Allan Small, a very experienced volunteer, in his statement to the VBRC.

The industrial agreements between the CFA and the UFU as they impact on training have been consistently referred to with concern at consultations and in submissions. Those agreements have been referred to in Chapter 8. The availability of instructors and the effect on training is a relevant matter and is discussed later in this Chapter.

16.5 SOME RESEARCH INTO TRAINING

16.5.1 THE WPI REPORT – ANALYSIS OF VOLUNTEER OPINION OF TRAINING OF THE CFA VOLUNTEER WORK FORCE

This is a helpful piece of research which was provided to the CFA.

The WPI Report was delivered to the CFA on 29 April 2008. The Project was an Interactive Qualifying Project submitted to the Faculty of Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science.

The goal of the Project was to reveal the opinions of CFA volunteer firefighters in regard to their training.

Two surveys were used to collect this information. One was completed online by non-selected CFA operational volunteers and the other completed by selected volunteers via a phone call with a team member or temporary employee hired by the CFA.

The phone survey sample selected was a random stratified sample that gave a valid representation of the entire CFA volunteer firefighter population. The online survey was used to enrich and support the results obtained from the phone survey. A sample of 258 volunteers was selected for the phone survey. It is not necessary to refer to the WPI Report in detail, although it is of value in considering training issues.

In summary, the conclusions reached from the survey were:

- Volunteers seemed generally satisfied with the training they were receiving.
- There were areas where volunteers wanted to see improvement.

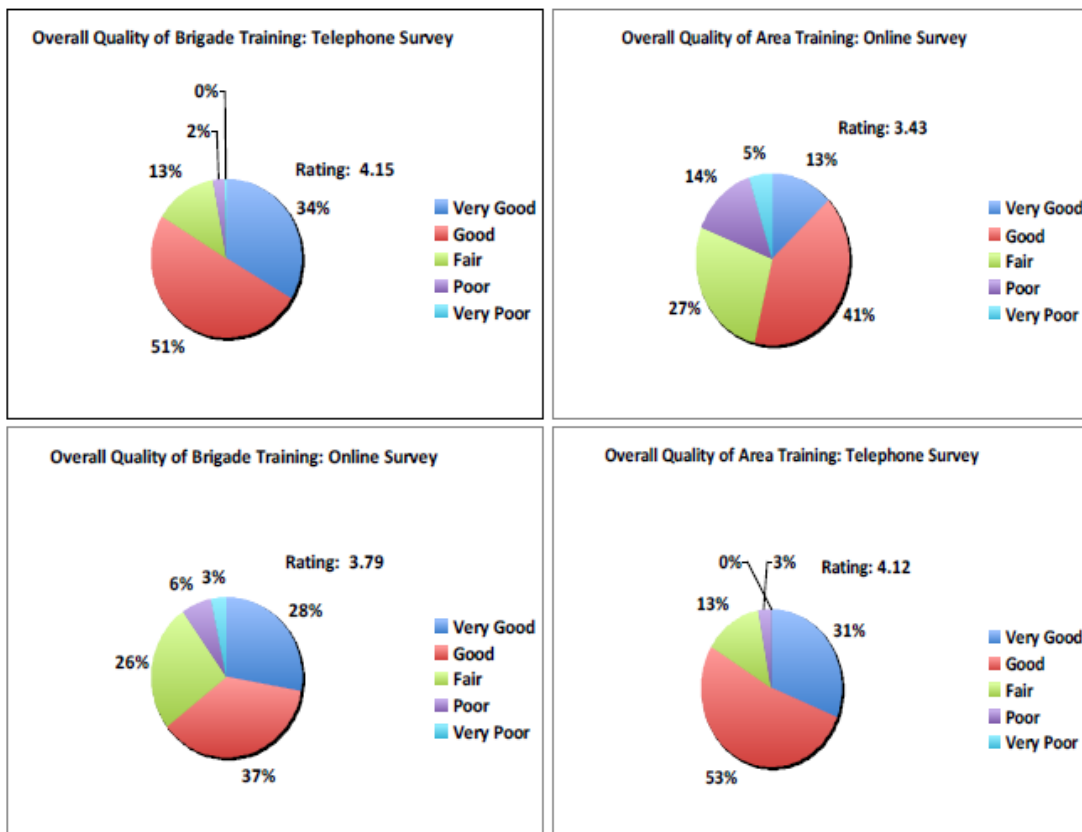
- A majority of volunteers wanted to see reference and learning materials posted online and to a lesser extent, online training courses.
- An overwhelming number of volunteers felt that they do not receive enough hands on instruction and that to be properly trained, they need more practical instruction.
- Volunteers felt that their skills were not being sufficiently assessed at a brigade level.
- Recommendations were made in the WPI Report to address those concerns:
 - Begin posting training materials online.
 - Provide more practical training for volunteers wherever possible.
 - Brigade Captains be urged to provide their volunteers with regular informal skills assessments.

It is helpful to drill down some of the response areas to obtain a clearer picture of the opinions of volunteers.

In terms of quality of training, a majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their volunteer instructors were competent in the material they taught. They felt the same about the CFA paid instructors. There were similar ratings for the phone and online surveys.

An inquiry was made as to the opinion of volunteers on the overall quality of their training. Diagram 24 gives a visual break down of their opinions.

Diagram 24: Opinion of Volunteers on Overall Quality of Training (WPI Report)



The results of these questions indicate that the training undergone by volunteers is good overall. Online respondents were more reserved in their optimism.

Recognition of Prior Learning emerged as a frustrating problem for volunteers with 50-60% of volunteers who believed they had prior learning, not having it officially recognised by the CFA.

The majority of volunteers who completed the survey said their skills were assessed about one to three times a year. On the online survey, a little over half thought that this was enough, with the remainder feeling this was too few. On the telephone survey, 76% thought that this was enough assessment. Less than 5% from both surveys felt that they were assessed too much.

Around 80% of all participating volunteers felt that the questions in the training assessments pertained to the material they were taught. However, some volunteers were frustrated with the ambiguous and complicated language in some assessment materials. Many were also concerned about the lack of practical assessment.

In both surveys, volunteers were positive that their training was relevant. However, with respect to major risks, they were less positive, indicating room for improvement in this area of training.

The majority of volunteers in both surveys felt achieving national certification was important. Volunteers indicated a desire for more team building and leadership exercises and more practical training, as opposed to theory or stimulated exercises.

The majority of volunteer responses stated that volunteer instructors were available once a week or more. 75% said this was sufficient.

The position of access to career instructors was different. Most volunteers said they only had access to career instructors about once every six months. Nearly 30% of the telephone respondents and 60% of the online felt that this frequency was not enough.

Over half of all respondents felt that training was offered at convenient times. However, over 25% of telephone responses and over 45% of online responses indicated some dissatisfaction with training times. Those that responded that training times should be changed usually said they would like more training on nights and weekends.

Volunteers also indicated that the CFA needed to be more flexible with the location of training. The most common open-ended response was that training should be held closer to the individual brigades.

Over 87% of the online respondents wanted to see more online training. About 50% of the telephone respondents were of this view.

The average response was that learning materials were of fair to good quality. Only a small number were negative. Nearly all online and 60% of phone respondents favoured online reference and learning materials.

The need for practical training was stressed by respondents. Many were of the view that courses should be shorter and more concise.

COMMENT

There are positives from this research. Important themes that are raised in consultations and submissions are the need for more practical training, access to career instructors, training scheduling and flexibility, online training and shorter more concise courses, which is consistent with the WPI research.

16.5.2 TRAINING DELIVERY REVIEW JANUARY 09 (THE GARNOCK REPORT)

Background

The Training Delivery Review is an important review of CFA training of volunteers. The review was commissioned in July 2008 by the former CFA Director of Human Resources, Barbara Lewis. It was carried out over six months by a consultant, Captain David Garnock. Because of its relevance, it is necessary to refer to Captain Garnock's Report in some detail. It raises much the same issues as raised by volunteers at consultations conducted and submissions received by this Inquiry.

Catalyst

Two key factors were identified as a catalyst for the commissioning of the review:

- Ongoing negative reports and complaints by volunteers and career firefighters and representatives from volunteer associations, particularly in relation to the consistency, accessibility and availability of training services to volunteers. The feedback largely accorded with the results of the WPI survey of volunteer satisfaction with training conducted in 2008. This confirmed a need for the CFA to improve its ability to meet training delivery needs of volunteer firefighters.
- The need to ensure that any future large-scale training equipment and facility investment decisions were aligned with current and future training needs, expectations and advances.

Project Aim

The aim of the review was to identify the key issues associated with the delivery of training to CFA firefighters (both volunteer and paid), and to recommend options to rectify deficiencies.

Captain Garnock followed an interview and visit program.

Caveats

It is acknowledged that only a small number of volunteer firefighters could be interviewed. However, the majority of findings were supported by long term serving CFA members and were largely in line with the WPI survey.

Acknowledgements by Garnock

- Garnock agreed with the result of the WPI survey, which indicates that the majority of volunteer firefighters believe that the CFA training organisation is generally coping satisfactorily with the complexity and magnitude of the training tasks.
- At a leadership and policy development level of training, he was impressed with the attitude and commitment of the members of the Learning and Development (L&D) Division despite workload and inadequate priority and resourcing by the CFA.
- At a management and coordination level, he was impressed with the attitude and perseverance of Area (now Region) personnel in ensuring that the vast majority of training is being developed how, when and where volunteers require it.
- At a delivery level, he was impressed with the standard of professionalism, knowledge and commitment by staff instructors in delivering a large quantity and variety of CFA courses in a manner that generally satisfies volunteer needs.
- At a receiving end of training, he was particularly impressed by the 'can-do' attitude of volunteers who unselfishly sacrifice their occupational commitments and leisure time to undertake training.
- In relation to facilities, Fiskville could be taken greater advantage of and become a centre of excellence.

Overview of Volunteer Training Issues by Garnock

- Although the majority of volunteers interviewed were generally happy with CFA training, a smaller number (15-38% of those interviewed) had concerns or perceptions about training issues. These tended to be the older and more experienced volunteers.
- At one end, a significant number of volunteers (mainly from the remote rural brigades) stated that they were only willing to undertake mandatory training if staff instructors were able to deliver the training at a time that suited them, and within or in close proximity to their brigade. They further claimed that they have no or minimal need for any formal skills maintenance or assessment because of their regular activities. They believed that CFA training and assessment packages were too academic and should be more practical. They were less interested in distance learning.
- At the other end, a significant number of volunteers (mainly from volunteer brigades) said they enjoyed every opportunity to undertake training, including advanced specialist courses and management and leadership courses. They were keen to obtain nationally accredited qualifications. They maintained many of their brigades had an abundance of volunteers qualified as trainers and assessors.
- Volunteer brigades with volunteer instructors generally preferred to receive training from their local volunteer instructors, and reduced reliance on staff instructors who could not always deliver when and where volunteers wanted it.

Scheduling of Training

- The most common concern raised by more than 30% of volunteers interviewed was the difficulty in fitting CFA's training requirements around their work and family requirements.
- Volunteers generally preferred training on weekends, preferably Sunday.
- Staff instructors and volunteer instructors do not have the capacity to deliver training on this basis.
- Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) restrictions on the number of weekends that staff instructors can work and the heavy workload at Training Grounds often required the delivery of some training on weeknights.
- Many volunteers believed that the CFA should do more to make initial Minimum Skills training more readily accessible to new recruits. A delay of more than three months (as in some of the more remote rural brigades) was discouraging some potentially valuable candidates.

Recommendations by Garnock

- A number of recommendations were made by Garnock to deal with issues relating to the scheduling of training. They included:
 - Developing options to improve the instructor/volunteer ratio to increase the availability of instructors to deliver training at times more suited to volunteer availability.
 - Develop a proposal to justify the relaxation of current EBA restrictions on the number of weekend days and weeknights that staff instructors are permitted to work in each eight-week rotation.
 - Develop a strategy to reduce the quantity of training required by increasing distance learning and limiting theory component to the bare essentials.
 - Develop a strategy to ensure that no suitable recruit is kept waiting more than three months to commence initial Minimum Skills training.

Location of Training

- Delivering a large majority of training to clusters of brigades from Groups or Catchment areas in a central location and at a limited number of FTGs, often means volunteers have to travel long distances to attend courses. They are frustrated that little training is delivered at their brigade stations.
- Whilst those involved maintained they attempt to deliver training to volunteers at or close to their brigades, capacity to do so is constrained by the number of instructors available, the number of brigades in their area, location and distances between brigades and FTGs and the willingness of volunteers to attend training when instructors are available to attend their brigade.

Recommendations by Garnock

A number of recommendations were made by Garnock for action by the CFA with regards to the location of training, including:

- Develop options to improve the instructor/volunteer ratio to increase the ability of instructors to provide training in a wider spread of brigade locations. This could include training up more volunteer instructors and the use of sessional instructors.
- Ensure that the location of centrally delivered training is regularly moved to different stations within the area.
- Assess the feasibility of establishing more FTGs so travelling time is reduced to a maximum of 1.5 hours.

Duration of Training

- There was a broadly held opinion amongst volunteers interviewed that the duration of most courses (particularly Wildfire Initial Minimum Skills course) was too long. This was magnified for members of more remote brigades who claimed that their willingness to undertake training was inversely proportional to the time away from work and families.
- They claimed that the prospect of large amounts of classroom instruction was a disincentive to potential recruits.
- They recommended that duration of courses (particularly initial Minimum Skills course) be kept to the minimum necessary with experienced members mentoring and coaching in the practical application of the new skills.
- The L&D Division points out that the length of the course is inextricably linked to the content of the associated Learning Manual which is approved by the Chief Officer.

Recommendations by Garnock

- Garnock recommended that the L&D Division, in consultation with the Operations Directorate, examine the feasibility of reducing the duration of courses to the bare necessary minimum to impart the basic knowledge to operate equipment effectively and to act in a safe manner on the fire ground under competent supervision.

Consistency in the Standard of Delivery and Assessment of Training Practices

- A significant number of volunteers interviewed considered that there were too many inconsistencies between instructors regarding content of lessons, quality of instructors and delivery time.
- Staff instructors interviewed denied making changes to packages. They acknowledged that there was no way of knowing whether volunteer instructors did this.
- A range of recommendations were made by Garnock to address these issues. There is no need to set them out.

Theoretical vs. Practical Training and Assessment

- A significant number of volunteers interviewed complained of there being too much emphasis on memorising information in the Learning Manual and passing written examinations, and not enough emphasis on developing and assessing practical competence in carrying out operational skills. They recommended a number of changes to the approach taken.
- It was noted that the recommendations may have merit but the capacity of the L&D Division to modify the learning strategies depended on a number of factors including the need for the Chief Officer to be convinced that any increase in practical training and assessment in a course by reducing theoretical training and assessment does not prejudice the attainment of the required learning outcomes of the course.
- A number of recommendations were made by Garnock for the L&D Division and Operations Directorate staff to address these issues, including opportunities to reduce the level of detail in the Learning Manual.

Basic Operational Skills vs. Nationally Accredited Qualifications

- A significant number of volunteers interviewed from more remote rural brigades were only interested in undertaking the bare minimum of training necessary to provide the basic operational skills mandated by the Chief Officer – some complained that recently introduced competencies are overtraining them.
- Others, particularly in the more vibrant urban brigades were keen to undertake as much training as the CFA can provide in order to attain nationally accredited (Public Safety Training Package) qualifications.
- Some volunteers recommended that the CFA priority should be to deliver core minimum operational skills training, with volunteers who wish to attain nationally accredited qualifications being given the option to undertake additional (non-core) training.
- Garnock noted that, although there was merit in the concept, there are difficulties in its implementation. Consequently, the CFA should initially focus on assessing the feasibility of introducing a two-tier approach to the Minimum Skills Wildfire course and if successful, consider adoption for other courses.
- Recommendations were made by Garnock as to how this might be achieved.

Flexible Delivery of Theory Training

- The majority of volunteers interviewed wished to be given more opportunities to undertake theory components of training in a flexible and distance learning means.
- Due to the differences in volunteer views, flexible training is complex. Nevertheless, the CFA should consider options for more widespread use of flexible and distance learning techniques for delivering theory components.
- Recommendations were made by Garnock as to how this could be best achieved.

Flexible Delivery of Hot Fire Practical Training

- A significant number of volunteers interviewed, mainly from more remote rural brigades, wanted options considered that would increase the opportunities they had to practice their structural firefighting skills in realistic (hot fire) training scenarios each year.
- Many brigade members were reluctant to travel unacceptably long (more than 1.5 hours) distances between brigades and the nearest FTG.
- Keen interest was expressed in undertaking 'hot fire' training in mobile props, which could be set up in a brigade for a period of one month. This occurs in other states and overseas.
- The requirement for the CFA to consider conducting a trial of the mobile 'hot fire' prop concept was supported by Garnock.

- Recommendations were made by Garnock as to how the L&D Division should proceed with a trial and ultimately develop a recommendation to the CEO and CO.

Operational 'Team' Training and Assessment

- Nearly all volunteers interviewed were confident that their training was adequate for the operational skills they were likely to use as an individual on the fire ground.
- A significant number were concerned that insufficient priority and effort was accorded to the development, maintenance and assessment of the operational competencies of crews, strike teams and brigades.
- Examples of initiatives raised and endorsed as having the potential to enhance the level of priority and effort that the CFA should invest in 'team' training were included in recommendations made in the Garnock Report.

Leadership and Management Training

- A significant number of volunteers interviewed complained that there was no overarching policy or coherent approach to the delivery of critical personal development training to prepare them for the organisational and operational leadership roles to which they can be appointed.
- Some brigade officers interviewed also requested opportunities to train to develop their managerial skills for brigade leadership roles.
- Volunteers were concerned that the implementation of a Leadership Strategy for volunteers appeared to have been delayed for two years pending UFU endorsement of its suitability for a much smaller number of paid firefighters. A draft strategy has been submitted to the UFU for consideration pursuant to the EBA.
- Further, this was not raised in discussions with paid firefighters as a significant issue. It was considered by Garnock that the CFA should urgently implement the Leadership Strategy for volunteers.
- Recommendations were made by Garnock as to how this might be progressed.

Skills Maintenance Training and Recording

- A significant number of volunteers interviewed complained that once they attained their Minimum Skills competencies there was no CFA-wide policy (with limited exceptions) regarding the requirement for refresher training or in the number, type or duration of operational call-outs needed to maintain those competencies.
- It was noted that the responsibility of brigade Captains to ensure members maintained their skills would be enhanced by a CFA 'Skills Maintenance Drill Manual'.
- It was noted that as existing skills maintenance training was poorly recorded, a more user-friendly method for recording training should be designed by the CFA.
- It was noted that the L&D Division had developed a draft policy and was finalising a manual.
- Recommendations were made by Garnock to deal with these issues. There is no need to set them out.

RPL and RCC Processes

- A significant number of volunteers complained that the existing process for obtaining recognition of their skills and experience was so convoluted and time-consuming that it was generally quicker and easier to undertake the full suite of related training and assessment again.
- It was noted by Garnock that there were a number of possible reasons for this perception but it would be sensible to review the RPL/RCC Policy.
- Recommendations were made by Garnock as to a review of the RPL/RCC Policy. There is no need to set them out.

Incorporation of 'Lessons Learnt' in Training Packages

- A significant number of volunteers interviewed complained that few instructors included examples of recent operational scenarios and 'Lessons Learnt' in their presentations.
- This criticism was acknowledged by instructors who made suggestions of action that could be taken. These are supported in the Garnock Report and recommendations made.

Induction Training and Pre-Minimum Skills Employment for New Recruits

- The majority of new recruits were happy with the induction process.
- A significant number of junior volunteers were dissatisfied about:
 - The excessive time taken from initial application to join until commencement of initial training. There were a number of reasons and the waiting time could be up to six months. Most consider more than three months to be excessive.
 - A lack of contact from brigade members during this period and limited opportunity to observe training and call out duties.
 - The inadequacy of the CFA's 'Welcome to CFA' booklet and any other brigade induction briefings.
 - It was recognised by Garnock that this was more a recruiting than training issue. However, it was recommended that a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) be developed for brigade Captains to help them implement a successful Induction Program for recruits.

Junior CFA Member Program

- There was widespread praise for the recruiting value of the program but a significant number of experienced volunteers interviewed complained that their inability to involve juniors in properly supervised operational 'support' duties detracted from the effectiveness of the program.
- This is predominately an OH&S issue but can impact on juniors staying with the program and thereafter.
- It was recommended by Garnock that the OH&S Division review the policy, although there are reservations about changing existing limitations.

Controlled Fuel Reduction Burns

- The strong opinion of a significant number of experienced volunteers interviewed was that the most effective way for members to develop and maintain wildfire firefighting skills was to conduct pre-fire season roadside and other 'fuel reduction' burn-offs.
- It was noted that some councils were reluctant to approve these measures. This was detracting from the ability of some brigades to develop and maintain their wildfire firefighting skills.
- Although an operational rather than training issue, it was recommended by Garnock that the veracity of the claims be evaluated and if correct, followed up.

Key Issue for Instructors/Area MTDs

- As well as supporting some issues raised by volunteers, a significant number of staff instructors and Area (now Region) Managers, Training and Development (MTDs) expressed concern about the apparent failings of the L&D Division in relation to:
 - The poor quality and excessive delays in the promulgation of new training documentation.
 - The apparent misalignment of training assessment and data entry requirements of Public Safety Training Package (PSTP) based training packages.

- Its inability to harness the collective wisdom of Area (now Region) Training Teams in developing effective solutions to training issues as they arise.

Instructor Capacity

- It was noted by Garnock that statistics gathered confirm the broadly held view that there were insufficient staff instructors to deliver (without greater assistance from volunteer, career member and sessional instructors) the quantum of ongoing training required for CFA's current numbers of new and active volunteers.
- It was noted by Garnock that opportunities for instructors to maximise delivery of training were reduced because:
 - Most brigades had set their training for a particular evening every week (normally Monday evenings) and were reluctant to vary.
 - Very few brigades would agree to training on a Saturday.
 - Many volunteers were only available to undertake training for short and sometimes unpredictable periods because of competing commitments associated with seasonal conditions.
 - The best long-term solution in Garnock's view to improve the instructor-to-volunteer ratio was not to create more staff instructor positions but to:
 - Train up and utilise more volunteer instructors to deliver the vast majority of all training to volunteer firefighters.
 - Divest the existing staff instructor positions of their current responsibilities for delivering classroom and practical training to volunteers.
 - Utilise the 'shared capacity' to utilise staff instructors in a new 'train the trainer role'. Their primary responsibilities would be to recruit, train, assess, support and coordinate volunteer instructors in designated regions.
 - It was recommended by Garnock that the concept be examined by a project team and, if appropriate, develop a costed strategy and implementation plan.

Structural Instructor Appointments for Volunteers

- Some staff instructors and a significant number of volunteers believed the CFA should:
 - Free up the existing EBA restrictions on volunteers being appointed, after appropriate training at Fiskville, as paid full-time staff structural instructors to fill the six existing vacancies.
 - Approve more appointments of appropriately qualified and experienced volunteers as unpaid volunteer structural instructors to overcome a perceived reluctance to use volunteers in these roles.

Opportunities for Staff Wildfire Instructors to Maintain and Enhance Operational Skills

- Most staff wildfire instructors interviewed were concerned that unlike structural instructors, who are permitted under the EBA to undertake an attachment of up to four weeks per year at a fire station to maintain their operational (particularly structural) skills and experience, there was no such provision for them.
- Further, as the EBA precluded these instructors from performing any operational duties in real fire ground operations, they were concerned that this not only affects their capacity to maintain skills but may also detract from their credibility in the eyes of their students.
- Most wildfire instructors attempted to compensate by becoming members of volunteer brigades which gives them a chance to have operational involvement in brigade operational call-outs.
- These instructors were concerned that the EBA does not provide a level playing field for all instructors.

- As a minimum, they would like a provision in the EBA that would enable them to undertake an attachment for four weeks per year at a fire station or related service where wildfire skills are practiced in order to maintain their operational skills and experience.
- It was considered by Garnock that this proposal should be supported by the CFA as the maintenance and enhancement of wildfire instructor skills was critical to their competence and credibility. A recommendation was accordingly made by Garnock.

Training Infrastructure and Equipment

- This was the subject of an investigation and Report by a consultant, Tungsten.
- The feedback received by Garnock gave a similar perspective to the findings in the Tungsten Report.
- The following findings of the Tungsten Report were supported by Garnock:
 - There is no CFA-wide strategy for life-cycle maintenance of training equipment and supporting infrastructure, nor is there an adequate supporting internal audit process.
 - There is wide variation between FTGs in the type, quality and utilisation of props. Further, there are potential gaps in the types of props required by some FTGs.
- Inconsistencies were found between FTGs, including:
 - Their permanent and casual staffing arrangements, which affect their capacity to support volunteer training needs.
 - Their allocation of firefighting vehicles for use by trainees.
- Recommendations were made by Garnock to deal with the issues identified.

Funding Allocations to MTDs for Area (now Region) Training Commitments

- Some MTDs were concerned that although their training related expenses had increased, the annual budget had not increased in the last four to five years.
- They claimed that the lack of real growth in funding to the training function was impacting on their ability to provide necessary training to volunteers.
- It was recommended by Garnock that the CFA evaluate the adequacy of existing funding allocations to each Area's (now Region) training needs.

Communication Channels within the CFA Training Organisation

- Some General (now Regional) Managers and MTDs were concerned that there was inadequate communication between them and the L&D Division staff to compare ideas and discuss solutions to training issues as they arise.
- Concern was expressed that the development of an 'us and them' attitude between some Area (now Region) HQ and Corporate HQ staff. Recommendations were made by Garnock as to how communication might be improved.

Key Issues for Career Firefighters

- These firefighters were concerned about perceived impediments to their ability to:
 - Undertake training needed to progress their careers.
 - Maintain their core operational firefighting skills.
 - Undertake Fiskville or Structural instructor appointments.

Key Findings

Incremental Strategy

- Overall, the impression gained by Garnock was that CFA firefighters were generally satisfied that they were adequately trained for their operational duties.
- The issues and recommendations in the Garnock Report should be viewed as opportunities for improvement.

Underlying Organisational Issues – Identified by Garnock

- Concern was expressed by those interviewed of apparent inaction by the L&D staff of training issues raised with them, which was a source of frustration.
- Believe that much of this was due to the organisational structure with there being a need for the L&D Division to have more autonomy and a higher profile in CFA decision making.

Underlying Cultural Issues – Identified by Garnock

- There was scepticism that CFA's senior managers were sufficiently motivated to resolve longstanding training issues, particularly if additional resources were required and changes needed to be negotiated with the UFU. It was felt the CFA was apparently reluctant to stand up to the UFU.
- Garnock was concerned about an apparent reluctance of a significant number of the longer serving volunteers interviewed, to accept the CFA Board decision in 2001 that the business of firefighters required all firefighters to be qualified (under the PSTP national framework) to undertake operational duties on the fire ground.
- These volunteers were not prepared to accept that, as a consequence of this decision, volunteers must be willing and able to commit more time to the attainment and maintenance of their skills than may have been required in the past.
- It is concluded by Garnock that the CFA must convince these members of the need for them to be qualified in order to negate their resistance to new initiatives.
- The CFA must also convince them that it is doing all it can to minimise the effect of the additional training on their lives.

COMMENT

As will be apparent from this analysis, the Garnock Report is a comprehensive and important one. It is not all 'doom and gloom' about volunteer training. Concerns and criticisms need to be kept in perspective, as there was an overall impression from the research of general satisfaction with the adequacy of training for volunteer operational duties. However, there were concerns, criticisms and issues, which the Garnock Report clearly identifies and addresses. They are similar to those raised in the consultations conducted and in submissions received by this Inquiry.

Indeed, when these various sources are considered together, the training picture is quite clear. Like Captain Garnock with respect to the issues and recommendations in his Report, I regard this Inquiry and Report as an opportunity for improvement in the training of volunteers – a positive rather than negative influence. As will be apparent from my later comments and recommendations, I am in general agreement with the observations of Captain Garnock in his Report, having regard to what I have learned from the conduct of this Inquiry. The CFA's response to the Garnock Report is considered later in the review of their submission to this Inquiry.

16.6 VFBV SUBMISSION

Not surprisingly, matters raised in the VFBV submission correspond with those raised at consultations and in other submissions. There is no need to go over that ground again. However, it is helpful to refer to some matters raised by VFBV that are expressed below with my comments.

- To maximise volunteer involvement, courses must be volunteer friendly in location and timing, mode of information geared to their preferred style of learning and the skills they learn relevant to the duties they will perform, or be seen as stepping stones to other desired courses or future roles.

COMMENT

As an 'in principle' statement, this is hard to dispute. The challenge is in the application as a reasonable practical reality.

- The CFA performance to date in the provision of training is often patchy across the State with a lack of consistency across districts in training resource allocation, training delivery and course content.

COMMENT

Based on the information gathered by this Inquiry, I would be inclined to agree with this assessment.

- Generally, volunteers consider access to training, the acquisition of new skills that enhance their role as a CFA volunteer, and the chance to maintain these skills in both real incidents and training simulations as a core part of volunteering.

COMMENT

Based on the information gathered by this Inquiry, I would agree with this statement.

- Skills Maintenance - there are a number of systemic problems. There is a need to address the failure to include the exercise of skills during incidents as part of assessing skills maintenance.

COMMENT

This is discussed earlier. However, based on the information gathered by this Inquiry, I am in general agreement with the statement.

- The Garnock Report - the VFBV has a high regard for the Report's recommendations and is concerned that two years after the Report, few recommendations have been implemented.

COMMENT

I regard this Report as an important one and have therefore referred to it in some detail. Its implementation by CFA is discussed later in this Chapter.

- Leadership development, through a clear and structured pathway, is another need of volunteers. It is of value, not only to the CFA, but to the community generally.

COMMENT

Based on the information gathered by this Inquiry, I am in agreement with this statement. This area is considered later in this Chapter.

- Industrial restrictions inhibit the ability of the CFA to provide volunteer training, including the use of volunteers for training and assessment and when paid staff are unavailable.

COMMENT

These matters are addressed earlier. Based on the information gathered by this Inquiry, I am in general agreement with this statement.

- There are problems with funding and resource allocation, which the VFBV says is back to front. It should be done by first assessing needs, then determining the most cost efficient and effective way to meet those needs, and finally allocating funds and resources.

COMMENT

Training budgets and strategies are addressed later in this Chapter.

- The VFBV submission sets out a number of principles that should form the policy setting for volunteer training. There is no need to set them out.

COMMENT

The matter of principles or objectives in relation to training is addressed in this Chapter. The suggestions made by the VFBV should be taken into account by the CFA in developing training delivery principles.

16.6.1 FIRST AID

- VFBV believes there is a reasonable public expectation that community-based emergency service workers will have the capacity to render at least basic First Aid in emergency situations and be able to provide intermediate or advanced First Aid pending the arrival of paramedics. First Aid training should also be delivered to provide adequate protection to other brigade members. Current arbitrary caps should not apply. A copy of VFBV's position paper on First Aid provided useful information.

COMMENT

First Aid is a subject raised at consultations and in submissions. The thrust of comments is that there are arbitrary limits, rather than a focus on the need. Occupational health and safety is relevant and there are issues relating to the maintenance of currency of qualifications. Clearly, all volunteers cannot be trained in First Aid but there is general community benefit in volunteers being so trained.

Based on the information gathered by the Inquiry, I am of the view that improvement is necessary with the delivery of First Aid training. This area needs to be reviewed by the CFA in consultation with VFBV and volunteers to make the delivery of First Aid training more effective and efficient.

RECOMMENDATION 15

The CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, review its arrangements with respect to First Aid training and maintenance of currency of qualifications, with a view to the delivery of such training and maintenance best meeting brigade needs.

16.7 CFA SUBMISSION – THE CFA PERSPECTIVE ON TRAINING

16.7.1 INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive review is provided in the CFA's submission to the Inquiry of the CFA's training arrangements. In preparing the submission, the CFA has had the benefit of Mr Lex de Man's attendance at the consultations and visits, where he was exposed to the views and concerns of volunteers. To obtain a complete current picture, it is necessary to refer to the CFA's submission in some detail. Reference is made to initiatives by the CFA taken which address issues raised. Where appropriate, I include comments and recommendations on these initiatives.

16.7.2 TRAINING TODAY

- The CFA delivers nationally accredited training courses within the national Public Safety Training Package (PSTP), which was adopted nationally by emergency services.
- 37,000 CFA members have been equipped with Operational Minimum Skills competencies over the last ten years. However, there are new challenges.
- The training spans a broad range of operational and non-operational courses, including community safety and leadership development.

- In 2010, CFA established a new Operational Training and Volunteerism (OT&V) Department. The Executive Manager is Mr Lex de Man. It is acknowledged that some current issues have arisen due to a lack of systemic and strategic planning. The new Department is regarded as a first step towards the establishment of a new program of development and change. Next steps include the development of a new statewide strategic plan for training across the CFA and the establishment of an operational skills map, which will include a review of Minimum Skills requirements.

COMMENT

The establishment of the OT&V Department is, in my view, a positive initiative. It is clear from the information that I have obtained that there has been a lack of organisational and strategic planning for training. It is a matter that has often been raised. Forward strategic planning, in what is a dynamic area, is essential. It needs to be short term (next 12 months), mid term (next two to three years) and long term (next five to ten years). Such planning needs to include the allocation of resources. It is apparent that this has not been occurring. No such plan or strategy was produced to this Inquiry by the CFA.

RECOMMENDATION 16

The CFA establish forward strategic planning initiatives for training with resource allocation covering short term, mid term, and long term.

16.7.3 CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

- CFA's training delivery is informed by Brigade Operational Skills Profiles.
- The majority of brigades appoint a Training Officer as part of their Brigade Management Team. This person is responsible for co-ordinating training activity for members in all its various aspects e.g. skills acquisition and skills maintenance.
- The CFA Minimum Skills program remains pivotal to 'turning out' or responding to an incident. Additional training should be obtained for any other skills desired to be exercised.
- Training involves skills acquisition and skills maintenance. For the majority of members, the ongoing focus will be on maintenance of skills after they have been acquired.
- The OT&V Department is currently in the initial stage of planning a full review of all elements of the Minimum Skills program including a revision of the course requirements, the reduction of waiting times for new members and improving consulting in delivery.

COMMENT

A full review of the Minimum Skills program is timely. The program has been in operation for ten years and a lot has changed. The Chief Officer referred to the need for it to be reviewed. Based on the information received at this Inquiry, I support the review as an important initiative. It should be thorough and comprehensive.

RECOMMENDATION 17

The CFA proceed with a review of the Minimum Skills training program.

16.7.4 TRAINING DEMAND

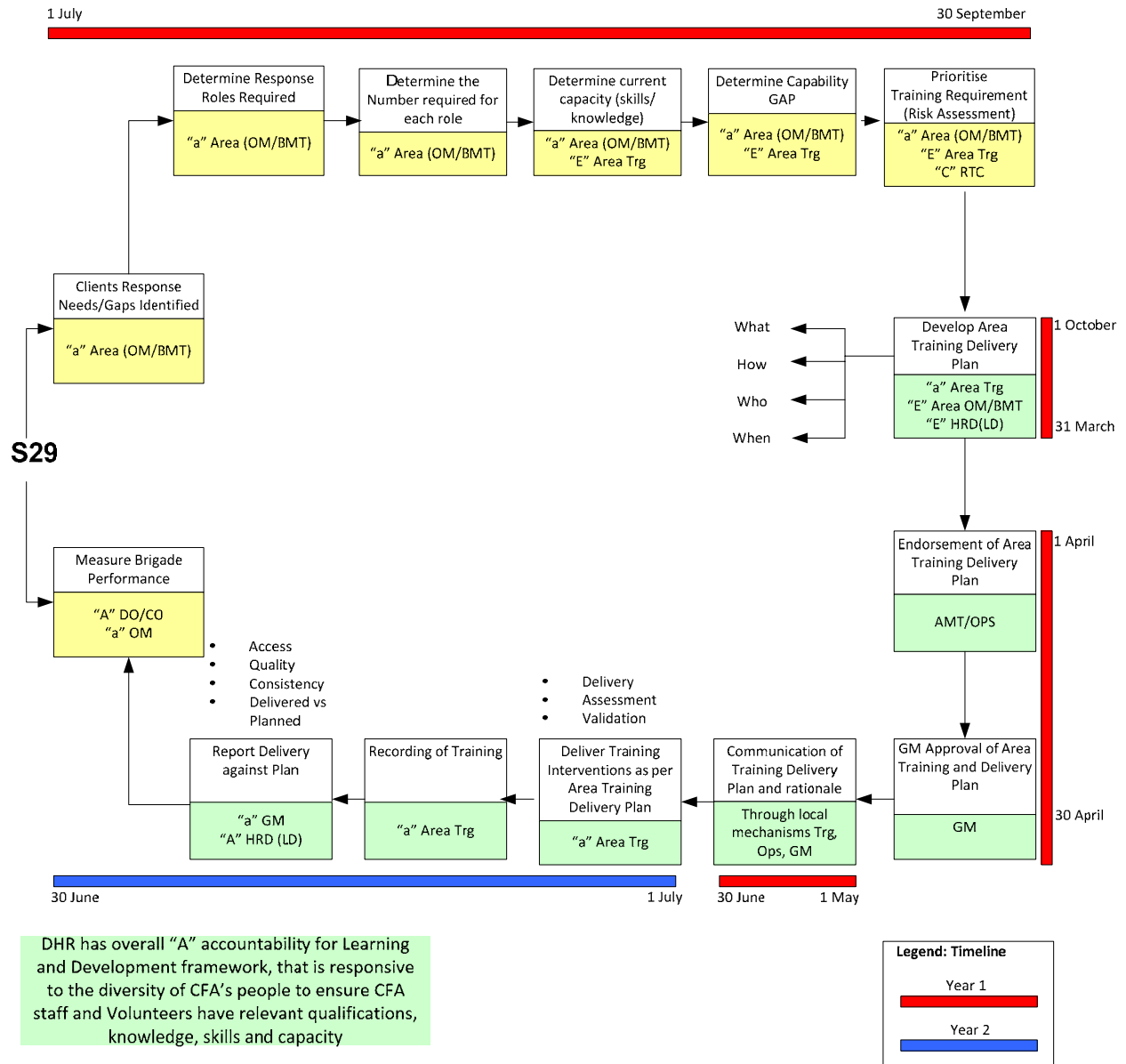
- CFA staff use a range of information to support the development of course schedules and the use of available resources.
- An example of the grinding process for the identification of training needs and delivery of training programs is shown in the following diagram.

Diagram 25: Identification of Training Need and Delivery of Training Programs at Area Level

Identification of Training Need and Delivery of Training Programs at Area Level

(Example used Area BOSP (V)) Draft Version 3

DO/CO has overall "A" accountability for the identification of operational training need and the establishment of operational training priorities.



DHR has overall "A" accountability for Learning and Development framework, that is responsive to the diversity of CFA's people to ensure CFA staff and Volunteers have relevant qualifications, knowledge, skills and capacity

- A 'capability gap' for each brigade which indicates training demand and courses is produced by matching current training records against the brigades skills profile data.
- Account is taken of career training requirements, training for specialist roles and skills and skills maintenance training.
- Full Regional and Statistic Training plans are developed for approval and funding.

COMMENT

There has been consistent comment in consultations and submissions that the CFA has not been meeting training demand for volunteers either because the need has not been recognised and planned for and/or it has not been adequately resourced. There is a perception, rightly or wrongly, that paid personnel receive preference in the provision of training. Even if that is not the case, and I make no finding either way, the fact that volunteers have that perception must be a matter of concern. It indicates a lack of clear communication and transparency in relation to training planning and delivery. In other words, everyone needs to know the facts.

RECOMMENDATION 18

The CFA ensure that there is transparency with respect to the identification and meeting of training demand, and plans to meet such demand.

16.7.5 TRAINING DELIVERY

- Training at a brigade and Group level is managed locally and generally scheduled on evenings or on weekends.
- Programs co-ordinated by the CFA's local District Management Teams are generally a combination of evenings or weekends or both. Statewide programs are typically more specialist courses, generally of a multi-day format delivered as residential courses either mid-week or weekend or a combination of both. Training activity needs to be supported by a suite of programs, facilities and delivery methods.
- The CO has stressed recently the importance of local training. Brigade level and local training delivery can, and should, be delivered as much as possible by local people.
- Presently, CFA employs 140 personnel across the State who are involved in learning and development and training. There are 68 positions of paid instructors and a range of other positions.
- The CFA District Management Team is responsible for a broad range of training delivery covering 100 different units of competency, including firefighting, First Aid, driving, leadership and incident management up to Level 3 Incident Controller.
- In 2009-10, CFA training staff conducted or co-ordinated 2,778 separate courses delivering training to 31,236 participants with a total expenditure of approximately \$22 million. The CFA submission states that a significant proportion of this funding supported the training of volunteers.
- I asked for details of training budgets of the CFA. The following Table was provided.

Table 26: CFA Training Budgets (Summary View) 2003 – 2011

“Below is a snapshot of financial information highlighting CFA's investment in specific training and learning and development areas over a nine-year period. The information should be reviewed as indicative, and is not considered as a comprehensive and auditable account of budgetary allocation for training activity. It should be noted that financial information supplied for 2003, 2004 and 2005 is particularly vulnerable due to (a) the age and available supporting documentation to verify it, which is archived, and (b) a parallel investment process occurring in many areas of training through the Special Resource Initiative (SRI) funding (State Government funding). The information for these years is provided with caution.”

Area of Investment	2003**	2004***	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Training Grounds									
Regional Field Training Grounds	70,907	356,496	534,866	473,364	589,320	556,582	506,821	545,397	508,643
CFA Training College Fiskville Campus	81,006	0	3,748,786	6,144,309	6,123,121	5,854,054	5,542,367	6,851,853	6,155,248
CFA Training College Bangholme Campus	0	0	290,828	1,032,147	1,078,453	1,544,412	1,487,320	1,559,096	1,421,719
Training Services, Staff, Systems and Programs									
Regional T&D Departments (Excluding FTGs, above)	6,636,087	2,698,432	8,613,882	9,338,953	9,972,977	9,834,597	10,190,283	9,962,140	10,443,097
SRI Skills Enhancement (Instructors)	0	3,500,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
L&D Dept/Operational Training & volunteers Dept (HQ)	7,883,866	3,995,630	3,719,874	3,169,728	3,324,867	3,642,649	3,106,702	3,103,240	3,203,563
Total CFA Training Budget	14,671,866	10,550,558	16,908,236	20,158,501	21,088,738	21,432,293	20,833,493	22,021,726	21,732,270

From within the above, specific investment in recruit (career) firefighter courses is noted as follows:

CFA Training College Fiskville Campus				1,455,000	1,073,340	1,206,560	760,000	1,800,000	1,080,000
L&D Dept/Operational Training & volunteers Dept (HQ)	750,000	663,000	380,000						
Total CFA Training Budget (minus career recruit costs)	13,921,866	9,887,558	16,528,236	18,703,501	20,015,398	20,225,733	20,073,493	20,221,726	20,652,270

For information, an INDICATIVE breakdown of regional training investment showing salaries versus operating costs is noted as follows:

Salaries and On-Costs at Regional Field Training Grounds	154,498	285,193	373,805	360,594	426,095	393,527	414,901	497,179	455,916
Salaries and On-Costs at Regional T&D Departments	4,403,886	5,381,793	5,747,172	6,602,418	7,260,347	7,093,137	7,473,521	7,410,447	7,771,682
Total salaries	4,558,384	5,666,986	6,120,977	6,963,012	7,686,442	7,486,664	7,888,422	7,907,626	8,227,598
Training Operating & Delivery Costs	2,148,610	887,942	3,027,771	2,849,305	2,875,855	2,904,514	2,808,682	2,599,911	2,724,142
Annual investment difference:		(1,260,668)	2,139,829	(178,466)	26,550	28,659	(95,832)	(208,771)	124,231

ADDITIONAL NOTES

L&D - Learning and Development

** - Skills Enhancement was included within Regional 2003 Budgets

*** - Skills Enhancement was included within L&D 2004 Budgets

All figures provided are noted as 'budget', not 'actual expenditure'.

COMMENT

A consistent theme through the consultations and submissions is concern and issues about training delivery for volunteers. The need for local training by local volunteers has been emphasised time and time again. Significantly, this has been recognised by the Chief Officer, as is apparent from my meeting with him. There is no doubt that a considerable amount of training is being delivered to volunteers in a variety of ways. But is it enough? Is enough being delivered locally? Is it being delivered at times and places reasonably convenient to volunteers?

The impression I have gained is that there is need for improvement in training delivery - more needs to be done. There is also a need for transparency in training budgets, so it is clear, for example, as to what is being spent on volunteer training as compared to career staff training, and the expenditure on particular programs. That is not revealed by the budgets supplied. It is important to be able to judge whether there is value for the money spent on the various training programs. That cannot be judged from the information supplied.

RECOMMENDATION 19

The CFA ensure that there is transparency with respect to training budgets and, in particular, with respect to what relates to volunteer training and what relates to career staff training.

16.7.6 TRAINING INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

- Such facilities are essential for some of the training and skills maintenance required, e.g. structural, industrial or chemical fires.
- The largest facility is the Training College at Fiskville. Six regional Field Training Grounds (FTGs) are located at Bangholme, Penshurst, Longerenong, Huntly, Sale and Wangaratta. Another is to be established at Mildura.

COMMENT

These facilities are essential to a range of training areas. As already indicated, I found the visits to Fiskville, Wangaratta and Sale most helpful.

16.7.7 ACCESSIBILITY FOR VOLUNTEERS

- Training conducted at FTGs is in high demand. It is pointed out that it is a challenge for CFA volunteers, having regard to the availability of the facility and the travel involved, to attend. Appendix H shows brigades which are within 30 and 60 minutes drive of a CFA FTG.
- There are supply and demand issues relating to hot fire training at FTGs. This is most evident for the outer metropolitan and regional city brigades that would normally attend Fiskville. This is because its training schedule is increasingly dominated by career and recruit career firefighter courses. This will continue with 540 recruits (342 additional firefighters and 198 recruits to replace outgoing members) to be trained over the next six years.
- CFA acknowledges that the consequences are serious. The brigades serviced by Fiskville are increasingly managing urban and structural risks.

COMMENT

As the CFA submission acknowledges, the need for volunteer training is increasing but the availability is reducing. Availability and accessibility to FTGs is another consistent concern and issue raised at consultations and in submissions. It clearly is a major challenge for the CFA. The feeling of frustration of volunteers is understandable, as is their perception that the training of paid firefighters is being preferred to theirs. This contributes to their feeling that they are 'second class' and not valued.

RECOMMENDATION 20

The CFA take initiatives to improve the accessibility of Field Training Grounds, including Fiskville, to volunteers for training.

16.7.8 INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND NEW FACILITIES

- The CFA submission acknowledges that investing in training infrastructure is critically important. It states that the CFA Board has recently reviewed its commitment to training grounds and facilities, and acknowledges there has been an under-investment for decades. There is now a need for substantial investment.
- The Volunteer Support Package adopted by the CFA to sustain volunteering through improved training opportunities comprises the Mobile Training Infrastructure Project and the Fixed Training Infrastructure Project. Both are in their initial start-up phase.

Mobile Training Infrastructure

- Several different types of mobile training assets will be acquired that can be moved between locations across regional Victoria that better meet the needs of volunteers.
- They will support training in both skills acquisition and skills maintenance, offering simulation of a range of different firefighting situations.

Fixed Training Infrastructure

- This project involves critical investment in the FTGs at Huntly, Wangaratta, Peshurst, Longerenong, Sale and the new Mildura facility. In view of the age of facilities, replacement or refurbishment is necessary. It is intended that the upgrade of the facilities will improve access to training for regionally based volunteers.

COMMENT

It is regrettable that ongoing maintenance and investment in these facilities has been neglected. It is always difficult to catch up. They are of critical importance to volunteers and their utilisation needs to be maximised. It has not. The initiatives being taken by CFA are supported. The mobile props idea received favourable comment at consultations because of their local availability but it is important that volunteers are involved with delivery of the training, whether skills acquisition or maintenance.

RECOMMENDATION 21

The CFA continue the Mobile Training Infrastructure Project and the Fixed Training Infrastructure Project. Where necessary, the Government support these initiatives in determining CFA funding.

Fiskville

- The CFA submission states that Fiskville requires urgent investment if it is to continue to provide sufficient and appropriate training in the next decade. Reference is made to the effect of the Government's commitment to implementing the VBRC recommendations and their decision to significantly boost career firefighting staff.
- A Business Case has been developed and support is being sought from Government. There would be a substantial upgrade to existing facilities and extension of the overall training ground capacity.

COMMENT

Adequate access by volunteers to Fiskville is critical to them and is consistently raised. Its virtual takeover for paid firefighter training is a source of concern and frustration, which also fuels their perceptions of being 'second-class' and not valued. Investment to update and maximise the availability of Fiskville for training, including volunteers, is supported.

RECOMMENDATION 22

The CFA proceed with the update of facilities and infrastructure at Fiskville to enable its better utilisation by volunteers and employees for training. Where necessary, the Government support this update when determining CFA funding.

16.7.9 TRAINING MATERIALS

- CFA has to have the capacity to develop and provide a range of professional training materials. Most are developed by a small in-house team whose size has not substantially changed over the last ten years. Its capacity does not meet demand.
- In view of the demand, the work of the team has to be prioritised, resulting in a situation where, at any given time, over 85% of competencies or courses would be listed as requiring new materials to be developed or existing materials revised.
- The CFA submission recognises that boosted capacity for training materials development would improve CFA's ability to establish and conduct necessary training courses. An added burden is the move from AFAC standards to the newer Public Safety Competency Standards.
- The need for the CFA to examine options to boost capacity is acknowledged.

COMMENT

Comprehensive and up to date training materials are a vital part of effective training delivery. There is criticism expressed in the consultations and submissions about the standard of materials and their currency. Clearly, the CFA team has not been coping with the demand and consequently, training has suffered. A solution needs to be found so that capacity can meet demand. The examination of options to find a solution is supported. Involvement of the TAFE system should be explored. This is discussed further and is raised at the consultations.

RECOMMENDATION 23

The CFA examine options to enable sufficient training materials to be available to ensure effective training delivery. As part of this examination, the CFA explore the feasibility of utilising the TAFE system.

16.7.10 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES – SPECIALIST AND LEADERSHIP ROLES

- It is recognised that many volunteers are keen to undertake training in specialist and leadership roles.
- It is acknowledged that there is a need to improve the design and promotion of processes to develop volunteers for these roles.
- The view is expressed by the CFA that the development of a training plan or pathway for volunteers would be of benefit to all concerned. This is to be explored. Such a pathway would assist all members to see and consider their options for skills development and place them in a stronger position to create medium to long term plans about their desired role within the CFA.
- It is acknowledged by the CFA that there is a perception that preference is given to paid firefighters for specialist and senior roles, and conceded that this is partly true.

- Overall, it is recognised by the CFA that there is work to be done in this area. In particular, the CFA submission states that the CFA:

“...must develop a stronger and more transparent model for the identification of and planning for members who would benefit from further skills development and to find solutions to barriers that prevent or inhibit volunteers nominating, and successfully completing, specialist training courses.”

COMMENT

Consistent concern and issues were raised at the consultations and in submissions about this area. There is a feeling of lack of opportunities given to volunteers, and preference given to paid personnel. The concept of a training pathway is supported by volunteers. It is strongly supported by me and hence, I encourage the CFA to pursue the concept. What occurs with the Defence Reservists is a good model.

RECOMMENDATION 24

CFA develop an individual training pathway for operational volunteers to enable volunteers to be able to better identify their career and training options and pursue a pathway that meets their expectation.

16.7.11 TRAINING DELIVERY STANDARDS

- To meet training demands, the CFA must have in place a robust system for the provision of appropriately experienced and qualified instructors and assessors.
- It is pointed out that as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), the CFA is required to comply with policies outlined under the Australian Qualifications Training Framework in order to maintain its status as an RTO. Under the national standards, those engaged in the delivery of CFA training and assessment processes need to have appropriate vocational competencies and experience.
- Reference is made to standards and the requirement for a systematic approach to quality monitoring and quality review. One system is ‘endorsement’. The RTO must endorse a person as suitable to deliver training or assessment.
- Consequently, the CFA currently requires that an endorsed instructor (volunteer or staff member) provide the supervision for any assessment, which leads to a nationally recognised qualification.
- The CFA submission states that the introduction of the Minimum Skills program along with National Competency Standards has, over time, led to an increased reliance on dedicated paid instructors to support this new workload and a shift in how a great deal of training is typically delivered.

COMMENT

This reality corresponds with the perception of volunteers. They question the need for all volunteers to be trained to the level of a nationally recognised qualification. This is also referred to by the Chief Officer in my meeting with him.

16.7.12 SKILLED MEMBERS DELIVERING TRAINING

- CFA recognises three key skill sets for training and assessment - trainer, assessor and qualified instructor.
- The Table below represents the number of CFA members qualified for training roles.

Table 27: Number of CFA members qualified for training roles

Competency / Qualification	Volunteer	Employee	Total
Trainers			
Train small groups	1618	783	2401
Facilitate group based training	242	165	407
Provide training through instruction & demonstration of work skills	201	68	269
Total			3077
Assessors			
Assess Competency (TAEASS402A)	312	138	450
Conduct Assessment	1666	682	2348
Total			2798
Fully Qualified Trainers & Assessors (may include the people listed above)			
Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training	429	203	632
Certificate IV in Training & Assessment (TAE40110)	210	90	300
Certificate IV in Workplace Training	21	2	23
Total			955

- Significantly, the CFA notes that this is an optimistic account of training delivery strength due to a number of factors, including that some members have only limited capacity to deliver training or do not feel appropriately enabled to provide training to other CFA members.

COMMENT

I would agree that the numbers are an optimistic, and perhaps unrealistic, indication of training delivery strength. The consensus of volunteer input to this Inquiry is that there is inadequate training delivery strength. The CFA submission notes that over time a large workload has increasingly fallen to full-time instructors. Nevertheless, despite increased demands, there has not been any substantial increase to the instructor base over the last ten years, when 52 instructor positions were created in 2000.

16.7.13 INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY

- Instructor availability necessarily affects training delivery and capacity.
- The following Table is a snapshot of instructor availability.

Table 28: Snapshot of instructor availability

Description / Employment Condition	Time / Measure
Weeks per/annum (52 weeks) minus Annual Leave (9 weeks)	43 weeks
Number of 8 week cycles (standard rostering arrangements under the EA)	5.375
For each eight week cycle:	
Maximum 'nights' (evening or night hours) per cycle	16
Maximum weekend days per cycle	10
Travel time required - estimated as consuming several weeks per annum, depending on the CFA Region.	1-8 weeks
Not included: other leave including sick leave, professional development, administration or other general staff duties, or requirements for other activity (such as operational duties during particular emergencies).	

- The result is that one instructor, for example, is only capable of delivering training on up to two evenings per week and five weekends out of every eight. The remainder of their working hours must be conducted during normal weekday times, which are generally not suitable for volunteers.
- I agree with the following statements in the CFA submission. They accord with the views volunteers have expressed to this Inquiry.
 - The CFA submission states that a dependence on career instructors to deliver the quantum of volunteer training required is not sustainable.
 - It is acknowledged that new approaches are needed that are cost effective and reflect the underlying principles of the Volunteer Charter.
 - The CFA submission further states that:

“CFA’s qualified volunteer trainers and assessors represent an underutilised resource within CFA. Greater use of those volunteers would see a substantial increase in overall CFA’s training delivery and assessment capacity, enhancing availability and accessibility of training to volunteers. Local volunteer instructors, delivering training in their local area are much more likely to be able to provide training at times and in locations suited to other volunteers and to deliver training which is most relevant to the particular area and people.”

COMMENT

The availability of career instructors at times that are likely to be convenient to volunteers is governed by the CFA/UFU 2010 EA. For all practical purposes, it means that, for volunteers, they are underutilised. The effective and cost efficient answer cannot be appointing more and more instructors on this basis. New approaches are needed and they must involve greater and better use of volunteer instructors and assessors. How this can be best achieved cannot be answered by this Inquiry. It needs to be developed by the CFA in consultation and with the assistance of its volunteers. I can identify the problem but I cannot wave a magic wand to provide the answer. It will take hard work and perseverance but the public interest requires that a solution be found.

RECOMMENDATION 25

The CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, examine options to enable the engagement of an adequate instructor strength to serve the training needs of volunteers. Those options should include making more use of volunteers as instructors.

Instructor and Training Capacity

- The CFA submission notes that the CFA faces very real challenges filling instructor vacancies. There has been a number of complaints on the safety and confidence of CFA people and service delivery.
- Although some changes arising from the 2010 EA assist, it still gives rise to practical challenges in filling vacancies. Table 29 illustrates instructor vacancies and the prolonged (and I might add, unacceptable) length of vacancies.
- It is noted that at present there are specific constraints arising from the EA that limit the CFA’s ability to temporarily or permanently fill these vacancies with sessional (casual/paid) or volunteer instructors.
- It is the CFA’s view (and I might add, mine) that an increased ability and flexibility to fill instructor positions and ensure maximum training capacity would benefit both volunteer and career members. As the CFA submission points out, this would be appreciated by volunteers and would accord with the UFU view that volunteers should be trained to professional standards by professional instructors to ensure the safety of its members.

Table 29: Number of unfilled instructor positions and length of time vacant (2004 – 2011)

Region	District	Position ID	Position Title	Vacancy Commenced	Vacancy Ended	No Weeks vacant	
Barwon South West Region	District 05	200125	Instructor D.05	14/05/2008	8/06/2009	56	
Barwon South West Region	District 05	300873	Instructor D.05	14/10/2005	22/10/2006	53	
Barwon South West Region	District 05	301110	Instructor Wildfire D.05	4/02/2008	13/05/2008	14	
Barwon South West Region	District 07	301114	Instructor D.07	2/07/2006	30/07/2006	4	127
Eastern Metropolitan Region	District 13	300757	Instructor Wildfire D.13	8/02/2008	4/11/2008	39	
Eastern Metropolitan Region	District 13	300878	Instructor D.13	17/08/2009	2/01/2011	60	
							99
Fiskville	Fiskville	299377	Snr Instructor Fiskville	11/04/2011	22/05/2011	6	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290260	Instructor Fiskville	14/04/2006	2/08/2006	16	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290260	Instructor Fiskville	4/12/2007	28/09/2008	42	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290260	Instructor Fiskville	30/12/2008	30/01/2011	109	
Fiskville	Fiskville	299262	Snr Instructor Fiskville	30/03/2009	28/02/2010	48	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290263	Instructor Fiskville	7/01/2002	2/07/2005	182	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290263	Instructor Fiskville	18/07/2006	2/10/2006	11	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290263	Instructor Fiskville	3/12/2007	1/02/2009	61	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290263	Instructor Fiskville	2/02/2010	30/09/2010	34	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290368	Instructor Fiskville	17/10/2006	15/04/2007	26	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290368	Instructor Fiskville	27/10/2007	17/02/2008	16	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290368	Instructor Fiskville	5/10/2009	17/10/2010	54	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290380	Snr Instructor Fiskville	7/07/2006	2/08/2006	4	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290384	Instructor Fiskville	2/06/2006	31/08/2006	13	
Fiskville	Fiskville	290384	Instructor Fiskville	2/12/2008	31/05/2009	26	
							648
Gippsland Region	District 10	300876	Instructor D.10	16/01/2009	25/02/2009	6	
Gippsland Region	District 10	300876	Instructor D.10	12/03/2010	16/08/2010	22	
Gippsland Region	District 10	301122	Instructor D.10	1/04/2008	31/05/2008	9	
Gippsland Region	District 10	301122	Instructor D.10	1/12/2008	5/12/2010	105	
							142
Grampians Region	District 15	300882	Instructor D.15	10/09/2005	14/10/2007	109	
Grampians Region	District 15	300882	Instructor D.15	28/07/2008	14/02/2010	81	
Grampians Region	District 15	300883	Instructor D.15	26/01/2003	4/07/2004	75	
Grampians Region	District 15	300883	Instructor D.15	3/01/2011	8/05/2011	18	
							283
Hume Region	District 22	301123	Instructor D.22	6/06/2008	11/10/2009	70	
Hume Region	District 22	301126	Instructor D.22	3/10/2005	21/12/2005	11	
Hume Region	District 22	301126	Instructor D.22	23/12/2007	7/04/2008	15	
Hume Region	District 23	301137	Instructor Wildfire D.23	28/01/2011		17	
							113
Loddon Mallee Region	District 02	301107	Instructor Wildfire D.02	14/12/2006	30/03/2008	67	
Loddon Mallee Region	District 02	301578	Instructor Wildfire D.02	6/08/2007	12/10/2008	62	
Loddon Mallee Region	District 18	301134	Instructor D.18	29/11/2005	1/04/2007	70	
Loddon Mallee Region	District 18	301134	Instructor D.18	2/10/2007	31/08/2008	48	
Loddon Mallee Region	District 18	301134	Instructor D.18	1/10/2008	14/06/2009	37	
Loddon Mallee Region	District 18	301134	Instructor D.18	19/02/2011	5/05/2011	11	
							295
Northern and West Metro Region	District 14	300880	Instructor D.14	25/10/2010		31	
							31
Southern Metropolitan Region	District 08	300840	Instructor D.08	27/11/2005	16/07/2006	33	
Southern Metropolitan Region	District 08	300841	Instructor D.08	6/06/2006	31/08/2006	12	
Southern Metropolitan Region	District 08	301115	Instructor D.08	10/09/2007	18/10/2009	110	
							155
South Eastern Training Ground	District 08	391177	Instructor S/Eastern T/G	11/05/2009	3/06/2010	54	
South Eastern Training Ground	District 08	391177	Instructor S/Eastern T/G	28/01/2011	7/04/2011	10	
South Eastern Training Ground	District 08	391178	Instructor S/Eastern T/G	5/10/2009	22/10/2009	2	
South Eastern Training Ground	District 08	391179	Instructor S/Eastern T/G	1/09/2006	13/05/2007	36	
							102

COMMENT

Reference is made in Chapter 15 of this Report to the evidence of Mr de Man to the VBRC on the effect of the 2008 EBA on engagement of instructors. The position has improved slightly but obstacles still remain. In my view, the position is unsatisfactory and unacceptable and should be changed. I do not see how these requirements are necessary to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the safety of career members. The safety of volunteers also has to be considered. However, any change has to be by negotiation between the CFA and the UFU. As the UFU has not participated in this Inquiry, I have not had the benefit of their views on this part of the EA, although I have gathered from their input to the VBRC that the justification is the safety and welfare of their members.

RECOMMENDATION 26

The CFA revisit with the UFU the arrangements contained in industrial agreements relating to the engagement of instructors with a view to increasing the ability and flexibility of the CFA to fill instructor positions and thereby ensure maximum training capacity to the benefit of CFA members, both volunteer and paid.

Sessional Instructors

- It is noted that sessional instructors and assessors are not available locally to deliver training or where there are instructor vacancies, sessional or one-off training sessions are often required.
- Negotiations for the 2010 EA have resulted in the establishment of a process to allow sessional training when necessary (clause 99.2.2). This clause outlines a process to be followed. There is an obligation on the CFA to consult the UFU when employing sessional instructors. The CFA maintains that, as it stands, the arrangement is unsatisfactory and it is attempting to resolve the matter in consultation with the UFU.

COMMENT

The use of sessional instructors and their lack of availability and difficulty in being utilised have been referred to by volunteers. They clearly have an important role to play in the effective, efficient and cost effective delivery of training. However, again this is being inhibited by the EA, although, hopefully, some satisfactory outcome can be negotiated.

RECOMMENDATION 27

The CFA continue its consultations with the UFU to establish a satisfactory and workable process for the use of sessional instructors.

16.7.14 TRAINING DELIVERY REVIEW – GARNOCK REPORT

- The Garnock Report has already been reviewed in some detail. It proved a helpful tool in the consultations to focus discussion regarding training.
- The CFA submission states that the recommendations by Garnock have subsequently been considered and inform CFA's current activities and future strategies for training delivery.
- It is noted that the Garnock Report confirmed that volunteers have a diverse range of expectations and attitudes and establishing a balance between these diverse volunteer expectations and organisational service delivery requirements is a perpetual challenge for the CFA.

16.7.15 CFA ACTION ON THE GARNOCK REPORT

Separate to its submission, the CFA has provided quite detailed information on the action being taken in response to the Garnock Report. It can be summarised as follows:

- A Training Delivery Review Multi Year Improvement Plan is being developed to address the recommendations made by Garnock in his Report.
- A Stage 1 (2010) workshop program has been completed. Ten improvement initiatives were identified and are being implemented, where appropriate, or planned as part of other linked initiatives or projects.
- An important initiative implemented is the formation of the CFA Operational Training and Volunteerism (OT&V) Department. It has commenced to address a number of underlying organisational and cultural issues that need to be resolved in order to implement many of the initiatives.

- Planning commenced in June 2011 for Stage 2 of the workshop program. The remaining 24 recommendations of the Garnock Report will be addressed in Stage 2 using a process of workshops to identify and plan implementation of further improvement initiatives. Stage 2 will run through to June 2012. Prioritisation of the 24 recommendations will be informed by the outcomes of Stage 2.
- Stage 3, or the final stage, is planned as an ongoing process of evaluation and review conducted through periodic consultations with stakeholders and the assessment of the effectiveness of improvement initiatives implemented in Stages 1 and 2.
- It is proposed that progress reports will be submitted to the CFA Board on the nature of the improvement initiatives identified during the workshop process, a summary of the action outlined and timelines associated with each initiative and feedback from stakeholders.
- A chart providing an initiative summary relating to the Garnock Report was provided by the CFA. It is quite comprehensive. It is not practicable to include it in this Report.

COMMENT

I confirm my earlier comment that the Garnock Report is an important document. It is supported by the results of the consultations and the contents of submissions to this Inquiry. I believe that is accepted by the CFA, who is taking the Garnock Report seriously and implementing it in a responsible way. Inevitably, that has to be done over time and incrementally. Based on the information available to me, I support the approach being taken, including keeping the CFA Board fully informed of progress. It is also essential that CFA members, both volunteer and paid, are kept informed and consulted. The VFBV has expressed concern at an apparent delay in implementation. However, it needs to be understood that CFA action has been made difficult by the demands resulting from Black Saturday.

RECOMMENDATION 28

The CFA continue with its initiatives to implement the Garnock Report, keeping volunteers and paid personnel fully informed of progress and consulting with them in relation to the implementation. This implementation should be given priority, having regard to its importance.

16.7.16 MANAGING DEMANDS

- The CFA submission states that demand for CFA training is expected to continue to evolve and increase for the next ten years. A number of drivers are identified, including continued growth in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria and ongoing legislative change such as national Work Health and Safety legislation.
- Consequently, CFA training strategies will need to include greater flexibility that better utilises existing resources and targeted investment.

COMMENT

I would agree with the CFA's assessment of demand, change and factors likely to drive it. It does represent a challenge, which requires careful strategic planning - short, medium and long term.

16.7.17 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR CFA TRAINING

- As part of thinking around new strategy development, the OT&V Department, together with a number of stakeholders, has been considering key principles and current priorities to underpin future development of training policies and programs. They can be briefly listed as follows:

- Developing the capability of CFA people.
- Learning can take place in many forms.
- Everyone has a role to play.
- Consistency of learning outcomes.
- Programs and systems must be inclusive.
- Alignment of training opportunities with needs.

Organisational demands for training give rise to a need for:

- An appropriate organisational structure.
- Greater flexibility in training delivery options.
- Appropriate fixed and mobile infrastructure.
- Enhanced capacity for design and development of materials.
- Consistency and transparency in the pathways available to CFA members.
- Suitable training management applications and systems.
- Appropriate mechanisms to review and assess training delivery, consistency and quality.

COMMENT

CFA training has to be based on, and guided by, sound principles. They form the foundations. Those principles identified by the CFA are relevant and can be further refined and developed. Principles such as diversity, consistency, inclusiveness and transparency are fundamental, as is an appropriate organisational structure that can deliver effective and efficient training. The principles set out in the VFBV submission are worthy of consideration.

RECOMMENDATION 29

The CFA continue the development of key principles in relation to training, in consultation with volunteers and paid personnel. In the development of those principles, account should be taken of matters raised by volunteers to this Inquiry and the comments that I have made about training delivery. Account should also be taken of principles contained in any statement of Vision, Mission and Values adopted by the CFA.

ALTERNATIVE OR MORE FLEXIBLE TRAINING/DELIVERY METHODS

16.7.18 BRIGADE LEADERS

- The CFA submission identifies the value of good leadership at the brigade level. The CFA provides leadership development opportunities, such as through the Fireline Leadership Program.
- Although it submits that a lot has been done over the years, the CFA acknowledges it must do even more.

COMMENT

Good leadership at all levels is of fundamental importance to the CFA, having regard to its functions and make up. It must start at the top and go down to the brigade level. The importance of leadership and concern about lack of it and not enough training, have been consistently raised at consultations and in submissions. Individual issues which have been raised, and which this Inquiry cannot resolve, seem to me, in the end, to often arise from a lack of good leadership. The importance of leadership cannot be over emphasised. The CFA does need to do more in leadership training across the board, including at the brigade level. Importantly, people should only be appointed to positions of leadership if they have the necessary capability.

RECOMMENDATION 30

The CFA provide greater opportunities for leadership training for volunteers at all levels but particularly at the brigade level. The CFA, as far as practicable, endeavour to ensure that persons appointed to positions of leadership have the necessary capability.

16.7.19 THEORY VS. PRACTICE

- Reference is made to the Garnock Report suggesting more emphasis on practical training. This is suggested at consultations and in submissions.
- The CFA submission notes that this is being investigated by the Operations Directorate and the OT&V Department.
- I support this being pursued, as I believe it can improve training delivery.

16.7.20 RECOGNITION OF CURRENT COMPETENCY/RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

- The CFA submission points out that as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), the CFA has an obligation to make available an equitable and easily accessible RCC and RPL processes.
- It is acknowledged that there are problems with the current processes. They are not adequately resourced.
- The CFA notes that the current processes for RPL and RCC are burdensome for all parties, and it will streamline and improve current practices. In 2010, the CFA initiated the RCC Process Review Project that will identify issues and make improvements where feasible. One option that must be considered is the use of appropriately accredited and qualified volunteers to assist in the process.

COMMENT

The frustration, and even anger, expressed at consultations in relation to the RPL and RCC processes was palpable. The current situation is a source of great negativity towards CFA and results in unfairness. It cannot continue and must be satisfactorily resolved. If it needs to be resourced better, that needs to happen. The utilisation of volunteers could assist, as could a less centralised process. One volunteer at a consultation succinctly described the difference between Victoria and NSW, a six-month process against a four-hour process to recognise Minimum Skills, is the way he described it.

RECOMMENDATION 31

The CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, review the process for RCC and RPL with the view to making that process transparent, efficient and fair.

16.7.21 USE OF THE TAFE SYSTEM

- The CFA submission points out that the CFA currently engages a number of TAFEs and other training organisations to deliver non-operational courses and programs. However, the TAFE network is not used as extensively as it was.
- The 2010 EA precludes the engagement of external (sessional) instructors for operational training unless specific circumstances apply and the UFU consents. Further, the funding agreements for TAFEs have changed.

COMMENT

The use of the TAFE system has been raised by volunteers as facilitating the better delivery of training. Some use has been made of it. Bearing in mind its geographic spread and experience in skills training, it seems a logical option to be explored. Clearly, cost is relevant but I would have thought not necessarily insurmountable. This is an area where a potential initiative may be inhibited by an industrial agreement. Overcoming that difficulty by negotiation or other means needs to be investigated by the CFA if the use of the TAFE system is otherwise a viable option.

RECOMMENDATION 32

- A. **The CFA, in consultation with volunteers, employees, the VFBV and the UFU, examine the feasibility of utilising the TAFE system for training delivery.**
- B. **To the extent that this utilisation is inhibited by arrangements in industrial agreements, those arrangements be revisited by the CFA with the UFU.**
- C. **To the extent that it is able, the Government provide support for CFA utilisation of the TAFE system.**

16.7.22 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS AND TRAINING

The meeting with CFA IT personnel is reviewed in Chapter 10. Further information is provided in the CFA submission.

Evolution of CFA's Training Management System

- The IT system TRAIN was established in 1995. It is a database of courses, course structures and training records for CFA members. It is a 'legacy' system and has limitations.
- The conversion of TRAIN to a new Human Capital Management System (HCMS) has commenced with State Government funding following recommendations of the VBRC. As noted earlier, this new system will manage a volunteer's entire life cycle of activity.
- As discussed at the IT meeting, the CFA submission recognises that a key current deficiency is the capture of skills maintenance by CFA members and the use of actual brigade activity to build credit towards skills maintenance and general competency.
- At present, for example, if a brigade member operates the pump at an incident or takes on the role of a Crew Leader, this skill is not captured and placed on the member's record to provide evidence of their competency.

COMMENT

As I have said earlier, the recording and storage of information relating to training has been consistently raised as an issue by volunteers and is a cause of frustration and concern. Their concerns and frustrations are well founded. I refer to, and affirm, the comments I have set out following the IT meeting. There is no need to repeat them. The development of HCMS is essential and I fully support it. I have previously made a recommendation with respect to the use and development of modern information and communication technologies (see Recommendation 10).

Brigades Online/Volunteer Support Portal

- These systems were discussed at the IT meeting and are referred to in the submissions.
- Brigades Online was established ten years ago as a website that all CFA members are able to access online. Some materials are provided online through this service.
- The Volunteer Support Portal is being established to replace Brigades Online and provide a single point of entry into multiple CFA systems that support volunteer activity. This will connect to HCMS.

COMMENT

As commented earlier, the establishment of the Volunteer Support Portal is an important initiative that will assist volunteers and I fully support its establishment.

Vector Command Training

- The use of computer based Training Simulators is discussed in the Garnock Report and was discussed in the consultations.
- The CFA submission states that the CFA is committed to this form of training, particularly for leadership and incident management. Currently, there is only one operator but another two are to be recruited. As well as an operator, a suitably qualified instructor is required.

COMMENT

There was favourable comment from volunteers who have used the Vector System. It has the advantages of being portable, the training can be conducted locally and it engages the volunteers. A range of scenarios need to be developed and to be fully utilised. There has to be adequate operator and instructor resourcing. I encourage the CFA to do this. With the establishment of a NBN, it might be practical to deliver this training through such a network which could be more efficient and less resource intensive. This could be explored at the appropriate time.

RECOMMENDATION 33

The CFA continue the development of Vector Command Training and its availability and utilisation by volunteers. The feasibility of this training being provided online be explored by the CFA as part of the consideration of the use of the NBN.

Online Learning

- The CFA submission states that during the development of Brigades Online, the CFA invested substantially in the development of online learning materials for Minimum Skills Training. Wildfire and Low Structure Minimum Skills content were developed and published online.
- The experience was that it was labour intensive and the take-up was limited. At present, there is a commitment to maintain the existing online material but no program to expand them.
- It is pointed out that there is considerable effort involved in building online curriculum learning strategies.
- However, the CFA considers that the value of practical training and face-to-face instruction with a team cannot be underestimated and remains its priority and preferred training method.

COMMENT

The points raised by the CFA are acknowledged. Online training, particularly in the delivery of materials is raised in the Garnock Report. It was raised in consultations and submissions. Online use in the community generally has increased dramatically in the last ten years.

Exploiting New Technology

- In many respects, this is what my meeting with CFA IT personnel was all about - to explore how the CFA might take advantage of new or emerging technology.
- The CFA submission confirms that the CFA continues to monitor developments such as the NBN. Making use of the NBN will require a strategic program and investment. As well as training, it applies to other services, such as connecting with young members.
- It is recognised that NBN implementation makes practicable internet access for all brigades.

COMMENT

I remain of the view expressed in my comments about the IT meeting. Brigade internet access is a matter of concern to volunteers. It would be of real benefit even to the small brigades. The NBN (or some other broadband solution) could enable this to happen. It should, in my view, be the objective of the CFA. Ultimately, no doubt, there will be a whole of Government approach to utilisation of the NBN or its equivalent. The CFA should be a key stakeholder and user.

RECOMMENDATION 34

The CFA as part of any examination of the utilisation of the NBN give priority to the establishment of internet access for brigades.

16.7.23 THE NEXT GENERATION

- A constant theme of this Report is the need to attract young people to become members of the CFA and remain members, if the volunteer model is to be sustainable in the long term.
- The CFA submission, correctly in my view, recognises that the CFA's capacity to attract and retain new members depends upon their agility and capability to deliver suitable training to them. It also recognises the need to discuss and better understand current volunteer views on the use of technology. That is one of the things that I was able to do with the consultations, although there were virtually no young members present.
- Working with the VFBV and others, CFA intends to develop a shared future vision and plan for technology use.

COMMENT

I agree that technology itself is not the answer. The key is for CFA to be the master of the technology and not the reverse. I reiterate future strategic planning must include what modern technology can offer and how current and future generations do, and will, use it.

16.8 FINAL COMMENT ON TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS

A great deal of this Report has been devoted to training because of its critical importance to both community safety and the safety of firefighters, both paid and volunteer. The arrangements, research and views relating to training have been set out together, where appropriate, with comments and recommendations. It is an area that requires commitment from all involved to ensure that best practice is followed. The provision of adequate resources for training is essential if it is to be effective, efficient and achieve the necessary objectives. Reference has been made to training infrastructure and the need for that to be well maintained and up to date.

It seems to me that the CFA has reached a stage in its development where the establishment of a dedicated training academy which would be available to volunteer and career members is worthy of consideration by all concerned, including government.

RECOMMENDATION 35

Consideration be given to the establishment of a dedicated CFA training academy.

17. DEPLOYMENT AND UTILISATION OF VOLUNTEERS – ARRANGEMENTS AND ANALYSIS

17.1 INTRODUCTION

Another important arrangement considered in this Inquiry is the deployment and utilisation of volunteers. Reference was made to these arrangements consistently at consultations and in submissions. The issues raised at consultations and in submissions are first considered and then matters raised in the VFBV and CFA submissions. Finally, the arrangements are reviewed and, where appropriate, comments and recommendations are made.

17.2 ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN CONSULTATIONS

There was lively discussion in the consultations regarding the use of qualified volunteers, particularly in Incident Management Teams (IMTs) and as strike team leaders. The issues raised are as follows:

- *Volunteers often marginalised on initial deployment* - volunteers may not get the chance to participate in initial response firefighting at integrated stations due to the time it takes for them to travel to the station. By then, the career staff would already have responded to the incident.
- *Requirement to have staff member on board or in charge* - In some instances, a fully volunteer-manned crew will not be allowed to leave an integrated station when responding to incidents without at least one staff member on board.
- Often, when a strike team is deployed that is consisted of four volunteers and one career staff, the volunteers are told that it is a condition of the EA that the strike team leader in that situation must be a staff member.
- There previously used to be opportunity for volunteers to be on strike teams but in the last six months, there has been a forced changeover to career staff when volunteers respond or there would be a re-call of volunteer teams.
- It is now common to see integrated teams (volunteer and career brigades) responding to incidents, that the career brigade becomes in charge. There is no mention in the EA that staff cannot report to volunteers and it is, more significantly, not the ethos of how the CFA operates.
- *Deployment in strike teams* - During the flood response, selected brigades for strike teams were given two hours to deploy with their trucks. However, volunteers are more often than not, unable to drop everything in that time and leave for a strike team response that could go on for weeks.
- *Deployment as strike teams to fight campaign fires* – volunteers are frustrated at, having been deployed as a strike team for days on end, to wait in the middle of a paddock, sitting idle, tending to the green, without being utilised. It may be indicative of the management of resources on the fire ground.
- Volunteers are adamant that they should not be called upon if they are not needed. Some volunteers ‘pick and choose’ but others have no choice in the matter and have to deploy in the strike team.
- Volunteers state that the logistics for deploying strike teams is extremely stretched and the CFA struggles to gather and deploy strike teams. This may be attributed to the fact that deployments commonly last for over 5 days and do not suit volunteers, particularly those who are self-employed or are unable to take that amount of time off work.

- For example, on Black Saturday, certain strike teams were not deployed although the extent of the fires was clear. This may be indicative of a lack of consultation between one region and the next.
- *Preference for non-volunteer brigades* – Ill feeling is perpetuated amongst volunteers through the use of neighbouring integrated brigades before local volunteers.
- Volunteers feel they are often treated as the reserve team and career staff as the initial response team. This should not be the case and they must be treated as part of the team at the start.
- *Assisting other organisations* - during the 2011 floods, CFA brigades assisted VICSES but were not properly trained or equipped to deal with such an incident. There may need to be consideration of how far CFA volunteers should be involved in VICSES activities. In some rural areas, rural brigades do act in the role of VICSES by responding to floods or road accidents.
- *Volunteers doing 'dirty work'*- There have been reported cases where volunteers have been called out to an incident by career staff to do the 'dirty work' such as 'mopping up' operations and 'blacking out' the fire area to prevent re-ignition, and the career staff then return to the station and rest.
- *Utilisation of volunteers* - volunteers not able to use qualifications obtained. Incident Management roles not available to volunteers regardless of training undertaken.
- Where an incident response requires the deployment of a person with higher level training, the culture of the CFA is often to respond by calling upon volunteer personnel as a last resort, looking first to career staff resources, then external agency sources and sometimes to resources imported from interstate or overseas before deploying accredited volunteer personnel.
- This approach often leads to career staff being dragged further distances to take up a post than a volunteer of equal qualification might have to travel and the associated delay in ensuring a suitably qualified person fills the position.
- Many volunteers feel that this is part of a culture within the organisation that devalues volunteers. This culture also has a flow on effect to other organisations that might be present.
- A person qualified as a Level 2 or Level 3 incident controller should be trained and tested to that level and capable of fulfilling that role. Whether that person is a volunteer or paid staff should make no difference in the execution of task.
- CFA must take steps to ensure that volunteers are encouraged to undertake higher level incident management training, and ensure that opportunities are provided, so that incident management needs continue to be met. This process will take a number of years, as volunteers of all levels will need to be provided with further training so as to be able to ensure all incident management roles are filled.
- As career firefighters are required to undertake training at senior levels to advance their careers, paid staff are preferentially selected to take up positions in training programs. Consequently, there are very few spaces available for volunteer staff in training programs at senior levels in any event. This constitutes a further impediment to volunteer firefighters obtaining the training necessary to advance into senior management positions.
- *Treated as less than equals* - Many volunteers have expressed the view once the volunteer patch on the shoulder of their uniforms is noted they are treated as less than equal in skills and experience, with ICC members bypassing volunteers and deferring to less experienced or qualified career staff.

17.3 ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN SUBMISSIONS

The submissions received broadly reflected the issues raised in consultations, particularly in relation to the view that having 'volunteer' on their sleeve is sometimes seen as a detriment in incident management roles. Other issues raised include:

- *Lack of opportunity to use or exercise IMT roles* - Many complaints are made of incident controllers with little obvious practical bushfire experience, put in charge of larger fires, who do not listen or respect the experienced local firefighters.
- Differences in endorsement processes across the state such as for strike team leaders.
- *Too much reliance on association of a member to a brigade* - There arises an assumption that brigade member is only trained to the risk level of the hazard and are not recognised for the skills and experience that can be deployed more broadly.
- *No opportunities for volunteers to be ground observers* - Courses were no longer run once there was a minimum number trained and those trained were all staff. Volunteers were not able to participate in the training.
- *Volunteers sidelined from roles* - In some brigades, qualified volunteer personnel are being sidelined from many roles and appear to have been done under the guise of clauses contained in the EA despite the EA not directly stating staff should get preference for these roles.
- Volunteer trainers are not perceived by CFA to be of the same calibre as those employed even though they may hold equal qualifications and a vast wealth of experience.
- *No volunteer firefighter can be paid as a sessional instructor* - This removes any chance the CFA had to reward its volunteers with remunerated training roles utilising their skill sets.
- *Community education* - Volunteers need to be trained and allowed to be involved in community education in their brigade areas. There are many older volunteers who might find the physical demands of firefighting onerous. These people with experience would be well suited for such roles.
- *Utilisation as strike team leaders* - volunteers are not utilised as strike team leaders if tankers are carrying staff members. Some brigades are told that a staff member must be present in the 'command crew' to address workplace rules but the practical application of this means volunteers are no longer selected for these roles. This will affect volunteer skills maintenance opportunities. They see no reason why suitably qualified and endorsed volunteers cannot perform these roles or why fully volunteer manned tankers cannot be responded from integrated stations.
- *More local leadership used* - Group Officers now have no actual tactical role in a fire situation, their role now being to organise crews and recruit volunteers for task forces – appears to be ongoing trend by CFA that local volunteer command structures are being sidelined and marginalised by permanent career staff who see themselves as a superior elite group that has little or no need to take any advice from the volunteers.
- *Utilisation of volunteers* - Appointment to IMT roles is often limited to career staff. Experience in these roles is not obtained by volunteers because it seems they are only called when there are no more career staff available, rather than being called on early to be given opportunities to be mentored and to gain experience. There are certainly exceptions but no clear career path is given for volunteers to strive towards.

17.4 VFBV SUBMISSION

The VFBV submission raised a number of similar issues to those raised at consultations and in submissions, in terms of the preference for career staff to lead strike teams and the under utilisation of qualified volunteers at all levels of the CFA. The matters they have raised include:

- The failures of CFA leadership, the industrial relations environment and the growing incidence of dismissive attitudes towards volunteers at state and local management level is giving rise to an increasing incidence of under utilisation of experienced and qualified volunteers.
- Schedule 15 (Wildfire Duties) of the 2010 EA covers leadership arrangements for strike teams consisting of both volunteers and career firefighters. It spells out interim guidelines for paid firefighter deployment to wildfires covering the skills required by crew and skills/endorsement and rank for Crew Leaders, Strike Team Leaders, Sector Commanders and Division Commanders.
- As an integrated workforce, it is not exceptional for CFA strike teams to comprise a mix of paid career firefighters and volunteers. Strike Team Leaders are usually appropriately qualified volunteers but Schedule 15 of the 2010 EA requires that if a Strike Team includes career firefighters, that the Strike Team must have career staff at strike team management level.
- There have been a number of reports that when career staff are part of the strike team, local arrangements are that the Strike Team Leader must be a career staff member. VFBV have also received frequent reports that career staff will only take direction from the career staff member operating at Strike Team management level (usually the deputy leader).
- The VFBV recommend that, to ensure effective utilisation of the volunteer resource:
 - Ensure succession planning and required arrangements are actively implemented to promote, train, provide experience and mentor appropriately experienced volunteers for all senior operational roles in CFA including the highest level of incident control;
 - Delete the requirements of EA Schedule 15 as inconsistent with the CFA integrated model of operation, and ensure consistent application of the current Schedule such that available, qualified and experienced volunteer leaders are utilised as strike team leaders, Sector and Divisional Commanders with relevant responsibility and authority over crews which serve under them regardless of whether the crews are volunteer or career.
- Many members have expressed a concern to VFBV that they sometimes feel that Government and CFA treats them as 'cannon fodder' or, cheap labour and this is seen as a disincentive for continued volunteer contribution.
- On this issue, CFA cannot operate on the premises that all leadership, direction, governance and performance management will be provided by paid personnel. Just as volunteers are essential to front-line fire-fighting and incident command, volunteers in CFA are vital to the non-operational leadership and management of CFA, at every level from brigade to board.
- The VFBV make a valid point in their submission that, in an integrated workforce, those who are appointed to positions of leadership and authority, whether they are from volunteer or paid staff must be respected in such positions, and their authority accepted by all subordinate members of their team, based on their competence to do the job, and regardless of whether they are volunteer or paid and regardless of rank.

COMMENT

I would agree that CFA volunteers are a valuable resource and it would benefit the CFA to ensure experienced and qualified volunteers are utilised at all levels of the CFA, in leadership, as well as incident management roles.

17.5 CFA SUBMISSION

- The CFA submits that there is a current perception that preference is given to paid firefighters for training opportunities, particularly for specialist and senior roles. This is in part true, but not for an unexplained reason. The capacity and availability of CFA career staff can be planned for and specifically designed to ensure availability of particular skills. This presents a specific strength to CFA as an organisation, which it must capitalise upon, and as such, career staff will often be put forward to obtain skills and experience that can be readily deployed.
- It is important to note that the development of skills and experience in volunteer membership brings different strengths to the organisation, including an important surge capacity for particular skills, particularly IMT roles, and the application of these skills with local knowledge, which cannot be underestimated in its value.
- Overall, on the matter of selection for specialist training and leadership roles, the CFA recognises that there is work to be done. CFA must develop a stronger and more transparent model for the identification of and planning for members who would benefit from further skills development and to find solutions to barriers that prevent or inhibit volunteers nominating and successfully completing specialist training courses.

COMMENT

As noted in Chapter 16, a training pathway for volunteers would place volunteers in a stronger position to achieve their desired role within the CFA, such as in IMTs, and make full use of their valuable local knowledge, skills and capabilities, which in turn would benefit the CFA, as well as the morale of volunteers. I would support this occurring and have made a recommendation for the CFA to do so (see Recommendation 24).

17.6 THE ARRANGEMENTS

Given the fundamental role of volunteers in the CFA service delivery model and in the community, it is clear that an efficient deployment and utilisation of the volunteer resource is a major factor in the overall effectiveness of that service as a whole.

The witness statement of Mr Lex de Man and statements of Mr Allan Monti and Mr Allan Small to the VBRC provided useful information on the use of volunteers in IMTs and as incident controllers.

CFA volunteers come from very diverse backgrounds. They include lawyers, engineers, farmers, teachers, police, former CFA career staff, ex-military, active MFESB staff, and in their personal lives, have developed valuable skills or held positions of responsibility that make them suited to hold management positions in emergency response organisations such as the CFA.

As Mr Monti noted in his statement to the VBRC, there are matters that need to be addressed in relation to the utilisation of volunteers in the CFA:

- Acknowledgement that CFA volunteers comprise people with valuable skills that can be employed in the service of the State to fight fires and respond to other emergencies;
- Facilitate accessibility to training opportunities to ensure that the maximum contribution of volunteers can be achieved; and
- Recognition that people who have trained and obtained competencies to the required standard are to be regarded as capable to act and should be utilised in those roles regardless of whether they are paid or volunteer.

Turnouts are only one facet of active volunteering within CFA. During an emergency, CFA volunteers fill a range of roles, such as firefighter, crew leader and strike team leader on the fire ground, and information officer and incident controller in the incident control centre (ICC). They may also be deployed as fire investigators, air observers, fire weather planners and ground observers.

In addition, CFA volunteers are involved in brigade administration, equipment maintenance, training, educating the local community and fund raising. These are often the unseen activities that keep the CFA running. Emergency roles that support firefighting and incident management include, but are not limited to, catering, equipment maintenance, and welfare and peer support.

The Operations Manager is responsible for ensuring that arrangements exist for the effective and efficient coordination and deployment of brigade and Group personnel and other resources within and outside of the Region and with other organisations. In larger fires, the Operations Officer will be responsible for strategic positioning of resources. Division and Sector Commanders will be responsible for the tactical positioning of those resources at the fire ground.

The CFA states that the allocation and positioning of resources is based on projected bushfire risk levels, both seasonal and daily, to ensure appropriate coverage and maximised response capability. To achieve this requires a flexible and mobile workforce. The CFA's utilisation of higher density areas for surge capacity ensured that no regions were left with a shortfall of volunteer members on 7 February 2009.

17.6.1 INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS

Role Development Pathway

The AIIMS structure utilises all incident management roles from Crew Leader through to Level 3 Incident Controller and for Level 1 to Level 3 incidents. An IMT is part of the AIIMS structure. IMT roles are generally considered to be the roles fulfilled within an Incident Control Centre (ICC) as opposed to fire ground management roles, although some roles, such as Air Operations, which may be based at an air field, are often conducted external to the ICC.

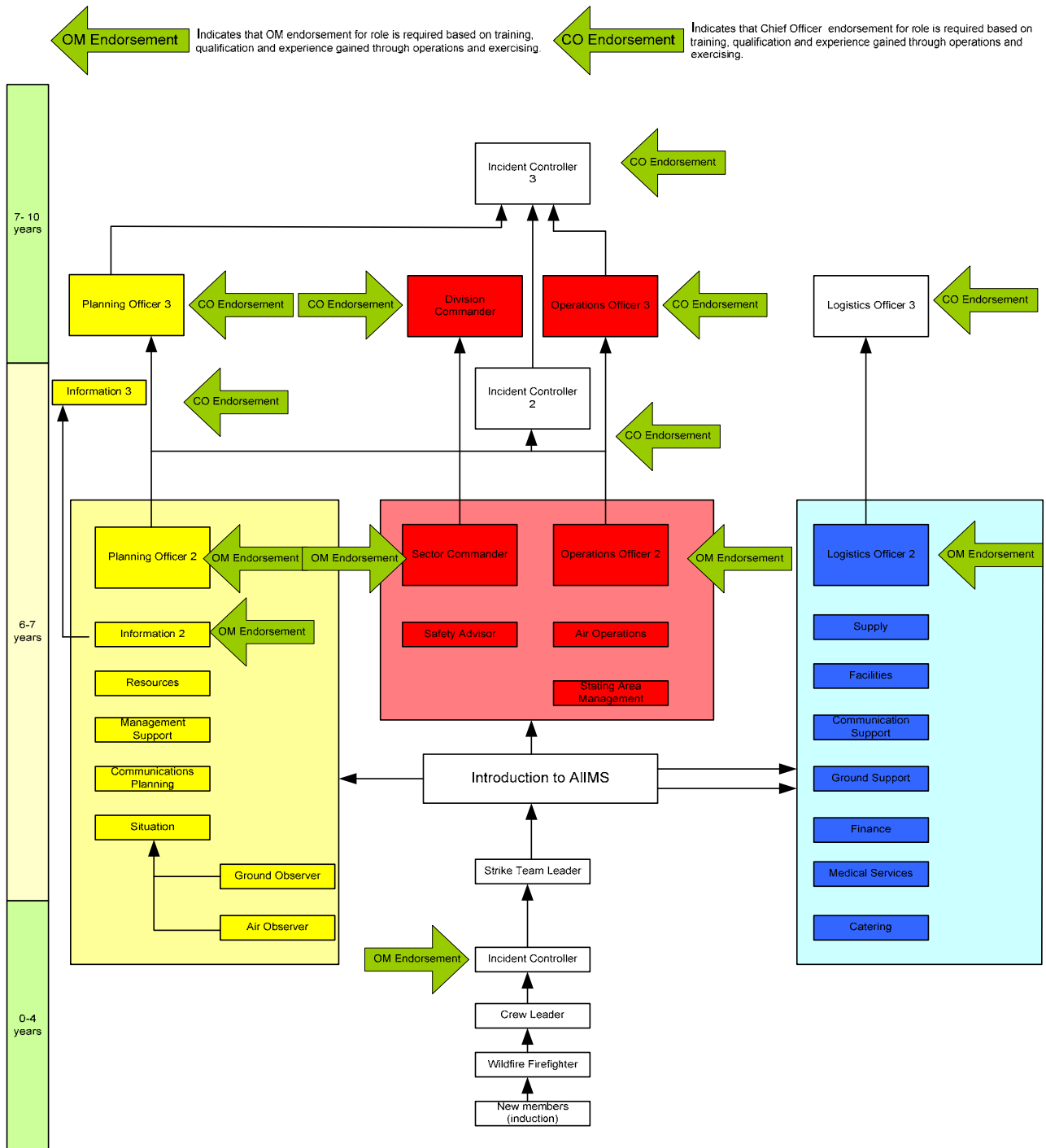
Operational progression to IMTs often requires the member to both undertake approved training and gain relevant experience. Diagram 31 shows the CFA Role Development Pathway, which the CFA Operational Training area advises represents its understanding of role progression within IMTs, and has not been endorsed by the Chief Officer.

Diagram 31 outlines the different pathways within IMTs and suggests timeframes for achieving different levels of competencies. The pathway to key Level 3 incident management roles, including Planning Officer, Operations Officer, Logistics Officer, Divisional Commander and Incident Controller is estimated to take between seven to ten years.

Diagram 31: Role Development Pathway for Operational Team Positions

CFA utilises a “pick the team” approach to filling operational team positions at all levels; suitable members are:

- **Selected** based on current competence, aptitude for identified future role and past performance in current role
- **Developed** for new roles via training and mentoring/coaching in operations and exercising
- **Evaluated** in the role to provide evidence of workplace (actual or simulated operations) usage of the skills to a satisfactory level
- **Endorsed** to fill the role by the Chief Officer or Operations Manager.



The CFA's approach to Level 3 IMT qualification is as follows:

- Both paid and volunteer personnel wishing to take on an IMT role must participate in a series of five AAIMS courses—in total, 145 hours of instruction and 60 hours of study.
- The Chief Officer annually endorses members to perform the roles of Incident Controller and Operations, Planning and Logistics Officers for Level 3 incidents.
- Endorsement is based on competencies, endorsements, experience, and an assessment of the CFA member's aptitude for the role. In practice, endorsement of IMT personnel occurs on the recommendation of Operations Managers.
- The endorsement of Level 3 Incident Controllers is based on a candidate's performance in Level 2 roles, their aptitude for the role, and previous exposure and mentoring at Level 3 incidents.

Mr de Man noted in his VBRC witness statement that a career pathway document for both volunteers and career staff needs to be formally developed, endorsed and implemented by CFA.

COMMENT

Based upon the information obtained in this Inquiry, I support the establishment of role development pathways for interested volunteers. This facilitates involving them in incident leadership roles to their own benefit and the benefit of the CFA. I refer to my earlier comment and recommendation in relation to the development of a training pathway for each operational volunteer and would envisage such a pathway embracing role development for each interested volunteer to facilitate their involvement in incident leadership roles.

Mentoring

Based upon a candidate's experience, record of performance, and demonstrated aptitude for a particular role at Level 2, they will be eligible to be endorsed for that role at Level 3 on a mentored basis. CFA does not conduct a formal mentoring scheme, or review of performance for Level 3 Incident Controllers but uses the appointment of individuals into deputy roles as a form of mentoring. Then with experience and recognised achievement in a mentored deputy/role the candidate will then progress to full endorsement in that particular role.

Standard Operating Procedures

J3.08 (Version as at 16 November 2009) of the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE)-CFA Joint Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) provides a consistent and pre-determined process for the appointment of an Incident Controller for multi-agency incidents. It is not necessary to set this out.

There are distinct advantages in utilising local personnel in IMTs. This is reflected in J2.04 (Version as at 29 September 2007) of the DSE-CFA Joint SOPs, which outlines the objective of improving operational planning and decision-making and maximising the safety of incident personnel by incorporating local knowledge in the integrated responses to fire and other emergencies.

The SOP states that the Incident Controller must ensure that, as far as is practicable, personnel who are able to contribute a local perspective and have knowledge of local issues are involved in the planning and conduct of incident response. IMTs will incorporate local knowledge by including local people in key IMT roles, as advisors to IMT members and the fire ground command structure.

According to the CFA SOP 8.03, the Chief Officer automatically endorses Captains, Lieutenants, Station Officers, Senior Station Officers and Leading Firefighters as Level 1 Incident Controllers. The Chief Officer annually endorses a number of CFA members to undertake, for Level 3 incidents – the role of Incident Controller, Planning Officer, Operations Officer, Information Officer and Logistics Officer, and for Level 2 incidents – the role of Incident Controller.

The District Operations Manager, under delegation from the Chief Officer, endorses a number of CFA members to undertake roles as:

- Division Commander;
- Sector Commander;
- Strike Team Leader;
- Staging Area Manager;
- Safety Officer; and
- Functional management roles in Level 2 incidents other than the Incident Controller.

The Officer in Charge of a brigade will endorse a number of brigade members to undertake the role of Crew Leader.

The SOP states that strike teams are to work shifts allocated by the IMT but should not be in excess of 12 hours plus changeover time. The preferred deployment period for a support force is:

- Firefighting crews: 3 shifts plus travel time;
- IMT: 5 shifts plus travel time;
- Support personnel: 5 shifts plus travel time.

COMMENT

As mentioned earlier, Standard Operating Procedures is an area being addressed by the Chief Officer. His approach of having less prescriptive principles, rather than detailed procedures, is supported by me.

Group Structure

Group Officer is a managerial and support role, whereas IMT positions are operational, incident based roles. They, therefore, sit as two distinct streams within CFA.

There is no requirement that Group Officers be qualified or endorsed to hold IMT positions. Therefore, Group Officers, like any other CFA member, are appointed to IMT positions based on qualifications, endorsements and experience. As Group Officers tend to be senior volunteers, many are appropriately qualified and endorsed, and as such are appointed to IMT positions. There are currently 22 Group Officers and Deputy Group Officers that are endorsed as a Level 3 Incident Controller.

COMMENT

As referred to earlier, the Chief Officer supports the group structure and the utilisation of the valuable local knowledge and experience of the Group Officers. Based on the information that has been obtained in this Inquiry, I agree with his approach and would encourage initiatives whereby the benefits of the group structure may be fully realised.

17.6.2 UTILISATION OF VOLUNTEERS IN INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS

There are currently 8,175 volunteers and 856 employees who have achieved competency as Crew Leader. Crew Leader training includes Level 1 Incident Controller training. Many volunteers advance beyond the position of Crew Leader. Advancement beyond Crew Leader is influenced by a range of factors, including, the aptitude and motivation of the volunteer, the level of support provided by senior CFA members, career and volunteer, the availability of training courses, and operational requirements.

The AIIMS position directly above Crew Leader is Strike Team Leader. 497 career members are qualified as Strike Team Leader, with 1,675 qualified volunteers. Further, 469 volunteers and 361 employees are endorsed as Sector Commander, and 289 volunteers and 249 staff are endorsed as Divisional Commanders.

Whilst volunteers fill the majority of fire ground management positions, there are less volunteers proportionally within IMTs. The 2010-11 endorsed list records that:

- 22 volunteers are endorsed as a Level 3 Incident Controller;
- 91 volunteers are endorsed as a Planning Officer;
- 85 volunteers are endorsed as a Logistics Officer;
- 120 volunteers are endorsed as an Operations Officer;
- 45 volunteers are endorsed as an Information Officer;
- 234 volunteers are endorsed as a Level 2 Incident Controller;
- 289 volunteers are endorsed as Divisional Commander; and
- 591 volunteers are endorsed as Sector Commander.

There are a total of 768 volunteers that are endorsed to at least one role at Level 3 IMTs. Of the Level 3 incident management roles that are included on the Chief Officer's endorsed list, a volunteer is most likely to be endorsed as an AIIMS Operations Officer.

CFA training records show that the following volunteers have successfully completed training for the following Level 2 incident management positions, and other general incident management positions:

- 72 as Planning Officer (Level 2);
- none as Operations Officer (Level 2);
- 39 as Logistics Officer (Level 2);
- 29 as Situation Officer (Level 2);
- 28 as Information Officer (Level 2);
- 127 as Fire Weather Planner;
- 2 as Fire Behaviour Analyst;
- 20 as Safety Advisor;
- 57 as Ground Observer; and
- 73 as Air Observer.

Volunteers also perform a number of other support and administrative roles within an IMT, which do not require specific training, qualification or endorsements.

Of over 38,000 operational volunteers, 0.06% are endorsed as Level 3 Incident Controller, while 15% of paid firefighters are endorsed. Only 2% of operational volunteers are endorsed to hold at least one role in Level 3 IMTs. CFA recognises that the numbers above are low.

COMMENT

Based on the information obtained by this Inquiry, I would agree that the numbers are low and need to be improved. It is important that the CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, explore initiatives whereby more volunteers are qualified to participate in Incident Management Teams.

RECOMMENDATION 36

The CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, explore and develop initiatives whereby more volunteers are qualified to participate in Incident Management Teams.

Royal Commission

The VBRC considered the management of incidents in their Final Report and supported the continued use of AIMS and recognised the importance of local knowledge within Level 3 Incident Management Teams.

The VBRC found that those IMTs that were poorly prepared or did not have access to fully qualified staff also often had the greatest difficulty managing information flows, which are crucial to the issuing of public warnings and informing firefighters of changing conditions and potential danger.

The VBRC's examination of shortages of Level 3 Incident Controllers revealed major differences between the DSE system of accreditation (formal assessment of a candidate against known criteria) and the CFA system of endorsement (nomination or approval of a person to perform a particular role).

The VBRC noted that since both agencies provide members to joint IMTs, it is highly desirable that there be a uniform standard and selection process, to ensure that each Incident Controller, regardless of agency, has similar experience and competence. The VBRC considered that DSE's accreditation process is rigorous and thorough and is suitable for use by both DSE and the CFA. The CFA's process is more subjective and less transparent.

The VBRC proposed that a uniform, objective and transparent accreditation process for Level 3 Incident Controllers and a system of performance review be adopted and that a traineeship scheme be used to progress people from Level 2 to Level 3 positions. A standardised and rigorous approach to accreditation on the part of both agencies would deliver considerable benefits in ensuring that incident controllers of high calibre are appointed.

The VBRC recommended that the accreditation process should also involve a dedicated training course for Level 3 Incident Controllers. The emphasis should be on the skills and attributes, including leadership, that were identified in the Level 2–3 Transition Project as being desirable for Level 3 Incident Controllers.

In addition, the VBRC recommended that the CFA and DSE should introduce a performance review system for Level 3 Incident Controllers to allow for effective monitoring of performance and feedback to personnel and to provide opportunities for identifying areas for improvement and additional training for people needing assistance in the role.

The VBRC noted that the system should be introduced before the 2010–11 fire season. Further, the CFA must implement a system for recording the endorsement and accreditation of its staff and volunteers. The system should be arranged in such a way as to allow the location, qualifications and experience of the individual concerned to be easily identified and kept in a form (such as a secure online database) that is readily accessible to regional staff and area operations controllers.

The VBRC considered that volunteers, with their diverse work and personal backgrounds, could bring skills and experiences to the role of incident controller (and other senior IMT roles) that might be extremely valuable.

The VBRC also stated that the CFA should increase its efforts to ensure that training for senior IMT positions is made available to volunteers and that volunteers are considered for nomination in the incident controller accreditation process and, once accredited, for appointment as incident controllers for Level 3 incidents.

Experience of Mr Allan Small

Mr Allan Small, an experienced volunteer in the CFA for over 44 years has held functional IMT positions in major bushfires throughout Victoria and NSW for over ten years, including as a Level 3 Incident Controller.

In his statement to the VBRC, he states that he is aware, through both anecdotal evidence and personal experience, that the CFA management does make resource allocation decisions that prefer the utilisation of paid staff over volunteers who have made themselves available and are able to serve.

He provides this personal experience as evidence of his claim:

“Approximately a week after February 7 2009, CFA management asked me to fill the role of Deputy Incident Controller at the Woori Yallock ICC during the day, for three days (Monday to Wednesday) as part of the ongoing management of the King Lake to Healesville fire complex that continued to burn after Black Saturday. I agreed to do so.

Late Sunday evening, the night before I was to attend as Deputy Incident Controller, and after I had put in place personal arrangements to take on this task, I received a phone call from CFA management who advised me not to attend the ICC as I was not needed. No explanation was provided to me as to why I was not required and I was not asked if I would be available at any other time.

I visited the ICC the following Tuesday. I discovered that a senior CFA career staff member had filled the position of Deputy Incident Controller. I knew the CFA staff member fulfilling the role. There is no doubt that the person fulfilling this role was appropriate for the position.

The point I make is that I had made myself available for three full days to the CFA as a Level 3 Deputy Incident Controller in the wake of the worst bushfires in memory. I was not utilised in any way despite my skill and availability during that three-day period other than to the extent that I voluntarily attended the ICC to “help out” if needed. The post I was originally designated to fill was filled by a paid employee and I was sidelined without explanation.

Given what was happening at that time, it seems to me to be a ridiculous waste of available resources in a time of emergency not to have both me and the paid employee fully utilised.

These incidents reflect a wider cultural issue within the CFA and DSE. That is, the systematic preference for paid CFA staff members to fulfil senior management roles, notwithstanding the availability of volunteer fire-fighters with commensurate skill and experience. In my view, the body of volunteer fire-fighters is a resource that is under-utilised and poorly managed. The failure of the State to develop and maximise this valuable resource has a negative impact on the firefighting ability of the CFA and disadvantages the community.”

Mr Allan Monti, Executive Officer of VFBV notes in his statement to the VBRC that he can say that from his position at VFBV, from anecdotes that have been relayed to him directly and from his own observations, the situation outlined by Mr Small is one example of a broader issue that affects the way in which the volunteer resource is utilised.

In response to evidence before VBRC that the CFA’s volunteers are underutilised in preference to career staff, particularly when filling IMT positions, Mr de Man noted in his witness statement that this issue is not as simple as career staff being preferred over volunteers. There are a number of factors that interlink:

- The numbers of volunteers endorsed for Level 3 incident management roles is low;
- IMTs are not just made up of CFA staff and volunteers. There are usually a number of staff from other agencies, in particular from DSE; and
- Information about personnel availability is more accessible for career staff. A personnel management system for all personnel needs to be implemented.

COMMENT

Based on the information obtained by this Inquiry, it does appear to me that qualified volunteers are under utilised in Incident Management Teams. There certainly is a perception amongst volunteers that they are a last resort resource. That should not be the case as their better utilisation is beneficial to volunteer morale and the CFA. The recording of information relating to volunteers and the utilisation of that information is addressed in this Report.

RECOMMENDATION 37

The CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, explore and develop initiatives whereby qualified volunteers may be more utilised in Incident Management Teams.

17.6.3 ACTIONS TAKEN BY CFA

The Incident Management Team Training Project was introduced to address the Government’s response to the recommendations of the VBRC Final Report that directly related to the management of ICCs and the training of IMTs. Specifically, this project will ensure that appropriate systems, pathways and training exist for personnel to attain the required skills, knowledge and experience to safely and effectively manage incidents. In the next phase of the project, the coordination of this work will be supported by the creation of a personal development plan for each participating member.

CFA and DSE have agreed that all incident management staff from CFA or DSE should be endorsed to the same standard as agreed between the agencies. This will ensure consistency in the quality of training delivered by the agencies. For that purpose, the agencies have committed to develop joint training packages for key IMT personnel where they do not currently exist and to agree on long term training plans and targets.

CFA and DSE have agreed to develop a formal, comprehensive mentoring program that is consistent with developing key IMT personnel in accordance with the common endorsement standards.

A joint CFA/DSE Level 3 Incident Controller Endorsement and Accreditation Database is in development with CFA as the lead agency. The database will be pre-populated with endorsed/accredited personnel from both agencies.

Key developments to date include:

- In-principle agreement on Level 3 Incident Controller role pathway and endorsement process between DSE and CFA reviewed and accepted by VFBV Level 3 Incident Controller Reference Group.
- In-principle agreement on a uniform, objective and transparent process based on the current DSE approach for accreditation of Level 3 Incident Controllers reached between DSE and CFA. The Chief Officers of both agencies have signed off this documentation.
- The interim Level 3 Incident Controller Performance Review System produced, which requires minor modification before it is complete.

COMMENT

Based on the information obtained in this Inquiry, I would support the actions taken by the CFA and DSE in response to the VBRC recommendations.

17.6.4 SERVICE DELIVERY STANDARDS

CFA has in place a set of Service Delivery Standards (SDS) for its brigades. SDS establish a target response time to incidents which brigades are measured by on every call to an emergency. A risk classification for each brigade response area informs the SDS which are set. In high-risk areas, the SDS for fire response may be eight minutes from time of alerting to time of arrival. In areas of lesser risk, the SDS may be undefined ('as rapidly as possible').

With these standards in place, the Chief Officer has at his disposal, an important and comparable output measure to assess the performance and viability of brigades. This measurement is one aspect that the Chief Officer considers in monitoring and ensuring that his responsibilities under the CFA Act are being executed.

The CFA SDS approved by the then Chief Officer on 12 November 2004 list the expected response times by the various class of hazards and types of brigades.

Table 30: CFA's Service Delivery Standards (SDS)

CLASS OF HAZARD	RESPONSE TIME DEFINITIONS	VEHICLE RESPONSE TIMES (MIN) *
1 – High Urban **	A structure or series of structures, which present a serious life hazard from fire.	**
2 – Medium Urban	Significant urban areas, primarily residential areas involving commercial centres, clusters of industrial and/or institutional hazards.	8
3 – Low Urban	Encompasses all structural hazards in urban areas not falling into Classes 1 and 2 and includes predominantly residential occupancies and small industries.	10
4 – Rural	Primarily involves natural surroundings in terms of fuel, but also involves isolated dwellings and structures within those areas.	20
5 – Remote Rural	Structural and rural hazards similar to Class 4 and for which the location of the hazard is geographically distant from a fire station.	No times specified
Urban RAR	Road Accident Rescue (RAR) incidents occurring in the Melbourne statistical division, plus the municipal districts of Greater Geelong, Greater Bendigo, Ballarat, Latrobe and Greater Shepparton.	20
Rural RAR	Road Accident Rescue incidents occurring in that part of Victoria not in the urban zone.	40
Hazmat	Any hazmat incident.	No times specified
<p>* CFA measures response time as the interval between the notification of the first brigade and the arrival of the first fire truck on scene, that is Response time = Turnout time + Travel time</p> <p>** An integrated package has been developed for this hazard class that does not rely exclusively on response times. Adoption of this approach by CFA followed a CFA decision in December 1997 to approve a number of changes to CFA's standards of Service Delivery. These include an increased emphasis on integrated risk management arrangements at high-risk sites. In 1998, by direction of the Chief Officer, CFA discontinued the use of Hazard Class 1 as a category for the purpose of response time Reporting.</p>		
TURNOUT TIME (MIN)	BRIGADE TURNOUT TIME DEFINITIONS	
1.5	Brigade with more than one career officer/firefighter on duty at the fire station.	
4.0	Brigade (fully volunteer or with one career officer on duty) with Emergency Reporting System (ERS), siren, full complement of pagers and incorporating any Hazard Class 2 locations in their response area.	
6.0	Brigade (fully volunteer) with ERS activated siren, or a full complement of pagers and incorporating any Hazard Class 3 locations in their response area but no Hazard Class 2 locations.	
10.0	All other brigades incorporating only Hazard Class 4 and 5 locations in their response areas.	

COMMENT

Reference has already been made to the initiatives being taken by the Chief Officer with respect to Standard Operating Procedures and service delivery. I would expect as part of his considerations, he would examine Service Delivery Standards and I would support that taking place.

17.6.5 INSTRUCTORS/ASSESSORS

The utilisation of volunteers in senior roles is inextricably linked to the availability of training necessary for them to obtain senior management roles. As noted in Chapter 16, there are insufficient numbers of trainers and opportunities available to provide senior level training to volunteers at times and locations that are accessible to volunteers. The use of volunteers as instructors needs to be increased. Volunteer instructors, present in a local area, negate much of the need for travel and provide opportunities to design delivery modes around local needs. This is explored in detail in Chapter 16.

18. SUPPORT OF VOLUNTEERS – ARRANGEMENTS AND ANALYSIS

18.1 INTRODUCTION

This is another important area that was the subject of many comments at the consultations and in the submissions. There was concern that not enough was being done to provide adequate support to volunteers and their brigades. Possible initiatives to improve the situation were offered. The issues raised at consultations and in submissions are first reviewed, followed by submissions from the VFBV and CFA. The arrangements that apply are then considered.

18.2 ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN CONSULTATIONS

The support of volunteers by the CFA and the varied issues that fall within that subject was discussed at length in the consultations and in the submissions received. The issue raised include:

Career Staff as Support

- Volunteers feel that paid staff do not have volunteer interests at heart, they feel pandered to.
- It should not be an 'us' and 'them' approach. Members of the CFA, whether paid or volunteer have a common objective, which is to provide emergency services to the community.
- Mutual respect is essential. Induction training for career staff should emphasise that they are there to support volunteer staff, not the other way around. The interface between career staff and volunteers is a critical one.
- There are cases in integrated stations where volunteers are actively discouraged by career staff from responding to call-outs. Some newly integrated stations have seen their volunteer responses dramatically decline as they are intimidated, harassed and abused by career staff who lack respect for the volunteer rank system and lack respect for volunteer experience. There is also animosity between career staff and volunteers from neighbouring brigades who are drawn into those disputes.
- Station staff, District staff, Regional staff, Brigade Administrative Support Officers (BASOs) and Operations Officers are all focused on supporting volunteers. Career firefighters are not as concerned with the volunteer culture.
- A perception among volunteers is that ultimately what will happen is CFA will become a career firefighting organisation supported by volunteers.

Brigade Administrative Support Officers

- Housekeeping activities can take up a lot of time. The diverse circumstances of CFA brigades across Victoria means that some brigades will need more support than others.
- BASOs now do more for the Operations Manager and Region than brigades and have become part of the staff at District HQ.
- It is clear that the number of BASOs is insufficient. There is a high turnover of BASOs. This may be exacerbated by the fact that one BASO will often be dealing with the administrative needs of over 20 brigades. Some brigades are self-sufficient and organised but other brigades need all the help they can get.

Operations Officers/Operations Managers

- There is a significantly high turnover rate of Operations Officers; therefore, they are often not aware of the issues. There needs to be more Operations Officers and they must have people skills and be able to relate to volunteers, with a hands-on approach and active involvement.
- Lateral entry for Operations Officers will provide young people an opportunity to advance in seniority and encourage a long-term career with, and contribution to, the CFA.

Support for employers

- Some employers may see the active CFA volunteer as a disincentive to employ an applicant.

Funding

- Funding to integrated stations easily obtainable but volunteer brigades receive an insufficient amount such as \$2,500 to maintain their stations (buy cleaning products) or install security. Brigades then will have to conduct fundraising in their community.
- Volunteer brigades also have significant difficulty in getting equipment replaced. Volunteers appreciate new tankers but it is also necessary to ensure stations have the appropriate fit-out.

18.3 ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN SUBMISSIONS

The submissions received by the Inquiry raised a variety of issues relating to the support provided by CFA to volunteers. They are as follows:

- *Capabilities of brigade officers* - Brigade officers, including Captains and Lieutenants should be suitably qualified and experienced, not just elected on a popularity vote. Competencies should be gained to hold a position as an officer. Many officers have excellent firefighting skills but have no leadership skills, people management skills or experience in HR issues.
- *Operations Officers* – revolving door, turnover in a matter of weeks and couple of months, not years. Operations Officers, as the Officer in Charge, has to be constantly re-educated and apprised of current issues. Brigades have limited supervision and become self-managed brigades. There is a lack of consistency - no issues are resolved or projects finished. There is a lack of continuity with Operations Officers who do not know their people, attributes or skills or local area. Brigades build relationships then they move on.
- *Reimbursement of volunteers* - CFA should be supporting their members by reducing the costs of providing their service voluntarily. Emergency Memberlink is good but more should be done. Consider tax offsets, fire levy waivers, council rate reductions or insurance premium reductions.
- There does not seem to be any coordinated approach or set of guidelines for deciding what volunteer travel is eligible for reimbursement. Fuel costs are rising. As those costs escalate, it may prevent some from volunteering, especially when some distance is involved.
- *Assistance with employers* - Compensation for the self-employed volunteer is worth considering as the brigade's membership consists of many self-employed. We must consider the impact to their livelihoods when they are seconded to a long-term response.
- *BASO* – shocked that if a volunteer were successful in obtaining that position, they would not be able turn out in a volunteer capacity as required. This is a double standard that needs to change, as CFA is continually asking the private sector for support regarding releasing their employees for turnouts when needed and not allowing it within the very organisation that exists to support the volunteers.
- Brigades found the Community Support Facilitators (CSF) to be of significant help. They established and ran community and school education programs, ran tailored recruitment campaigns, took on administrative workloads and built relationships with other community

groups. Unfortunately, the role of BASOs is restricted in terms of what they are permitted to deliver compared to the previous CSF position. They have a much larger area in terms of the brigades they are allocated and their job descriptions are limited to certain tasks, which specifically excludes the delivery of community education programs. Often, they are used by District HQ as an extra resource to work on projects or other tasks that do not necessarily directly support brigades.

- *Templates* - CFA should provide templates and examples for brigades to complete organisational documentation such as brigade business plans or training plans to reduce redundancy and wasted effort where 1,200 individual brigades invent their own approaches or disregard the information all together. The CFA should ensure the provision of consistent and reliable information.
- *Paid staff as support* - Daytime response support by paid firefighters for brigades that have daytime manning needs should be available.
- The ethos of staff supporting volunteers is not evident below district or regional HQ level. Volunteers are tolerated rather than supported. It is up to the volunteer to initiate extra assessments by negotiating in a subordinate manner. The equality of volunteers and staff is a fiction.
- On the other hand, there are integrated stations such as Wangaratta and Melton where staff and volunteers have a harmonious relationship and there is mutual respect. Staff prepare and deliver training sessions, assist in fundraising and non-operational activities, assist with administrative duties, provide personal support including advice for those members wishing to become a career firefighter and have membership on BMTs and other committees where they work well with other team members.
- *Welfare of members* - There should be more focus on situational debriefing and psychological care for those firefighters who have been involved in traumatic incidents. There is scant awareness of Peer Support program.
- Potential psychological distress experienced by brigade members following traumatic incidents is largely ignored or undermined. There should be much greater encouragement by CFA to ensure that the welfare of members is considered by brigade management.

18.4 VFBV SUBMISSION

The VFBV submission raised a significant number of issues relating to BASOs, paid staff as support for volunteers, and reimbursement of volunteers. Those issues have been incorporated into the review of CFA arrangements. Other issues of note from the VFBV submission are as follows:

Continuum of Support

The principles of the Continuum of Support, reviewed in Chapter 18, provide for the flexible allocation of treatments to brigades that have difficulty in meeting their local service delivery requirements. Under this approach, the temporary deployment of paid firefighters on day shift whilst the rebuilding of the brigade's volunteer capacity is underway can occur, with ongoing day support if necessary.

The Continuum principles provide that it is only if and when these stages of treatment do not result in the brigade meeting its service requirements, will the CFA, in conjunction with the brigade, consider the appointment of 24 hour 10/14 shift firefighters to work with, and in support of, the brigade's volunteers to build volunteer service delivery capacity.

The VFBV submits that the CFA's failure to apply the Continuum of Support in determining support measures for volunteer brigades to meet service standards is of serious concern to VFBV. The CFA Board should implement an appropriate and transparent system of checks and balances to ensure that industrially driven resource decisions (such as major commitments to additional staff) comply with genuine CFA service priorities as determined by the CFA Chief Officer in accordance with:

- CFA's statutory responsibilities;
- Consultative obligations; and
- The principle of achieving best value for money.

Volunteer Support Officers

CFA has committed to working with VFBV to design the overall program and the position descriptions for the Volunteer Support Officers. At a fundamental level, VFBV is of a view that these positions must be focused at, or as close as possible to, local brigades with work priorities and support needs driven by the brigades themselves, to provide volunteer support.

Infrastructure Upgrades

The need for infrastructure upgrades, particularly at a number of rural brigades, which lack basic facilities like toilets and showers, is a common issue raised with VFBV. Similarly, concerns about the age and serviceability of the tanker fleet, radio black spots, issues about pagers and supply of PPC are regularly raised concerns. One of the most general complaints is about delays in the supply of replacement equipment, especially elements of PPC that are damaged or worn out, and the bureaucratic procedure this entails.

Operations Officers

During the term of the 2010 EA, the position descriptions of Operations Officers set out in Schedule 11 to the EA will be reviewed by CFA and UFU. Because of the importance of the positions to volunteers, VFBV believes that it should be part of any review of position descriptions.

The VFBV submits that the current position description for Operations Officer in Schedule 11 does not identify the Operation Officer's significant role in maintaining and building CFA volunteer capacity to deliver CFA services to the community. Nor does it comprehend the position's critical roles in conducting consultation with brigades and their leadership; communication and organisational liaison between volunteer brigades and District/Regional management and administration; and providing personal support to brigades and their leadership.

Accordingly, the VFBV submits that the selection criteria for Operations Officers fails to include requirements such as demonstrated experience of successfully working in or with community based volunteer groups; possessing high level interpersonal and communication skills; demonstrated negotiating skills; and, a sound understanding of CFA volunteerism. The VFBV submits that these are fundamental matters for inclusion in the position description.

Day Shift Support

Clause 80 of the 2010 EA makes no allowance for the brigade to rebuild its service capacity through recruitment, training, and changes in the availability of existing volunteers, volunteers from other brigades shifting to the brigade, and so on. It may be that after a period of rebuilding and re-organisation, the brigade no longer needs the support of a paid firefighter or reaches a state where the day shift firefighter is sufficient on an ongoing basis for the brigade to maintain service capacity.

18.5 CFA SUBMISSION

The CFA provided a comprehensive overview of support available to volunteers and volunteer brigades, which has been incorporated into the review of arrangements.

In its submission, the CFA states that it appreciates that one of the challenges some brigades encounter, is an inability to establish stable and long-term relationships with local staff, due to ongoing changes of personnel. For example, there are 94 Operations Officer positions at CFA today. In the past two years, 16 people have been newly promoted to this rank, 13 people have left these roles (due to promotion or resignation) and 19 Operations Officers have transferred within the rank to a new location. By any account, this represents a high degree of change in key personnel for brigades.

Brigades rely on the provision of systems and tools, not just staff, to support ongoing administrative duties. CFA's Resource Management System (RMS) has served CFA well for many years; however, it is now very dated and has limited capacity to support many modern volunteer and brigade requirements. CFA is currently developing a new Human Capital Management System (HCMS), accompanied by a new web based Volunteer Support Portal. These new systems will provide much improved functionality for CFA volunteers. They are discussed earlier in this Report.

18.6 THE ARRANGEMENTS

CFA has in place a number of arrangements for the general protection of, and provision of support to, all volunteers.

18.6.1 VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Immunity and Compensation

Under section 92 of the CFA Act, registered volunteers are 'not personally liable for any thing done or omitted to be done in good faith' in the 'exercise of a power or the discharge of a duty under this Act or the Regulations', this also applies to anything done or omitted to be done 'in the reasonable belief that the act or omission was in the exercise of a power or the discharge of a duty under this Act or the Regulations.' Where there would normally be personal liability for things done or not done, this liability is attached to CFA.

Part 5 of the CFA Act makes provision for compensation to volunteers who suffer personal injury, death and/or loss or damage to property while engaged in an emergency activity. CFA provides insurance and compensation for all registered officers and members of CFA brigades, which cover physical and mental injury suffered as well as destruction, damage or loss of personal property incurred when performing CFA services. CFA also covers all reasonable medical and associated expenses such as hospital, ambulance, rehabilitation and travel costs as well as compensation for loss of earnings due to injury or illness. Lump sums are payable in the event of permanent disability or death.

Volunteer Mental and Physical Wellbeing

CFA's Peer Support Program arose following recognition of the lasting impacts of the Ash Wednesday fires on volunteers. The Program provides support to members and their families in times of need, is offered statewide and is delivered by a team of 150 trained CFA volunteers, known as Peers, together with chaplains and mental health professionals. CFA's welfare support services are a port of call for members looking for confidential support and practical strategies, to manage stress or trauma after a critical incident or personal experience. In 2010, CFA peers attended 1,841 calls for support and assistance.

CFA is currently producing a DVD highlighting the impacts on the human body during a traumatic event. It will explain the physiological changes in the brain, provide advice on how to manage stress and outline the support services that are provided by CFA for its members.

Volunteer Support Officer

In October 2010, as part of a \$44.5 million support package, the former Government provided funding for 64 Volunteer Support Officers (VSOs) to work directly with CFA volunteer firefighters. These positions will provide a local, flexible, and needs driven service to build and utilise volunteer capacity across CFA. The CFA and VFBV are currently determining the roles to be undertaken by the VSOs.

Reward and Recognition of Volunteers

CFA members are proud of their service and it is important that this service is recognised. To this end, CFA administers a number of awards and certificates recognising the commitment and achievement of members. These include

- Long Service Award;
- Honorary Life Member Award;
- Certificate of Recognition;
- Valour Medal; and
- Letter of Commendation.

Emergency Memberlink

Emergency Memberlink is a recognition program for CFA and VICSES members where they are able to receive discounts and benefits on a wide range of products and services from companies and organisations throughout Victoria and some nationally, such as savings on fuel, groceries, movies and tourist attractions, insurance, restaurants and accommodation.

Reimbursement for Volunteers

The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) released a Position Statement in January 2008 on the 'Cost of Volunteering: Providing Recognition to Volunteers and their Employers'. The Statement recognised that emergency services volunteers do not want to be paid, as payment for service detracts from the core altruistic values and nature of volunteering and is likely to be offensive to volunteers.

However, it is evident that it now costs financially to volunteer. Sometimes, this cost can be prohibitive. There are both formal research/reports and anecdotal evidence to support the need for compensation (not payment for service) to reimburse a volunteer for their out of pocket expenses, as well as compensation for employers of emergency service volunteers who often incur a financial burden on releasing volunteers, especially so for the self-employed volunteer.

A volunteer's financial contribution needs to be recognised, acknowledged and reimbursed. This may be the difference between being available to volunteer, or not. AFAC's position is that:

- Emergency services volunteers should be eligible to claim a fixed tax rebate to compensate for out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of volunteering.
- The Government should expand the current Defence Reserves Employer Support Payment Scheme to include employers of emergency services volunteers.

COMMENT

In Chapter 12, I previously referred to and recommended the establishment of a fund to reimburse employers. Volunteers have raised concerns to this Inquiry about the extent of the reimbursement they receive for their involvement as volunteers. For example, they felt that the travelling reimbursement was inadequate. I believe that the reimbursement of volunteers should be considered in conjunction with the possible reimbursement of employers. I stress that I am not suggesting that volunteers be paid for their service. Volunteers do not expect that, but expect to be treated fairly in relation to expenses that they incur.

RECOMMENDATION 38

The CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, review the arrangements for the reimbursement of volunteer expenses. This review could be done in conjunction with the review of possible reimbursement of employers of CFA volunteers as recommended in Recommendation 5.

18.6.2 EMPLOYER SUPPORT

Although voluntary emergency management is legislated for, it would be extremely difficult for many volunteers to attend fire calls and related incidents without the support and understanding of their employers, many of whom allow their staff to take time to attend fire calls, or participate in CFA activities, including strike team activity during the summer months. It must also be recognised that many CFA volunteers are self-employed and forgo their personal income and time.

The Federal Government provides a payroll tax exemption for wages paid or payable to employees who are absent from work to volunteer as firefighters or respond to other emergencies. The exemption does not apply if employees are away on official leave.

CFA recognises employers who support CFA by providing Certificates of Appreciation and acknowledgement stickers that can be displayed at their public place of business to let the public know they support CFA volunteers.

CFA encourages its volunteers to negotiate with employers suitable leave arrangements early in their employment relationship, prior to the need to attend an emergency. These arrangements may be informal, such as a verbal agreement. Many employers choose to have a more formal arrangement by putting the agreement into writing.

The Employer Information leaflet produced by the CFA notes that, notwithstanding legislative requirements in the National Employment Standards and the Fair Work Act, the decision as to how leave will be processed is at the discretion of the employer. Options, outlined in the leaflet, may include leave without pay, time in lieu, fully or partly paid leave.

As noted in Chapter 12, the Australian Defence Force has an Employer Engagement Program, which includes a Defence Reserves Support Council that seeks to enhance the availability of

Reservists by promoting the benefits of employing Reservists, and various Employer Engagement Activities, which seeks to encourage employers to support their employees who are in the Reserve.

COMMENT

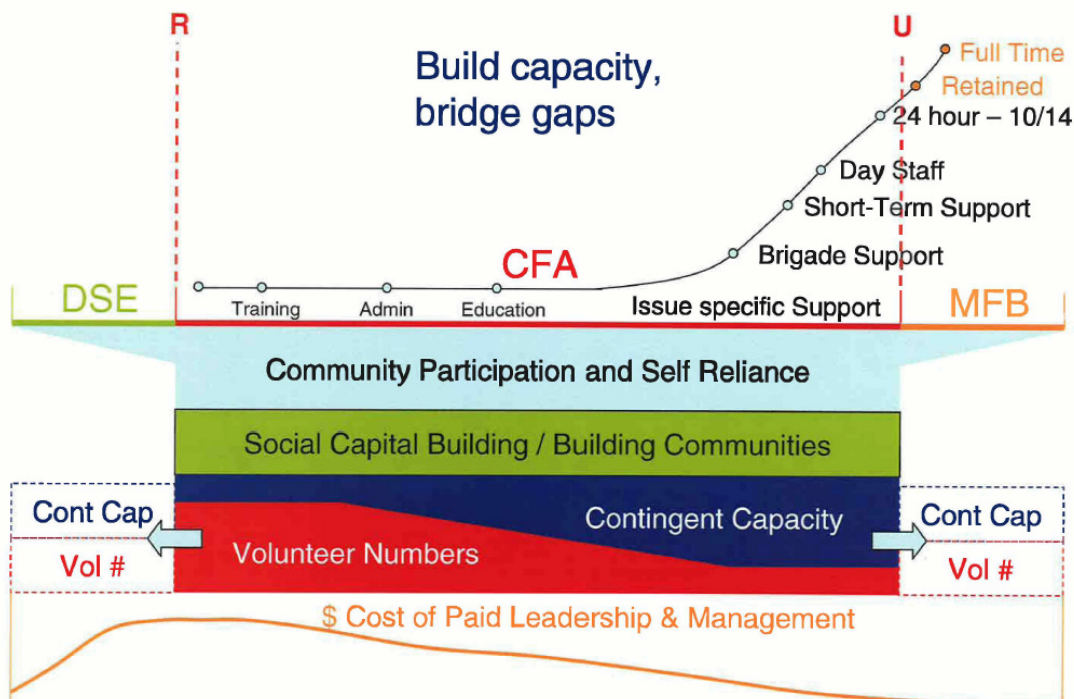
The support of employers of volunteers is critical to their preparedness to serve. This is recognised by the Australian Defence Force and a review of their arrangements is contained in Chapter 12. I, there, referred to the benefits that could apply to similar arrangements in the CFA and made some recommendations which do not need to be repeated.

18.6.3 CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT

The current CFA Service Delivery Model, also known as the Volunteer Continuum of Support, at Diagram 32 reflects the interconnected relationship between a brigade and the community in which it is located, so that as a community grows, and as the risk to that community grows with increased structures and people, the CFA brigade also expands and evolves to meet the needs of the community. The purpose of the Continuum of Support is to ensure that volunteers are supported to deliver to community expectations, in accordance with community and volunteer needs.

As shown by the diagram below, there are a number of support options along the Continuum. These may include administrative and non-operational support or support from paid firefighters on day shifts, or a 24-hour roster, in order to address deficits in service delivery. The CFA submits that the Continuum does not represent an official CFA position and has not been formally adopted by the CFA Board, although it is widely used as a reference document.

Diagram 32: Continuum of Support



At the direction of the Chief Officer, the CFA has set out to refine a Service Delivery Model, which is clear, risk based and transparent. This model is still under development and was set out in detail in Chapter 11.

COMMENT

It is clear that the VFBV considers the Continuum of Support to be of considerable importance. As I understand it, the Continuum of Support, although it has been considered by the CFA, has not been formally adopted by it. However, as indicated, it is clear that the Chief Officer is developing a service delivery model, which no doubt, will be informed by the Continuum of Support. I am not in a position to make a determination or recommend a particular model but support the initiative being taken by the Chief Officer to develop an appropriate model. I have no doubt that he will consult with the VFBV and volunteers in the development of an appropriate service delivery model.

18.6.4 BRIGADE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT OFFICERS

A key principle of the brigade structure is that brigades are encouraged and supported to be capable and viable in their own right. Supporting the viability of volunteer brigades is often a case of reducing the administrative and management burden on volunteers. While volunteers are committed to protecting their communities against emergencies, many are not in a position to shoulder additional administrative and management duties in their role as a volunteer.

The two primary roles that support CFA volunteers are Operations Officers and Brigade Administrative Support Officers (BASOs). Currently, a significant number of brigades receive no administrative support. Many of these brigades have either operated independently or have been considered too small to warrant support. It is necessary to recognise that brigades have different levels of capability and viability and this will affect the level of support required.

BASOs were established at CFA a decade ago to replace Community Safety Facilitators. The purpose of a BASO, as provided in their position description, is to *“provide the Brigade Management Team with paid administrative support, as provided for in the Deed associated with Operational Staff Agreement 2008 Clause 12.3, to enhance the Brigade’s viability and service to the community.”* Their duties would include:

- The brigade’s general administrative requirements including word processing, records management and accounting.
- Recruitment and retention of volunteer members of the brigade.
- Identify, develop and deliver fundraising activities for the volunteer brigade.
- Arrange meetings.
- Arrange the delivery of brigade/CFA community campaigns and special information campaigns.

These duties specifically exclude firefighting. There are approximately 89 BASO and 7 Brigade Administrative Support Coordinator positions across the eight CFA Regions, with the majority being in the outer metropolitan locations.

Volunteers see this resource as the first ‘port of call’ when needing information or problem solving, and some volunteers also identified them as a potential contact point for the local community.

18.6.5 REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT NEEDS TO BRIGADES

In 2006, the then CFA Director of Human Resources commissioned human resource consultancy Kokkin & Brown Pty Ltd to conduct a review of administrative support needs to brigades in line with undertakings made during the negotiation of the 2006 Professional, Technical and Administrative Staff Agreement (PTA Agreement) with the Australian Services Union. Kokkin & Brown delivered their Report to CFA in November 2007.

The Project required the consultants to make findings on the current and future support needs of volunteer brigades located in rural, provincial and metro areas, and a potential role description for the work as identified. The consultants were also required to provide comments and recommendations on appropriate management, location, working and reporting relationship models for consideration, and the future role of the BASO.

Kokkin & Brown used the following definition of administrative support for their project:

“Administrative Support to brigades can be defined as the work undertaken by CFA staff in direct support of the administrative activities required by CFA in order for brigades to fulfil their statutory requirements.”

Kokkin & Brown noted that, since 1997, administrative support to brigades has been delivered through a number of different models. The transition from model to model through this period has been fraught with tension, often associated with the challenges of working in a difficult Industrial Relations (IR) environment.

Kokkin & Brown conducted interviews with CFA HQ and the then General Managers (now known as Regional Managers), focus groups with CFA staff and volunteers, sent out newsletter questions and answers, and reviewed a significant amount of existing documentation. The data collected was then validated through consultation with BASOs, BASCs, Area (now Region) Management Teams and the Stakeholder Reference Group, comprised of representatives of volunteers and their Associations, Area (now Region) Staff, BASOs and BASCs, Community Safety, Operations Directorate, Finance & Administration Managers, Strategic Planning & Area Co-ordination, Human Resources and unions.

Kokkin & Brown found that there was considerable consistency of data across all stakeholder groups with some very strong themes emerging. The project ‘wish list’ identified by volunteer focus groups is of particular importance:

- Resource Allocation
 - Equitable distribution of resources to reflect required need.
- Principles for Service Delivery
 - Same across the State.
 - Resourced based on need and not want.
 - No brigade ownership of the resource.
 - Flexibility in delivery within broad guidelines.
- Accessibility
 - First point of contact when needing information or problem solving.
 - Refer to specialist resources.
 - Face to face contact.
 - Contact point for local community.

- Breadth of Support Role
 - Brigade support not regional support.
 - Groups provide direction around priorities.
 - Catchment management support.
- Clarity of Roles
 - Clarity of expectations.
 - Clear reporting lines.
- Recognition of differing needs
 - One size does not fit all.
 - Evolving support as capability changes.
- Process Improvement
 - Standards and template for processes and systems - make simpler.
 - Efficiency - remove duplication of work.
- Impact on Volunteer Workload
 - Balance dependence and service.
 - Reduce the workload strain on volunteers – greater compliance requirements (both driven externally and internally) leading to constant increase in volume of paperwork and requests from CFA.
 - Recognise constraints of business hours.

Recognising the different levels of capability and viability of brigades, Kokkin and Brown identified three different brigade types in terms of defining the administrative support required. Each of these brigade types could be located in a metro, provincial or rural area. However, their situational or environmental factors vary and impact their support needs as demonstrated in the diagram below.

- Brigade 1 is a capable and viable brigade whose sole motivation and activity is focused on meeting response needs.
- Brigade 2 is a capable and viable brigade, which is active in the community and/or in its fundraising.
- Brigade 3 is a brigade experiencing change or issues.

The needs of Brigades 1, 2 and 3 are not dictated by size or location, but by their situation at any point of time.

Brigade 1	Brigade 2	Brigade 3
Capable & Viable	Capable & Viable	Experiencing issues or change
Aims to be prepared for and manage response	Active in community Active in Fundraising	
<i>Support required:</i> Brigade Planning Pre-plans Emergency/Incident Support Logistics Recruitment & Training Special Brigade Events Regional/Catchment liaison	<i>Support required:</i> <i>Brigade 1 support</i> Community Engagement Community Education External Liaison Fundraising	<i>Brigade 1 or 2 Support</i> <i>Short Term Support required:</i> BMT Capability & Support Risk Management People Issues Community/Member Welfare Office/Admin support Technical Advice & Information Sharing

Kokkin & Brown identified some significant cultural and organisational issues that will need to be considered through implementation. In particular, the lack of trust in the overall management of projects within CFA that leads to an expectation that this project will not be open and transparent and will stall before positive change can be achieved.

Barriers identified included:

- Issues generated through the IR environment.
- Recommendations not reflecting the HQ agenda.
- A need to over consult and reach consensus rather than determine a strategy and go forward.

Throughout the project, stakeholders identified a belief that the administrative support to brigades could be considerably improved. Kokkin & Brown observed considerable variation in the delivery of this support across the CFA and identified some areas of risk to the organisation if work practices continue as they are, and therefore believe that the adoption of the recommendations in their Report will lead to improvement.

Kokkin and Brown made six key recommendations as follows:

1. Adoption of Principles for Defining Administrative Support Accountabilities.

In summary, the principles recognise:

- Building Capability of Brigades.
- Support Based on Risk.
- Resourcing - Equitable but not equal.
- Seamless Service Delivery.

2. Adoption of Principles for Defining Administrative Support Delivery Model.

Administrative support should;

- Be Brigade Focused.
- Be Flexible.
- Be Needs Driven.
- Be Seamless.
- Be Proactive and Planned.
- Be Accessible and available.

3. Development of Work Clusters.

- The adoption of four clusters of work (transactional, project, expert and brigade owned) to recognise like groupings of work delivered as support to brigades and the appropriate level of accountability:
 - Transactional Cluster - Ongoing core administrative support.
 - Project Cluster - Project administrative support.
 - Expert Cluster - Expert or technical support requiring subject matter expertise.
 - Brigade Owned Cluster - Internal support needs of brigades that should be managed through internal volunteer resources.

4. Delivery of administrative support to brigades.

- Transaction cluster of work should be delivered utilising a combination of options for service delivery as decided by General Managers based on the individual circumstances of their Region.
- Project Cluster work should be delivered, where practical, from within the Catchment Team.

5. Support Planning Process

- Adoption of the support planning process, including two planned and structured visits as a minimum to all brigades annually.

6. Facilitating Implementation of Recommendations

- Continuation of the open, transparent and two-way communication processes utilised throughout the project to support implementation.
- Undertake consultative processes to explore the impact of the options for delivery of both Transactional and Project clusters and the role descriptions described in the Administrative Support Matrix.
- Adopt a unified approach across all Regions for service delivery, utilising a standardised approach to the catchment model.

CFA has recently initiated a process to define and focus the role of BASOs with a focus on brigade viability and capability.

COMMENT

Based on the information gathered in this Inquiry, it is clear that administrative support is of great importance to volunteer brigades. That is the purpose of the BASO position. It would appear that initially the concept worked well but has encountered difficulties in providing the necessary level of administrative support to volunteer brigades. This is recognised by the CFA initiating the review which is outlined above and which appears to be quite thorough. It is important, in my view, that the CFA, in the light of the Kokkin & Brown review and input from the VFBV and volunteers, develop a comprehensive strategy for the administrative support of volunteer brigades. No doubt that will involve the use of BASOs or persons fulfilling a similar role. In the end, it is critical that volunteer brigades be adequately supported with administrative assistance to ensure that they can operate efficiently and effectively.

RECOMMENDATION 39

The CFA, in consultation with the VFBV and volunteers, develop a comprehensive strategy for the administrative support of volunteer brigades to ensure that such brigades can operate efficiently and effectively.

18.6.6 INDUSTRIAL AGREEMENTS

The CFA Professional, Technical and Administrative Agreement 2007 (PTA Agreement) lists the terms and conditions of employment of certain employees including BASOs and BASCs. The PTA Agreement binds the CFA and various unions, including the UFU and their members.

The PTA Agreement states that it is designed to maintain a highly skilled and motivated group of employees ensuring the provision of administrative, professional, clerical and managerial support services to a professional integrated fire service delivering high quality services to the community.

The 2007 PTA Agreement was in the process of being re-negotiated during the course of this Inquiry.

Clause 19 of the PTA Agreement states that the parties agree that any initiatives related to organisational restructuring which have 'significant effects' on employees will be the subject of the consultative processes set out in Clauses 9 and 10 of the PTA Agreement. The clause further states that where an organisational restructure occurs, unless agreed in writing between the parties concerned, prior to advertisement, position descriptions must be reviewed or developed for new positions to align with the revised organisational structure and positions evaluations must be completed for positions changed or introduced as a result of the restructure.

Clause 12.3 of the 2008 Deed between the CFA and UFU states that any person, other than a firefighter or fire officer who is employed by the CFA as a brigade administrative officer to provide administrative support to volunteer brigades, shall not respond or turnout as volunteer firefighters or officers or do any other firefighting related work. The clause defined administrative support as general administrative duties including typing, accounting, fundraising, making arrangements for meetings to be held, community liaison and volunteer recruitment.

Clause 12.2 of the 2008 Deed provides that where a review of a volunteer brigade, in accordance with the 2007 EBA, determines that career firefighters are required to be deployed to that brigade, then the BASO from that brigade will be transferred to another volunteer brigade unless otherwise agreed by the CFA and UFU.

The 2008 Deed further provides that career firefighters/fire officers deployed to that volunteer brigade will, as part of their duties, undertake volunteer support administrative duties at the new integrated brigade. As noted above, this would include volunteer recruitment. The Deed states that such an arrangement will not affect the administrative duties undertaken by volunteers under the broader membership program or other unpaid arrangements.

Clause 12.2.4 of the 2008 Deed states that UFU must be notified in writing if the newly integrated brigade and CFA determine that brigade administrative support duties should continue to be performed by the BASO. The brigade and CFA will then determine the location at which these duties will be performed, to be selected from either the CFA Regional or District Office, a volunteer brigade closest to the brigade being serviced by a BASO, or within the newly integrated brigade complex but separate from the station, of which only there will be no more than 23 such positions.

The 2008 Deed states that the location of BASOs that service integrated brigades will be evaluated by the CFA and UFU, using the consultative process, no later than a year after the brigade becomes an integrated brigade. Clause 12.2.5 of the 2008 Deed states that the CFA may require the BASO to service more than one brigade.

Clause 8 of the 2010 Deed states that the CFA and UFU, as parties to the Deed, *"agree and acknowledge the increasing demands in relation to brigades and support needs of brigades and as such agree to develop a process for brigade support by developing an enhanced career structure and skills qualification base to provide increased support in accordance with identified needs."* The clause further states that any such structure must contain the flexibility that currently exists.

Clause 8 of the 2010 Deed provides BASOs with the opportunity to become an operational firefighter by undertaking a recruit and training course, the content of which is to be agreed by the UFU and CFA. On successfully passing, they will be appointed in the rank of Leading Firefighter (Brigade Support). The 2010 Deed notes that where a BASO position becomes vacant, then the appointment of the position of BASO will be in accordance with the position description developed between the UFU and CFA.

COMMENT

The position of BASOs was created specifically to provide administrative support to volunteer brigades. The VFBV contends that Clause 8 of the 2010 Deed is seeking to phase out BASOs. Significantly, the 2010 Deed recognises the increasing demands for volunteer brigade administrative support and consequently refers to the development of a process for brigade support by developing an enhanced career structure. Such an initiative could be said to be consistent with the earlier comment and recommendation I made in relation to brigade administrative support.

However, it is surprising that the CFA would enter into an agreement with the UFU in relation to the development of a process for brigade support by developing an enhanced career structure for administrative support without there being any reference to the involvement of VFBV and volunteers in that process. After all, what is being considered is the provision of administrative support to volunteer brigades. One would have thought that input from volunteer brigades would be necessary. That is certainly my view. I also have difficulty with an arrangement whereby the position description for a BASO is developed by the UFU and the CFA with no reference to volunteer input.

RECOMMENDATION 40

The CFA, in relation to developing any process for brigade support or career structure or position description for Brigade Administrative Support Officers, as referred to in Clause 8 of the 2010 Deed, consult with the VFBV and volunteers before reaching any decision on those matters.

18.6.7 OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE DELIVERY OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Through conducting their review, and data collection and validation process, Kokkin & Brown identified a number of opportunities for improving the delivery of administrative support to brigades. They are as follows:

Introduction of 1800 Help Desk

The implementation of a fully resourced 1800 Help Desk for brigades and volunteers provides a number of opportunities to address volunteer frustration and build process efficiencies. Research of successful call centres demonstrates a positive impact in terms of reducing work across other organisational resources, supporting continuous improvement and improving organisational communication.

Matching Staff and Volunteer Availability through Improved Staff Mix

Volunteers have identified that their work commitments often limit their availability between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm and therefore would prefer to be able to manage queries at alternative times. CFA could demonstrate a strong commitment to service through utilizing an improved mix of part time and full time resources to better match up with volunteer availability and improve accessibility. This has the benefit of opening up recruitment options and complementing the existing staffing levels by covering breaks and extending service hours.

Improved Communication Methodologies

Communication to brigades and volunteers is challenging on a number of levels:

- Volunteers have difficulty finding data on the intranet.
- Information is slow to reach the appropriate members of brigades resulting in brigades not accessing information on important initiatives in a timely and informed manner.
- Brigades are not kept informed of progress on their projects, issues, concerns or on initiatives at Region level designed to support the brigades.
- Volunteers are not always sure of the importance or context of information received.

Due to these poor processes, organisational and Region initiatives and change programs are often misunderstood and mistrusted. Some opportunities to improve communication include:

- 1800 team could help educate users on how to maximise use of the intranet, however redesign of this site could improve its useability significantly.
- Planning visits should incorporate structured processes to 'brief' BMTs on Region projects and initiatives.
- Pager and SMS technology could be used to flag a need to check email or visit intranet.

Across HQ and functions

Significant correspondence and communication is forwarded to brigades from HQ and Region teams without Operations and administrative support teams being aware. This leads to repetition of work, confusion for brigades and frustration for the CFA team. The development of a communication model that allows stakeholders to receive communication in a timely manner and for appropriate individuals to be notified in the right order would provide improved efficiencies and improved trust within the CFA.

Improved Delivery and Purchasing Services

Staff resources and time are absorbed in the provision of courier and delivery services to brigades. Volunteers also have difficulty in accessing stores (due to part-time staff, hours of operation and sometimes a requirement to only access a more distant office). The existing processes appear to be a significant drain on expensive resources and a cause of significant frustration to brigades. Kokkin & Brown recommended the consideration of more flexible approaches to stores and possible cost/time benefits of utilising alternative resources (outsourcing) to manage these processes.

Business Continuity

Volunteers indicated a variety of expectations in regards to the role of CFA staff, and particularly administrative support staff, through periods of campaign fires or emergency management. Generally, brigades believed that there is a core level of work that, if continued through an emergency, would reduce the impact as things returned to a more normal environment. The development and communication of a Business Continuity plan, that identified critical or essential functions that need to be maintained, and how these would be resourced, would allow the organisation to have a consistent approach to this rapidly changing demand on resources.

Standardisation of Processes and Templates

It is not uncommon to find that different brigades, within the same area, utilise different processes and templates. A focus on developing standardised processes and templates would significantly increase the flexibility and effectiveness of brigade administrative support and Operations Officers working directly with brigades.

COMMENT

Based on the information gained in this Inquiry, I support the views that have been expressed by Kokkin & Brown as identified above.

18.6.8 CAREER STAFF AS SUPPORT

As Mr de Man noted in his witness statement to the VBRC, it is the level and quality of support provided to volunteers rather than the number of staff that is important to volunteers. While the two primary CFA roles that support volunteers are Operations Officers and BASOs, as noted above, all career members have a role in supporting volunteers. For example, one of the key result areas in the position description of a Leading Firefighter is to *“provide support to and establish and maintain an effective working relationship with volunteer personnel.”*

The role of CFA career members is to support rather than manage volunteers. Volunteers manage and lead other volunteers through volunteer brigade and Group management teams.

As Mr de Man notes in his witness statement, the purpose of integrated brigades, with both paid and volunteer firefighters, is so that paid staff support volunteers in the provision of services to the community, to ensure that any potential service gaps are met. The flexibility of the integrated brigade model, as one step in the Continuum of Support, is fundamental to the effective management of CFA service to community needs. It has significant benefits over fully paid staffed brigades, through both surge capacity and community interconnectedness.

In his statement, Mr de Man acknowledges that CFA does experience challenges relating to its integrated workforce, but seeks to properly manage these issues. It is important that all career staff are properly inducted into CFA's volunteer culture, to ensure that employees work most effectively in the system.

18.6.9 DAY SHIFT SUPPORT

The CFA states that any identified need for additional resources is addressed by CFA on a case-by-case basis. All integrated brigades employ paid firefighters on a 24-hour roster. The Scoresby fire brigade is the only brigade where the CFA employs a paid firefighter for day shifts to support volunteer firefighters and provide fire ground command and support during incidents. Mr de Man notes in his statement that, at the Scoresby brigade, a crew was normally available to respond to emergency calls during workdays but often an officer or Crew Leader was not always available. Consequently, a paid firefighter was appointed to this station in a Leading Firefighter role.

Clause 80 of the 2010 EA provides that a station may only be staffed on an agreed roster other than the 10/14 roster, where the EA so stipulates or where there is a prior written agreement between the UFU and CFA to staff that station on a 10/14 roster at a later time. It further states that any written agreement reached about a date on which to staff a station on a 10/14 roster is enforceable as if it were a term of the 2010 EA.

The VFBV notes that some brigades may need temporary and flexible support from paid operations staff from time to time, such as during seasonal, weekdays, temporary volunteer availability or periods of brigade rebuilding. The VFBV contends that Clause 80 of the 2010 EA impacts on CFA's capacity to gauge appropriate brigade support requirements by preventing future permanent allocation of day manning to support brigades. The VFBV submits that the consequence of Clause 80 is that day manning of brigades by career staff will only occur with the agreement that it is an interim step to 24-hour manning as stipulated in the EA.

COMMENT

I am not in a position to investigate the subtleties involved in the matter of day shift support. The bottom line is that volunteer brigades receive sufficient support to enable them to carry out their functions efficiently and effectively, which includes enabling brigades to meet service delivery standards. In essence, how that can best be done is for the CFA to determine, in consultation with volunteer brigades.

18.6.10 OPERATIONS OFFICER/OPERATIONS MANAGER

Operations Officers are the delegated managers of volunteer brigades and are responsible for the efficient and effective operations of those units, including the welfare and support of their members. The primary objectives of the Operations Officers, according to their position description include assisting the regional management team in the provision of leadership, management and direction to career and volunteer personnel, brigades and Groups.

One of the key result areas in their position description is to assist the Operations Manager in managing career staff and supporting volunteer personnel, including reviewing performance, career planning, recruitment, brigade support and administration. One of the selection criteria for the Operations Manager position is a demonstrated commitment to, and an affinity with, the career/volunteer culture of the CFA.

COMMENT

Based on the information gained in this Inquiry, it is clear that these positions are of vital importance to the functioning of volunteer brigades and the involvement of volunteers. Concerns were consistently raised at the consultations and in submissions about the lack of continuity in these positions and a feeling that the persons holding them did not appreciate the role of volunteers nor have the necessary management and interpersonal skills. I wish to make clear that I am not criticising persons that hold such positions or saying that they lack those skills. However, it is clear that there is a perception amongst the volunteers that this is so.

Reference has been made in Chapter 15 to the matter of lateral entry and how the current arrangement inhibits the ability of the CFA to obtain the best qualified persons for these positions. Reference is also made in Chapter 13 to the importance of leadership in these positions. That, to my mind, is what volunteers are seeking – committed leadership. It is important that there be continuity in these positions, that they are filled promptly and that they are filled by persons best suited and qualified to occupy them.

18.6.11 EQUIPMENT

As is apparent, matters were raised by volunteers at consultations and in submissions relating to equipment such as firefighting appliances. It is not an area that I have been able to productively look into as part of this Inquiry. Many and varied technical matters are involved, as illustrated by the Lewis Report. It goes without saying that volunteer firefighters need to be provided with adequate and safe means to carry out their duties and be adequately consulted about their equipment needs.

19. RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES THAT AFFECT VOLUNTEERS – ARRANGEMENTS AND ANALYSIS

19.1 INTRODUCTION

This is an area of considerable importance to volunteers. It was regularly raised at consultations and in submissions. The issues raised at consultations and in submissions are first outlined, followed by the VFBV and CFA submissions. The arrangements are then reviewed.

19.2 ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN CONSULTATIONS

In consultations, it was raised that the dispute resolution process in CFA was not timely, and importantly, Brigade Management Teams (BMTs) were often ill trained in handling conflict and other HR matters and lacked the leadership skills to manage the brigade, which often was the cause of conflict. Issues raised were:

- Disputes within BMTs - it is critical that there are well-trained staff that are able to handle and resolve any HR and disciplinary matters, especially those involving bullying and harassment, expeditiously and effectively. While it may be appropriate in some cases for a brigade to handle a conflict internally, there should be provision for an external contact to mediate or deal with the individuals concerned.
- It is very difficult to remove a volunteer from a brigade.
- The lack of an Officer in Charge or permanent Operations Officer, or one who is often engaged at the District level, means that there is no one to rectify internal brigade issues.
- There is a possible conflict of interest if a brigade officer was to act in an Operations Officer role, as brigade issues may exist within the brigade itself that need to be resolved independently of the brigade.
- While there are processes in place by the CFA to resolve disputes or hear disciplinary matters, often these processes would not be cited as expediting outcomes.

19.3 ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN SUBMISSIONS

While the consultations did not address in any detail the matter of dispute resolution within CFA, many submissions received by the Inquiry addressed this issue, and is a clear indication that this is a significant issue for some volunteers and career staff, which can have an adverse effect on them.

Grievances were raised in some submissions about particular issues that had arisen which might be between volunteers or involve career staff. From the way these grievances were expressed, it is clear that volunteers felt strongly about them and felt they, for whatever reason, had not been adequately dealt with and determined. There was a feeling that this Inquiry could investigate their grievance and bring about some satisfactory resolution.

I can understand some volunteers having this feeling. However, it is not the role of this Inquiry to investigate such matters and determine a resolution. In essence, this Inquiry is concerned with systemic issues. To the extent that individual situations indicate some systemic issue, they are relevant to the Inquiry. The grievances raised have been approached on this basis and in saying this, I can understand that volunteers who have raised them might feel disappointed or frustrated with such an approach. However, that has to be the position.

The submissions received by the Inquiry provided a range of examples regarding disputes within brigades and suggestions for improvement of the current situation. Issues are as follows:

- Internal conflict within brigades, whether fully volunteer or integrated, is a significant issue.
- There should be a reasonable expectation that brigades are free from intimidation, prejudice, bullying and harassment.
- All parties to the dispute should be informed of the dispute within a reasonable time frame
- Disputes take over a year to resolve and are still not officially proven or rejected. They should be resolved and conducted in a reasonable and timely manner.
- The dispute resolution flowchart seems to be a guide only and is not followed through without some persuasion or persistence to dislodge or remove a troublemaker.
- Dispute resolution processes should be the same, and applied consistently regardless of whether an employee or volunteer. Career staff have a grievance procedure that allows for such matters to be resolved yet volunteers have no such similar process.
- District management lack either the power or the will to exercise appropriate disciplinary procedures. The inability of District management to take decisive action appears weak and very inadequate.
- There is a conflict of interest in career members resolving disputes involving their colleagues.
- Independent investigators are not timely.
- Personnel manager in the brigade is often not formally trained in conflict resolution and mediation and therefore ill-equipped to deal with disputes. Further, the member may not want to intervene in a conflict situation, as they have to work with parties from both sides of the conflict and it may place them in a difficult or uncomfortable position. There is a lack of skills and training in early intervention process and conflict resolution relating to HR issues, which impedes successful resolution of issues in the early stages. HR matters should be dealt with by dedicated trained and skilled HR professionals, not operational staff.
- The Equity and Diversity team in Headquarters have told members that the most realistic outcome and most frequently used means by which to deal with member conflict was to undertake a mediation session, which in some cases would be inappropriate due to the nature of the dispute – bullying, harassment, victimisation – and refusal of the offender to participate or the victim to endure such an ordeal.
- Operations Officer has told members complaining of bullying that ‘this kind of thing always happens around brigade election time’.
- Need to change the management culture that pervades through CFA of protection of corporate brand before protection of members.
- Need to review equity, diversity and disciplinary policies and procedures. Need to review CFA Act and Regulation clauses relating to discipline to ensure CFA members and managers are held accountable for their failures to comply with policies and procedures.
- Process for dismissal is based around CFA Regulations and not around civilian dismissal procedures, which are far more progressive and flexible. It seems that when a party is found to have acted inappropriately or found guilty of an offence, CFA does not have the fortitude to stand the offender down or dismiss them. In some cases, these people just remain in place or are encouraged to move onto another unsuspecting brigade.
- CFA management must begin a process to expeditiously deal with the issue on receiving a report, not avoid taking action by giving the complainant the run-around in the hope that the complainant will tire of the process.
- Sometimes, disputes within brigades are left to run their course, without any intervention from CFA staff, when with some early mediation and intervention, the whole issue could be short circuited to save a lot of deep-seated resentment, expense and ill feeling within brigades.
- If the case proceeds, the complainant must continually pursue staff due to little or no communication regarding the progress of the due process.

Recommendations to improve the situation were made by a submitter. They are:

- District management should have more power to deal with inappropriate behaviour at the brigade level – including the power to stand members down where appropriate, pending the results of formal investigation.
- CFA need to recognise the prevalence of bullying and victimisation within the organisation and act in a less lenient, more decisive and expeditious manner to eliminate it.
- Improved means to deal with conflict need to be implemented. Victims of bullying, conflict, victimisation, prejudice, harassment and abuse need to know there are defined channels by which this behaviour can be addressed, which do not result almost solely in mediation.
- All officers of brigades should be encouraged to undertake leadership courses to improve their leadership skills, rather than assuming that since a member is operationally sound, or particularly popular, they will make a good leader.
- There should be more awareness of the welfare support available to members, more debriefing after major incidents and more encouragement to seek assistance following traumatic events.

COMMENT

The submitter obviously gave careful consideration to the recommendations that were made. I believe that they are worthy of consideration by the CFA.

19.4 VFBV SUBMISSION

- Workforce arrangements must make clear the role and organisational expectation of each member of the workforce is to avoid disharmony, disputes and conflict within the organisation and thereby affect its efficiency and effectiveness. Such role clarity starts with position descriptions and leadership/management by supervisors consistent with their content.
- Within the workforce arrangements there must be proactive and supportive management (both paid and volunteer) with the authority, training, skills and experience to quickly and effectively negotiate and resolve disagreements in the workplace before they fester and become divisive.

19.5 CFA SUBMISSION

- CFA is committed to creating an environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or violence, where all members are treated with dignity and respect and where diversity is valued. Effective and transparent complaint resolution procedures are the key to achieving this goal.
- CFA's underlying emphasis is on strategies for prevention. However, when complaints do arise, CFA has policies and procedures in place that aim to deal with them in a sensitive, impartial, timely and confidential manner. Nevertheless, complaint resolution is always complex and CFA faces some specific and sizeable challenges in this area.
- Wherever possible, complaints are resolved informally at a local level, as it has been found that this typically produces more positive outcomes. This approach depends on the strength of local conciliation skills, which vary.
- When it is necessary to escalate a matter, the following of proper process will often see the resolution of complaints run on for lengthy periods. This invariably adds to the tensions that accompany such complaints and can also have applied impacts for the brigade or local area.
- Often frictions arising at a CFA brigade are not technically brigade issues, however in a small rural town (for instance), the line can be difficult to draw; issues that did not originate in a brigade can nevertheless impact on brigade viability.

- The CFA Regulations do not currently provide for CFA to compel members to attend, or participate in, complaint resolution processes, and for instance to make an apology or to attend a mediation session. The only options available in the event of an uncooperative or out of order member are 'penalties' which include admonition, reprimand, demotion, suspension and expulsion. These penalties are neither applicable nor useful in many complaint resolution situations.
- CFA also has disciplinary provisions within the Regulations, and a review of these is currently underway. There is some overlap between these provisions and CFA's complaint resolution procedure. As such, the scope of this review will consider the need for an expansion of provisions in the Regulations to provide for suitable actions in complaint resolution scenarios. The CFA is committed to finding new approaches to deal with complaints in brigades to bring prompt and appropriate resolution to issues of concern.

COMMENT

This is a difficult and delicate area as often disputes in an organisation like the CFA are essentially based on personality conflict. There is also the interface between paid personnel and volunteers which can give rise to conflict and difficulties. It is important to have the right policies and the policies of the CFA will be outlined. However, it is also important to have the right people implementing those policies. This is particularly so in an area like this. Conflict resolution requires particular skills if it is to be fair and effective. I would suggest that the CFA, in consultation with volunteers, employees and their representatives, review the CFA Complaint Resolution Procedure in the light of the matters raised in this Inquiry.

It occurs to me that it could be worthwhile for the CFA in conjunction with interested parties to explore the option of creating an Ombudsman type role for volunteer disputes. This could mean that such disputes are resolved before they become deep-seated, major problems.

I have briefly discussed this concept with the Fire Services Commissioner who has been most helpful. He has suggested some principles that could assist in developing the concept of a Volunteer Ombudsman. Those principles are as follows and are specific to the person being involved with volunteer disputes as distinct from those only involving employees:

- Deal with complaints from CFA volunteers about the harmonious, productive and cooperative workplace environment.
- Assist in the resolution of disputes that are unresolved and are impacting on the efficiency of CFA service delivery.
- Provide an independent oversight to the fairness, respect and integrity of CFA volunteers.
- Promote and uphold the human rights of CFA volunteers.

He points out that there would be a need for appropriate legislation to enable such an Ombudsman to function in an effective manner.

In the time available, I have not been able to take this concept further but believe that it is worth exploring having regard to the nature of some matters raised in submissions and how they appeared to have become intractable and drawn out. I support the review that is underway by the CFA of disciplinary arrangements and such review could embrace consideration of this concept. No doubt the review will involve consultation with the VFBV and volunteers and, as paid personnel would also be affected, would need to involve consultation with them and the UFU.

RECOMMENDATION 41

The CFA continue, in consultation with volunteers, paid personnel and their representatives, its review of disciplinary arrangements and as part of that review consider the concept of the establishment of a Volunteer Ombudsman.

19.6 THE ARRANGEMENTS

Arrangements made by the CFA to address disciplinary issues and resolution of disputes are contained in the Country Fire Authority Regulations 2004 (CFA Regulations), and CFA policies and procedures. There is other legislation such as the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (EO Act), which provide protection for volunteers.

19.6.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ACT 2010

The EO Act will come into effect on 1 August 2011, replacing the *Equal Opportunity Act 1995*. Under the EO Act, volunteers will have the same protection against sexual harassment as paid employees. Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature.

Volunteers will also continue to be protected from discrimination under the EO Act as they are under the *Equal Opportunity Act 1995*. In Victoria, it may be unlawful to discriminate against volunteers because of their actual or assumed:

- Age.
- Disability.
- Employment activity.
- Gender identity, lawful sexual activity or sexual orientation.
- Industrial activity.
- Marital status.
- Parental or carer status.
- Physical features.
- Political belief or activity.
- Pregnancy or breastfeeding.
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnicity and ethnic origin).
- Religious belief or activity.
- Sex.
- Personal association with someone who has, or is assumed to have, one of these characteristics.

The EO Act introduces a positive duty to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. The positive duty requires organisations and employers covered by the law to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation.

The reasonable and proportionate measures needed to satisfy the positive duty will depend on the size and resources of the organisation. For a small community organisation for example, complying with the positive duty might include having policies aimed at preventing discrimination and harassment and ensuring that all staff are aware of their obligations. For an organisation such as CFA with over 60,000 members, it would reasonably be expected that it would have more robust processes.

The EO Act states that an organisation or employer can be held vicariously liable for the actions of their employees and volunteers. Vicarious liability means that an organisation may be held legally

responsible if an employee or volunteer discriminates against, or sexually harasses, a client, their employer or another volunteer or employee. An exception arises if the organisation or employer can show that they have taken reasonable precautions to prevent such action from occurring.

19.6.2 EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR

The *CFA Complaint Resolution (Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying or Violence at CFA) Procedure* states that, often, members are reticent to raise issues or concerns to avoid any negative repercussions in their participation in the brigade. Managers, Officers in Charge and brigade officers are obliged to monitor the work environment to ensure appropriate standards of behaviour are maintained.

The CFA Complaint Resolution Procedure provides some examples of negative behaviour that have been identified in real cases of harassment and bullying in teams:

- Exclusion of individuals or groups from team activities or training.
- Not providing people with training or equipment to ensure they are unable to turn out.
- Ignoring or refusing to work with individuals.
- Bad mouthing of an individual to others or in public.
- Rumours being spread about a person's personal life.
- Proposals/votes of no confidence.
- Constant swearing or angry/aggressive behaviour.
- Information provided only to a select group rather than to everyone
- Rumour and gossip relied on as a source of information.
- Decisions made in the pub than at a meeting.
- Rivalry and competition within a team or between teams rather than co-operation.
- Climate of blame when things go wrong.
- Inability to delegate tasks resulting in teams where small groups do all the work or hold all the power.
- Elitism within group.
- Tampering with a member's equipment or personal belongings.
- Negative changes in behaviour/attitude.
- Increased sick leave.

The *CFA Policy on the Prevention of Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying or Violence at CFA* defines the following negative behaviour:

- Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed toward a member that creates a risk to health or safety such as excluding someone from workplace activities, giving someone the majority of unpleasant tasks or ridiculing someone's opinions.
- Bullying behaviour may be subtle or obvious and it is commonly used by individuals with power in the workplace, the most obvious example being supervisors with power and authority over others, or individuals with a dominant personality.
- Workplace violence is behaviour (often with criminal implications) that recklessly or purposely causes injury or potential injury to another, or conduct endangering life.
- Discrimination can be based either on the knowledge or presumption that a person has or had a particular attribute, such as making a recruitment/selection decision on the basis of age, gender or religion (or another protected attribute) rather than merit.
- Harassment is any uninvited, unwelcome behaviour, which a reasonable person could anticipate could create intimidation, humiliation or offence for the other person such as unjustified and unnecessary comments about a person's work, or capacity for work.

- Sexual harassment is any uninvited, unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature, which a reasonable person could anticipate could create intimidation, humiliation or offence for the other person, such as jokes or comments with sexual connotations.

19.6.3 DISCIPLINE PROCESS IN CFA REGULATIONS

The CFA Regulations outline the discipline of staff and conduct and duties of volunteers.

Regulation 43 provides that a volunteer or member of a brigade is guilty of an offence if he or she:

- (a) Contravenes sections 20A(2) (requirement for any brigade to have the Chief Officer's approval to attend an incident), 26 (unregistered fire brigade in the country area of Victoria) or 44(1) (brigade inspections) of the CFA Act; or
- (b) Contravenes a direction of the Chief Officer; or
- (c) Commits an act of misconduct; or
- (d) Is negligent in the discharge of his or her duties; or
- (e) Is inefficient or incompetent and the inefficiency or incompetence arises from causes within his or her control; or
- (f) Is guilty of disgraceful or improper conduct.

Regulation 44 then provides that a volunteer member who is found guilty of an offence under regulation 43 may be subject to one or more of the following penalties:

- (a) An admonition;
- (b) A reprimand;
- (c) A reduction in rank;
- (d) A reduction in classification;
- (e) Removal from an office in a brigade to which the member was elected or appointed and appointment to another office in the brigade;
- (f) Suspension of membership of the brigade for a specified time; or
- (g) A recommendation to the CFA that the enrolment of the member be cancelled.

Regulation 11 outlines similar offences for an employee, other than the CEO or Chief Officer, to that for volunteer members in Regulation 43. The penalty for an employee who is guilty of an offence under regulation 11 is slightly different to that for a volunteer and may be:

- (a) An admonition;
- (b) A reprimand;
- (c) A fine not exceeding \$2000;
- (d) A reduction in rank not amounting to a termination;
- (e) A reduction in classification not amounting to a termination;
- (f) A reduction in salary;
- (g) Transfer from his or her position and appointment to another position with the CFA for a specified period or without a period being specified; or
- (h) Termination.

19.6.4 INVESTIGATIONS

The CFA Regulations provide for a process for the CO or the CEO, in the case of employees, to appoint an investigator to gather information and make a written report on the circumstances which may have given rise to an offence.

A senior employee, other than the CEO or CO, may then lay a charge for an offence by an employee under regulation 11 after the written report of the investigation is given to him or her,

during which time the CEO and Chief Officer must hear the charge and may suspend a non-operational or operational employee respectively.

The CO may suspend a member from his or her brigade until the report of an investigation is given. An Officer in Charge of a brigade or officer nominated by the CO may lay a charge for an offence by a volunteer member under Regulation 43 after the written report of the investigation is given and must give a copy of the charge and particulars of the alleged offence to the member.

The Regulations then go on to list the process for hearings, representation and appeals. Matters of a serious nature that are considered to be critical to the CFA's ability to continue to provide an environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or violence may be investigated by an investigator without consent from the complainant.

19.6.5 CFA POLICY ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, BULLYING OR VIOLENCE

The *CFA Policy on the Prevention of Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying or Violence at CFA* states that the emphasis by the CFA will be on prevention through education and awareness raising activities.

The policy states that it is the responsibility of the CFA to intervene if the conduct of a member:

- Creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment;
- Adversely affects an individual's prospects for employment or promotion;
- Adversely affects an individual's work performance, health, economic security or job satisfaction;
- Adversely impacts on the integrity and standing of CFA; and
- Constitutes a breach of relevant legislation or related policies.

The policy states that a CFA member must:

- Respect the diverse contributions of all volunteers and employees;
- Comply with this policy and related policies and procedures;
- Model appropriate behaviour;
- Offer support to anyone who is being harassed or bullied and advise them as to where they can seek help and advice;
- Modify their behaviour if it is creating an intimidating, humiliating, undermining, threatening or otherwise hostile work environment; and
- Maintain confidentiality concerning any complaint or investigation.

According to the policy, all line managers and volunteer officers must:

- Monitor the environment in which CFA members perform their role to ensure that acceptable standards of conduct are observed at all times;
- Model appropriate behaviour;
- Take action to eliminate discrimination, harassment, bullying and violence, irrespective of whether a complaint is made;
- Take action to prevent breaches of this policy within their work area and ensure that all CFA members have an understanding of the policy and its requirements;
- Take action to prevent breaches of this policy and related policies and procedures;
- Deal promptly with any discrimination, harassment, bullying, violence or victimisation issue or complaint which is raised by a CFA member under the line manager or volunteer officer's authority;

- If necessary, approach their next senior manager or Manager, Diversity for assistance, information or support in dealing with those issues; and
- As far as possible, maintain confidentiality of parties involved in a complaint of discrimination, harassment, bullying, violence or victimisation.

19.6.6 CFA POLICY ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY & DIVERSITY

The CFA *Policy on Equal Opportunity & Diversity* has as one of its objectives, to promote the creation and maintenance of a workplace, which values diversity, and where all members are treated with respect and dignity. The policy states that Equal Opportunity means applying the principles of fairness, merit and respect for individual differences. Within CFA, this means that decisions relating to CFA members, the roles they perform, their access to training, equipment and support, and the treatment they receive whilst involved with CFA will be based on those principles. CFA, CFA members and management have the same responsibilities in this policy as that in the *Prevention of Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying or Violence at CFA* policy.

19.6.7 CFA COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

The CFA *Complaint Resolution (Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying or Violence at CFA) Procedure* states that its objective is ensure that complaints are dealt with in a sensitive, impartial, timely and confidential manner and respondents are accorded natural justice through the use of procedures that are impartial and open.

CFA states that it is committed to the informal resolution of complaints, issues and/or concerns wherever possible. The emphasis is on the resolution of the issue or complaint, not punishment. The CFA Complaint Resolution Procedure states that it is critical that an agreement is facilitated between the parties that allows them to continue in a productive working relationship.

CFA has a network of trained Equal Opportunity Contact Officers to provide members with information and support, not including complaint investigation or advocacy.

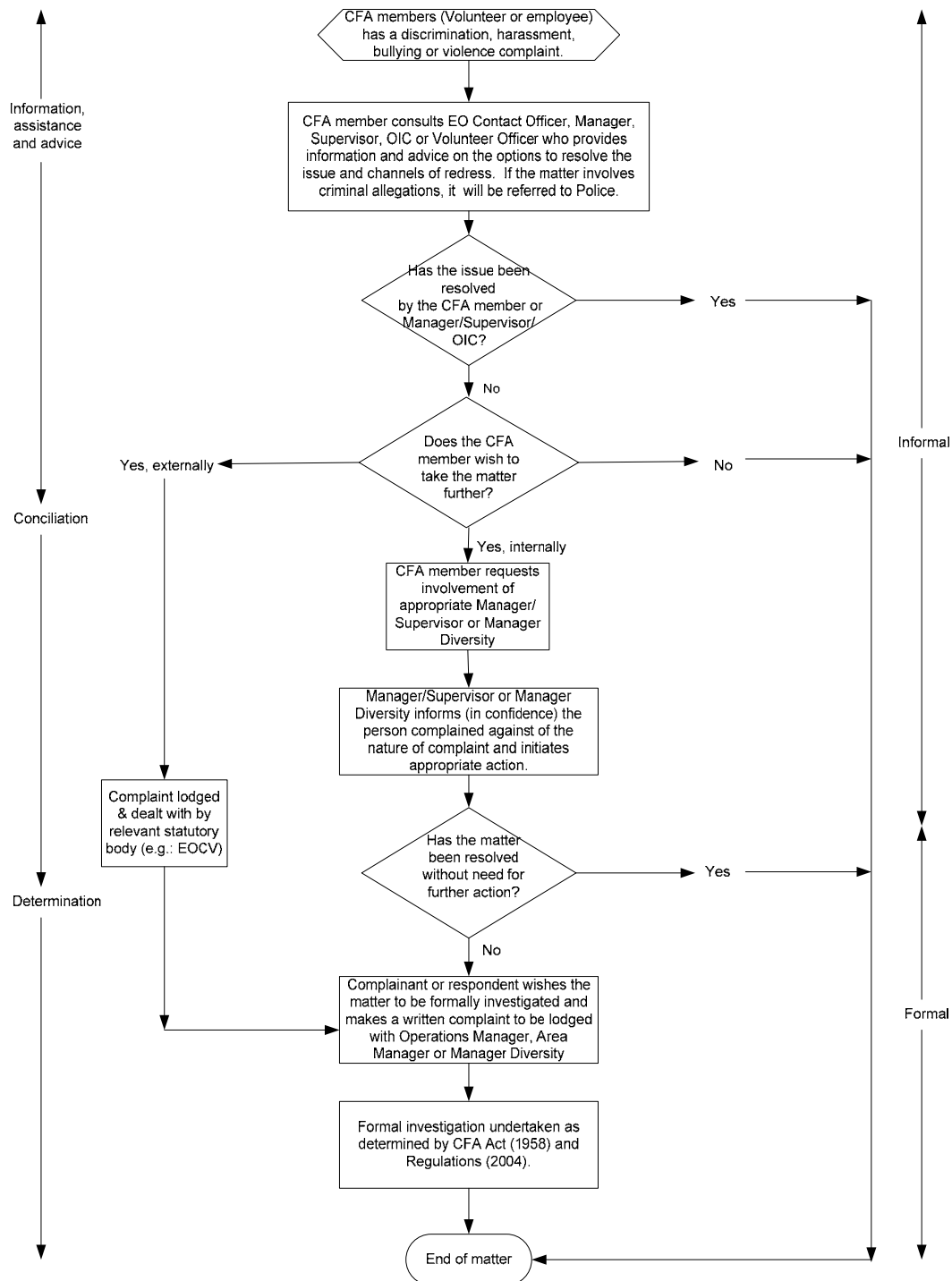
The CFA Complaint Resolution Procedure lists several resolution options. If the complainant feels confident to do so, informal action may be taken including:

- Approaching the person whose behaviour causes concern and ask that the behaviour cease;
- Writing a personal and confidential letter to the person concerned asking that the behaviour cease;
- Making an informal complaint to the person's line manager who will discuss the inappropriateness of the behaviour with the respondent and seek to obtain an undertaking that there will not be a repetition of the offending or similar behaviour;
- Seeking assistance through the Diversity Unit who can provide independent, professional mediation services to the parties involved; or
- Seeking support from the EO Contact Officer.

The purpose of informal conflict resolution is to reach an outcome that is acceptable to both parties and which allows the parties to continue in a productive working relationship. Where the behaviour is of a more serious nature, or where it is not possible or appropriate to resolve the issue between the parties concerned, a formal complaint resolution process can be followed. The Manager, Diversity will undertake a preliminary assessment of the complaint to determine whether discrimination, harassment, bullying or violence has occurred, interview the complainant and respondent, and make recommendations for resolution.

A flow chart outlining the CFA Complaint Resolution Procedure is at Diagram 33.

Diagram 33: Complaint Resolution Procedure (Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying or Violence at CFA)



Dependent upon the nature of the allegations and level of consequent tension, animosity or fear, consideration may be given to organising reasonable alternative working arrangements for either the respondent or the complainant until the matter is resolved. The Policy states that, under no circumstances, must there be any suggestion or implication that the complainant is being punished or moved because they made a complaint.

The CFA Complaint Resolution Procedure states that complainants have the right to seek assistance from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission or any other relevant external body. However, the procedure states that the internal complaint resolution procedure is likely to save time, minimise emotional trauma and financial expense and be more sensitive to the needs of the parties involved, and that it is likely that an external body such as the Human Rights Commission will refer the complainant back to the CFA if no prior attempt has been made to resolve the matter internally.

COMMENT

Concern has been raised in this Inquiry about the reaction of some paid personnel to their colleagues who also volunteer. In my view, there is no reason why a CFA employee should not be involved as a volunteer as long as that involvement does not adversely affect their performance as an employee. Indeed, it could be said that such an involvement should be encouraged in the CFA.

As recognised in Chapter 14, being part of a well-led, inclusive and harmonious brigade is strongly associated with higher levels of both satisfaction and commitment to remaining a volunteer. Volunteers willingly give their time to participate in the CFA and deliver its services and protect the community. Volunteers are able to leave the CFA when they want to, but many do not, due to their ties with the community.

There are challenges within both volunteer and integrated brigades, as in any workplace, and issues can arise that are personality-related, rather than systemic. Mutual respect is critical in an organisation like the CFA, as is strong leadership and a robust process for addressing in a timely manner, any disputes that arise or are identified as potentially arising.

20. CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION – ARRANGEMENTS AND ANALYSIS

20.1 INTRODUCTION

As I have said earlier in this Report, effective communication within the CFA is critical and a major challenge. It goes hand in hand with consultation. If you do not communicate effectively, you cannot consult effectively. The technologies available to facilitate communication and consultation have been discussed in Chapter 10. There is no need to repeat what is said there.

20.2 CONSULTATIONS AND SUBMISSIONS

Concerns and issues relating to communication and consultation were raised at consultations and in the submissions. General themes are:

- It is lacking on a systemic basis rather being ad hoc.
- A lack of effective communication and consultation results in a ‘them vs. us’ culture.
- The process needs to be formalised and structured. There needs to be improvement.
- The role of the VFBV needs to be increased and made more effective.
- Modern communication technology needs to be utilised.
- There has not been adequate commitment to the Volunteer Charter in consultation.

20.3 THE CHIEF OFFICER

I have previously outlined views of the Chief Officer that were expressed at our meeting. He is supportive of the joint VFBV/CFA Committees and, by and large, District Planning Committees. However, he believes the CFA lacks a single central consultative/advisory forum, such as the one operating in South Australia. He believes this could be highly conducive to consultation.

COMMENT

The Chief Officer's concept seems to me to have merit and should be explored.

20.4 COMMUNICATION, CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT - THE VFBV PERSPECTIVE

Consultation, communication and engagement are addressed in the VFBV submission. Matters raised by THE VFBV reflect those that were raised in consultations and submissions. However, it is necessary to refer to the following matters:

- The failure to meaningfully and effectively consult with and listen to volunteer concerns and under utilisation of their knowledge and experience has resulted in widespread disaffection in volunteer ranks.

COMMENT

Evidence of this is provided by the consultations and the submissions.

- The importance of genuine engagement with volunteers in an organisation like the CFA is critical. Failure can lead to many problems. Good positive engagement can lead to a better organisation.

COMMENT

I have already stressed the importance of communication and consultation in the operation of the CFA.

- The CFA cannot operate on the premise that all leadership, direction, governance and performance management will be provided by paid personnel. As well as firefighting, volunteers in CFA are critical to non-operational leadership and management of CFA, at every level from brigade to Board.

COMMENT

I am in general agreement with these propositions, based on the information gathered by this Inquiry.

- Industrial arrangements applicable in the CFA mean that there is a different treatment of the views expressed by volunteers, often an inability to make a fair decision incorporating both volunteer and paid workforce input, and ultimately for many critical issues, an inability for the CFA to make a decision without industrial agreement.

COMMENT

I am in general agreement with these propositions based on the information gathered by the Inquiry. The issue of PPC and the Lewis Report referred to in Chapter 7 is an example. As already discussed, the national harmonisation of OH&S laws has implications for joint consultation.

- Reference is made to the relationship between VFBV and CFA and the Deed signed in 2008 to support and implement the Volunteer Charter. The VFBV considers the fundamentals of the Deed to be sound but the benefits not as evident as desired. More needs to be done.
- The VFBV supports the continuation of the Deed after its expiry, perhaps informed by the content of this Report.

COMMENT

I would certainly hope that this Report can made such a contribution. The continuation of the Deed is a matter for the parties but it does appear to have merit.

- To discharge its role effectively, VFBV needs to be adequately resourced. CFA also needs to consult with volunteers directly and better.

COMMENT

I am in general agreement with these propositions based on the information gathered for this Inquiry. The resourcing of the VFBV has been addressed separately in Chapter 2.

- The VFBV sets out a number of recommendations including the establishment of a Volunteer Advisory Committee Reporting to the Minister. This would be a tripartite committee consisting of representatives of the VFBV, CFA and the Minister.

COMMENT

I believe that this is a matter best pursued by the VFBV with the Minister rather than being the subject of comment or recommendation in this Report.

20.5 COMMUNICATION, CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT - THE CFA PERSPECTIVE

20.5.1 INTRODUCTION

- CFA believes in the importance of engagement and seeks an approach, which allows for diverse views and enables different audiences to participate and be heard. It is acknowledged that there needs to be improvement.

COMMENT

Based on the information gathered by this Inquiry, I would agree that there is need for improvement.

- CFA considers that it is now incumbent on all parties to the Volunteer Charter to work together to develop a clear and agreed understanding of what the principles of the Charter mean in practice and how they can be best applied.

COMMENT

I would encourage this approach.

20.5.2 FORMAL CONSULTATION GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria

- The CFA considers the VFBV an invaluable partner. This value is realised on a formal and informal basis and takes place at a number of levels.
- VFBV was formed in 2008 and a good foundation relationship has been established between THE VFBV and CFA. It is still maturing.
- The CFA is aware of the opportunity to further embrace the VFBV as a collaborative partner.

COMMENT

It is understandable that the relationship is a maturing one and as mentioned by the Chief Officer, sometimes 'uncomfortable'. It is of great importance, and both parties applying the spirit of the Charter need to work together in a genuine spirit of good will, mutual respect, openness and transparency. There should be no secrets, no hidden agendas.

District Planning Committees

- These have been an important element of interaction and discussion with volunteers for more than 25 years. They provide valuable planning and operational advice to District and Regional Management.
- The Constitution of the District Planning Committee Region (District 15) is provided as an example. It is a comprehensive document and it is stated that the Committee is considered to be an integral part of achieving the Volunteer Charter by providing for meaningful consultation between the CFA, volunteer and paid members and brigades. Volunteers and paid personnel are members.

COMMENT

District Committees are regarded by the Chief Officer as a good basis for volunteer involvement and interaction. Based on the information gathered by this Inquiry, I agree. Decentralisation of consultations is regarded as important by volunteers.

VFBV/CFA Joint Committees

- There are a number of specific Standing Committees and a Joint Operations Consultative Committee.
- Details of the VFBV/CFA Joint Committees currently in place are set out in the following Table.

Table 34: VFBV/CFA Joint Committees

Joint Research and Development Committee

The Joint Research and Development Committee is a planned activity aimed at discovery of new knowledge with the hope of developing CFA's existing, new or improved products and services. In the past, this committee has been involved in projects such as Pre Ambulance Basic Life Support now known as Emergency Medical Response (EMR), Personal Flotation Devices, Radiant heat shielding, Resource Tracking and Information Management Project, Firefighter health, safety and wellbeing on the fire ground and much more. The Committee works closely with other research agencies such as the Bushfire CRC, Emergency Management Australia and other emergency research organisations.

Joint Community Safety Advisory Committee

The Joint Community Safety Advisory Committee meets three times a year to discuss matters directly relating to issues surrounding CFA's strategic community safety program. Examples of issues discussed at the Community Safety Advisory Committee include issues such as community infrastructure, Communication and networking, land use and planning, Regulating fire safety, Fire Access road scheme, and much more.

Joint Operations Consultative Committee (JOCC)

The Joint Operations Consultative Committee was endorsed by the Chief Officer and came into action in early February 2007. The purpose of the committee is to provide a forum to discuss emergency management/operations strategic direction with CFA. The membership of the JOCC includes the Chief Officer, each of the Deputy Chief Officers, eight VFBV representatives and one VFBV Executive Officer. This committee normally meets 3 times per year in February, July and October.

Joint Equipment Review Committee

This committee meets to discuss the implementation of new, and the maintenance of existing CFA vehicles and equipment. The Joint Equipment Review Committee holds a two-day meeting in July each year and a further one day meeting in each of April and October. Examples of issues dealt with by this committee include Class A and B foam systems, Appliance development and implementation, Fleet development and other equipment related issues.

Joint Communications Advisory Committee

The Joint Communications Advisory Committee meets to discuss various issues relevant to CFA's current and future communications systems, policies, processes and procedures. Meeting twice a year, the Communications Advisory Committee is involved in projects such as the implementation of the new Emergency Alerting System pager system, implementation of the new CFA radio project expected for implementation in 2012, the migration from CDMA phone service to Next G Mobile Technology amongst other communication related matters.

Joint Learning and Development Committee

The purpose of the Joint Learning and Development Committee is to provide a high level forum to raise and discuss learning and development matters specifically related to and impacting on the ongoing professional development of volunteers. Items such as Service delivery in the field, service delivery from the L&D department, programs and initiatives under development and long term risk management form a common ground for this committee's discussion.

Joint Human Resources Committee

The Joint Human Resources Committee, like all joint committees, allows for detailed discussion to take place at a high level regarding issues directly related to the management of all CFA members. The joint HR Committee meets three times a year and to date has discussed important issues such as Service awards, Emergency Member-link program, Diversity, equity and Human Rights policy implementation and development and Sustaining/retaining volunteers today and for CFA in the future.

The VFBV has proposed a review of VFBV's current committee and consultative arrangements. This will include realigning the CFA/VFBV Joint Committees to the CFA's proposed new organisational structure, by reforming the existing eight Joint Committees into seven, including the formation of a Volunteerism Joint Committee, and creating a number of Special Purpose Committees/Advisory Councils. This review is currently underway.

COMMENT

Committees are to be encouraged as a means of communication and consultation. Clearly, committee arrangements are currently being reviewed and I support that initiative. I would hope the comments made in this Report would be of assistance in that review. It is appreciated that adequate resourcing of the VFBV is necessary if it is to effectively perform its role under the Charter and the CFA Act in adequately representing volunteers in consultations.

20.5.3 COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION METHODS

CFA Connect Website

- The CFA Connect website is designed as a platform for volunteers and members to express their opinions and showcase the work of their brigades and teams. The site receives about 8,000 visits per week.

Brigade Magazine/Regional Newsletters

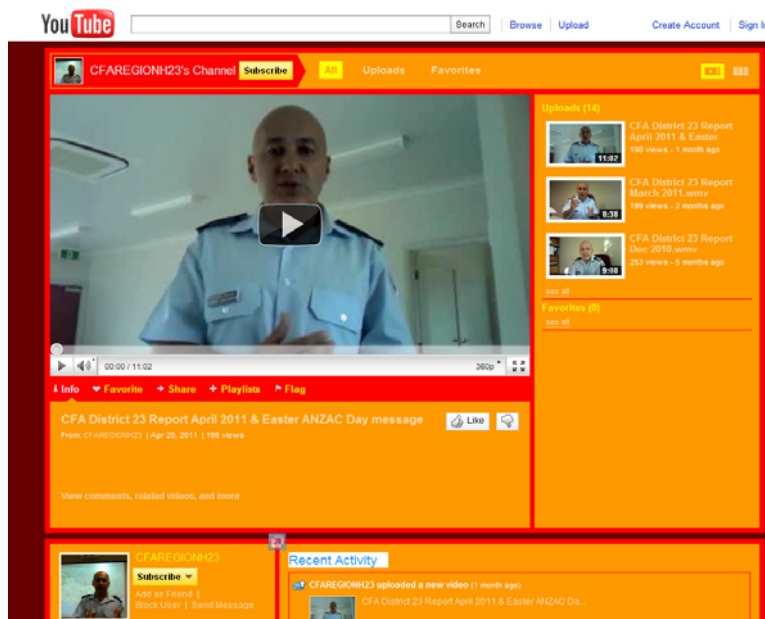
- *Brigade Magazine* is published four times a year and mailed to every CFA household. There are regular columns and feature articles.
- Many Regions also provide a Regional Newsletter providing more local information.

The Fireman

- The CFA contributes to funding for *The Fireman* newspaper, which is a monthly subscription-based newspaper that is independently produced and includes a range of CFA-developed articles and content.
- It is also a communication vehicle for the VFBV.

Use of YouTube

- In 2008, District 23 commenced the use of YouTube to post short communications. A number of other CFA leaders have followed in this strategy, which is attractive to younger CFA members. An image from YouTube follows to illustrate the use.



COMMENT

These means of communication are valuable and supported by me. Technological advances such as NBN provide, as already discussed, greater opportunities through increased internet access and initiatives such as SKYPE.

20.5.4 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

- CFA is developing an improved and overarching engagement strategy.
- Working in consultation with the VFBV, a draft strategy has been developed.
- CFA acknowledges the lack of a pre-determined and transparent engagement process with volunteers as it entered into the final negotiation process for the 2010 CFA/UFU EA. Some difficulties arise given the complexities in determining the appropriate process in accordance with federal law. CFA is committed to improving this process within the legislative framework prior to negotiations for the next EA.

COMMENT

This is an important acknowledgement. Volunteers and the VFBV feel that they were not consulted in relation to matters that might affect them, and did turn out to affect them. It has been consistently raised in this Inquiry. The CFA has to meet its obligations under the Volunteer Charter and its obligations under federal industrial law. Sometimes, they may appear to be in conflict. As will be evident from this Report, some arrangements made in industrial agreements do affect volunteers. This does not necessarily mean that they should not be made. Rather, there has to be a sound and lawful process whereby volunteers can have input about their effect upon them. There has to be consultation between them and the CFA. They cannot be a party and do not want to be a party to the negotiations with the UFU. There is no point in dwelling on the past and levelling blame. What is important, and has to be established, is a robust and transparent process that discharges the CFA's obligations under the Volunteer Charter with respect to future EA negotiations. That will not be easy but is capable of being done and must be done.

- CFA is drawing upon the framework provided in the International Association of Public Participation Principles.
- CFA believes that all parties to the Charter must enter an important phase of establishing an agreed operation of the Charter's principles for consultation.

COMMENT

I agree with this observation. The Volunteer Charter is now recognised in the legislation. It has statutory significance and gives rise to statutory rights and obligations. It must be treated seriously, and dialogue between the CFA and VFBV, in particular, is encouraged by me to achieve the valuable objectives of the Charter.

- The CFA points out that different interpretations of the meaning of 'consultation', 'involvement' or 'collaboration' can lead to frustration and confusion. Consequently, it is important that an agreed understanding on the practical understanding of these words is reached.

21. IMPLEMENTATION

In accordance with my engagement, this Report is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. It is a matter for him as to what action he takes with respect to the release of the Report.

However, if the Minister requests the CFA to implement any or all of the recommendations in the Report, I believe it would be desirable for the CFA to prepare an implementation plan and deliver a progress report on that plan to the Minister by an agreed date.

22. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The conduct of this Inquiry and the compilation of this Report have been demanding. I have reviewed the situation as well as I am able and set out my comments as clearly as I could. Recommendations have been made, where appropriate, to carry out initiatives that have been identified as necessary and appropriate.

As I said at the commencement of this Report, my objective has been to approach it in a positive rather than negative way and to concentrate on improvements and initiatives rather than criticism and blame. I believe this is reflected in the way in which the Report has been written. I am confident that the views I have expressed and the recommendations I have made will be given close consideration but in the end, implementation and acceptance of them are a matter for the Government and interested parties, particularly the CFA.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation to Stella Tan, Lisa Farrell and Karen Young for their invaluable assistance and energy. Without them, this Report would not have been possible.

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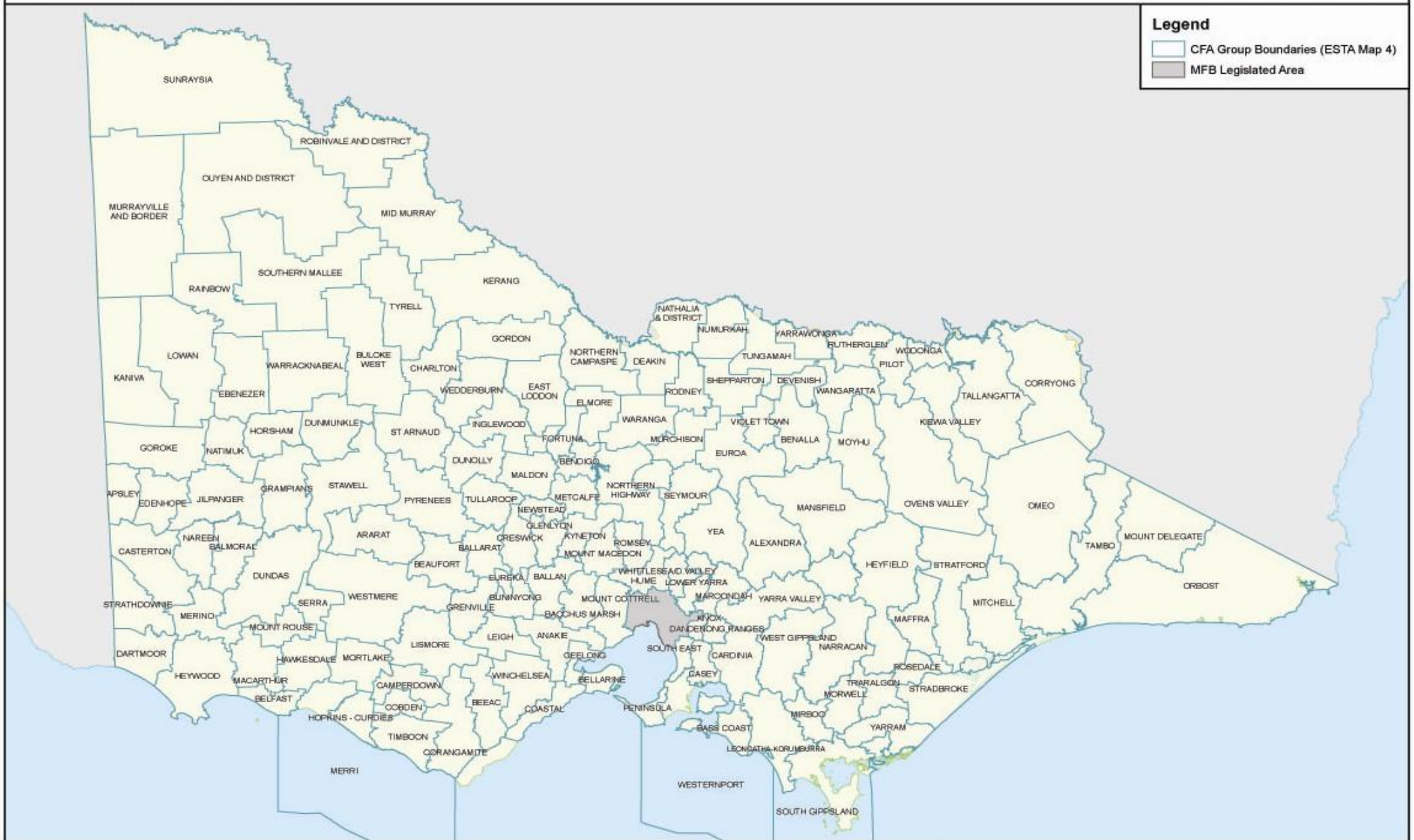
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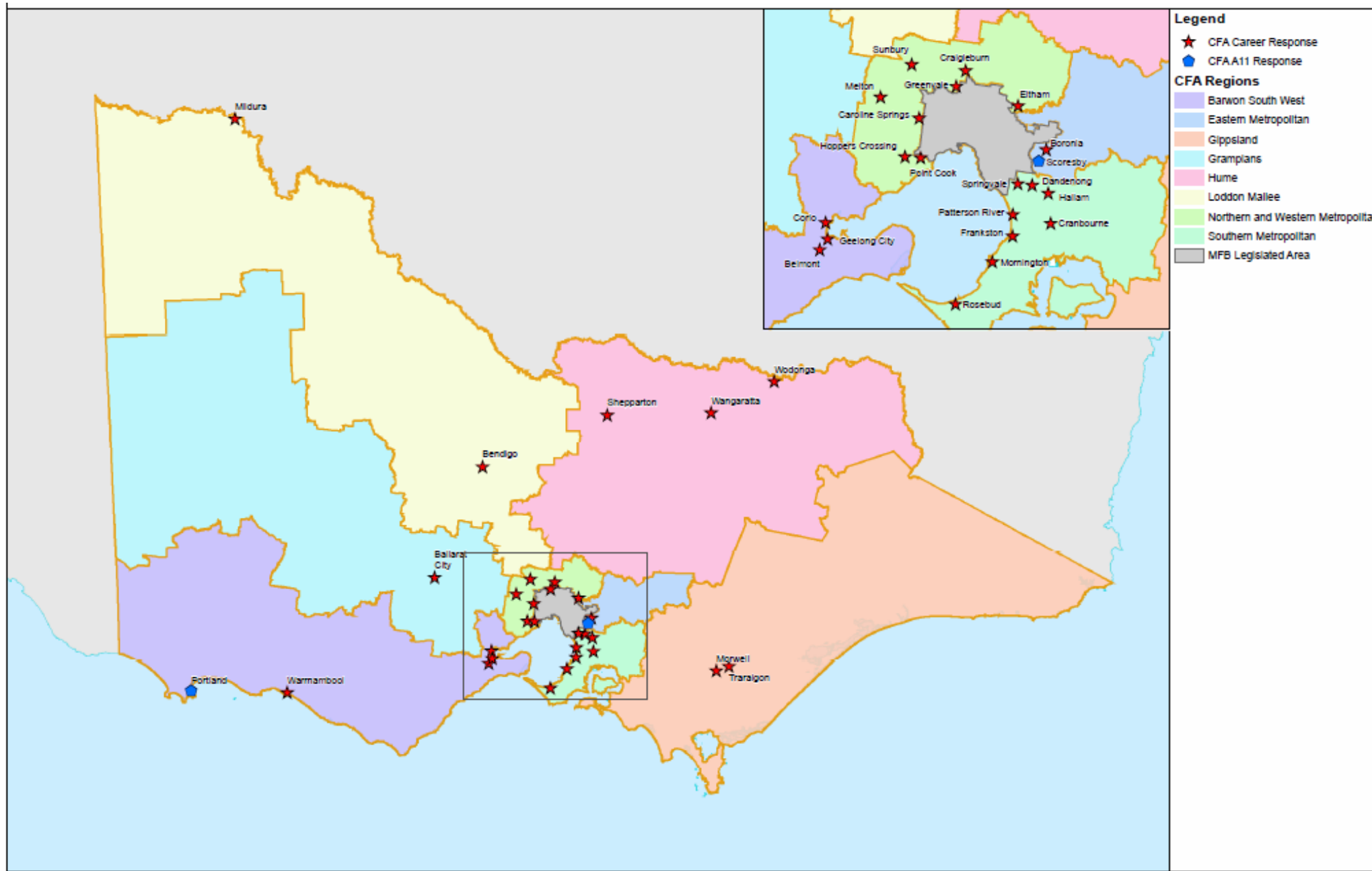
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APPENDIX A - MAP OF CFA GROUP BOUNDARIES

CFA Group Boundaries



APPENDIX B - MAP OF CFA STAFFED STATIONS



APPENDIX C - VOLUNTEER CHARTER



PREAMBLE

Volunteers of the Country Fire Authority of Victoria (CFA) are fundamental to emergency management in Victoria and their value and importance is recognised. Volunteers and the commitment they bring to the protection of the Victorian community remain the core strength of CFA. The individual and collective interests and needs of Volunteers must be protected if they are to deliver their services safely and effectively. They must always be consulted about issues that affect them as Volunteers. This Charter recognises that the members of CFA and their Association, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), operate under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*. The Charter is a statement of principle that will apply to the relationship between CFA, the State of Victoria, and CFA's Volunteers.

VOLUNTEER CHARTER

THIS VOLUNTEER CHARTER...

- cs Is an agreed commitment by the State of Victoria, CFA and VFBV on behalf of CFA Volunteers to each other;
- cs Ensures the State of Victoria and CFA will commit to consultation with Volunteers about all matters which might reasonably be expected to affect Volunteers;
- cs Provides the framework for the three-way relationship between the parties, requiring the success of the relationship and the outcomes from the Charter to be judged against the following principles:
 - Is it fair?
 - Is it just?
 - Is it reasonable?
 - Does it discriminate against Volunteers?
 - Is the outcome practicable and sustainable?
 - Is it in the best interest of the safety of the Victorian community?
- cs Is the framework for an enduring commitment between the parties. The Charter shall be reviewed as required by the parties or at the end of four years from its date of commencement.

VOLUNTEERS IN CFA...

- cs Selflessly bring time and life skills to protect life and property, prevent and suppress fires and thus create a safer community. They actively promote fire prevention works and provide fire, emergency and community services across Victoria. Many Volunteers provide their own equipment to do so;
- cs Are drawn from communities throughout Victoria in order to participate in an integrated fire service through a practical partnership based on mutual respect for CFA, people employed by CFA, and personnel of other organisations, to ensure that community safety needs are met to the best of their collective abilities;
- cs Depend on the goodwill and practical support of their families, friends and employers to enable them to serve. The time available to them is limited by the needs and demands of their employment, families and other obligations; and

- cs Do not contribute their time for financial reward but do expect to gain satisfaction from service, achievement, personal development and camaraderie.

THE VOLUNTEERS WILL PROVIDE THEIR SERVICES TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITIES SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES...

To:

- cs Provide their services for the protection of life and property, prevention and suppression of fires and undertake other relevant duties to create a safer community in a mutual, respectful and active partnership with people employed by CFA, other organisations and the community;
- cs Operate safely and undertake appropriate training and planning to ensure their personal safety and enhance the delivery of services in creating a safer community;
- cs Exercise the powers vested in them by the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* and Regulations in the best interests of the community;
- cs Recognise and support the elected VFBV representatives and the consultative mechanisms as agreed with CFA; and
- cs Be committed to working in harmony and consultation with CFA and seek to resolve differences of opinion internally in the first instance.

THE CFA RECOGNISES THE COMMITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS. THE CFA SHALL PROVIDE ITS SERVICES AND SUPPORT TO VOLUNTEERS SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES...

To:

- cs Recognise, value, respect and promote CFA Volunteers who come from widely divergent communities with differing needs and characteristics, as core partners with people employed by CFA;
- cs Recognise and acknowledge that a primary responsibility of CFA and people employed by CFA is to nurture and encourage Volunteers and to facilitate and develop their skills and competencies;

- cs Recognise and acknowledge the value of the time that Volunteers provide to CFA and ensure that Volunteer time is used to maximum advantage;
- cs Acknowledge that policy development and change should always be considered in terms of its potential to support and facilitate the Volunteer contribution and the particular situation of local brigades;
- cs Recognise that VFBV represents Volunteers in general and ensure there is meaningful consultation, allowing enough time for real involvement, with the elected representatives of Volunteers on all matters which may impact upon Volunteers before the adoption or implementation of any new or changed policies, procedures or approaches;
- cs Ensure that Volunteer views, opinions and concerns are fully considered before adopting any new or changed policies, procedures or approaches which impact on them as CFA Volunteers;
- cs Provide the resources necessary to enable new or changed policies, procedures or approaches which impact on them as CFA Volunteers to be implemented efficiently and effectively;
- cs Provide adequate resources to enable Volunteers in CFA to deliver agreed services;
- cs Provide administrative, operational and infrastructure support to enable Volunteers to perform their roles safely and effectively within available resources;
- cs Recognise and respect the needs of Volunteers that are derived from their volunteer service and provide effective and comprehensive support services within available resources including but not limited to:
 - Where appropriate providing protection against the financial consequences of extended litigation and arranging adequate legal representation with respect to proceedings involving Volunteers arising out of CFA activities;
 - OH&S support and development of the safest possible working environment for Volunteers;

- Procedures to address issues of discrimination in a fair, just and timely manner;
- Counselling and welfare support;
- Training;
- Support and assistance for Volunteers in applying for employment as CFA employees; and
- Compensation for accidents, injuries and losses.

THE GOVERNMENT OF VICTORIA RECOGNISES AND ACKNOWLEDGES THE VOLUNTEERS' COMMITMENT. THE STATE OF VICTORIA WILL PROVIDE SUPPORT TO THE VOLUNTEERS SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES...

To:

- cs Recognise, value, respect and promote CFA Volunteers, their families and employers for their contributions to the well-being and safety of the people of Victoria;
- cs Ensure that CFA legislation appropriately recognises the needs and interests of Volunteers in the delivery of services and protects Volunteers who provide their services in good faith and their dependants from financial losses and other liabilities; and
- cs Consult with the elected representatives of Volunteers on all matters which may impact upon Volunteers including proposed legislation and the adequacy of resources to enable Volunteers in CFA to deliver the agreed services.

THE COMMITMENT...

The parties commit themselves to use and apply the Charter in the spirit of mutual respect and goodwill and to work together in that spirit to resolve any disputes which may arise between CFA, the State of Victoria and the Volunteers by reference to the key principles set down in this Volunteer Charter.



This Charter is dated the 27th day of February 2011 and re-affirms the enduring commitment between the parties to each other evidenced by the Volunteer Charter made on 22nd December 2001.



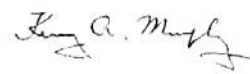
Ted Baillieu MP
Premier on behalf of the State of Victoria



Peter Ryan MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services on behalf of the State of Victoria



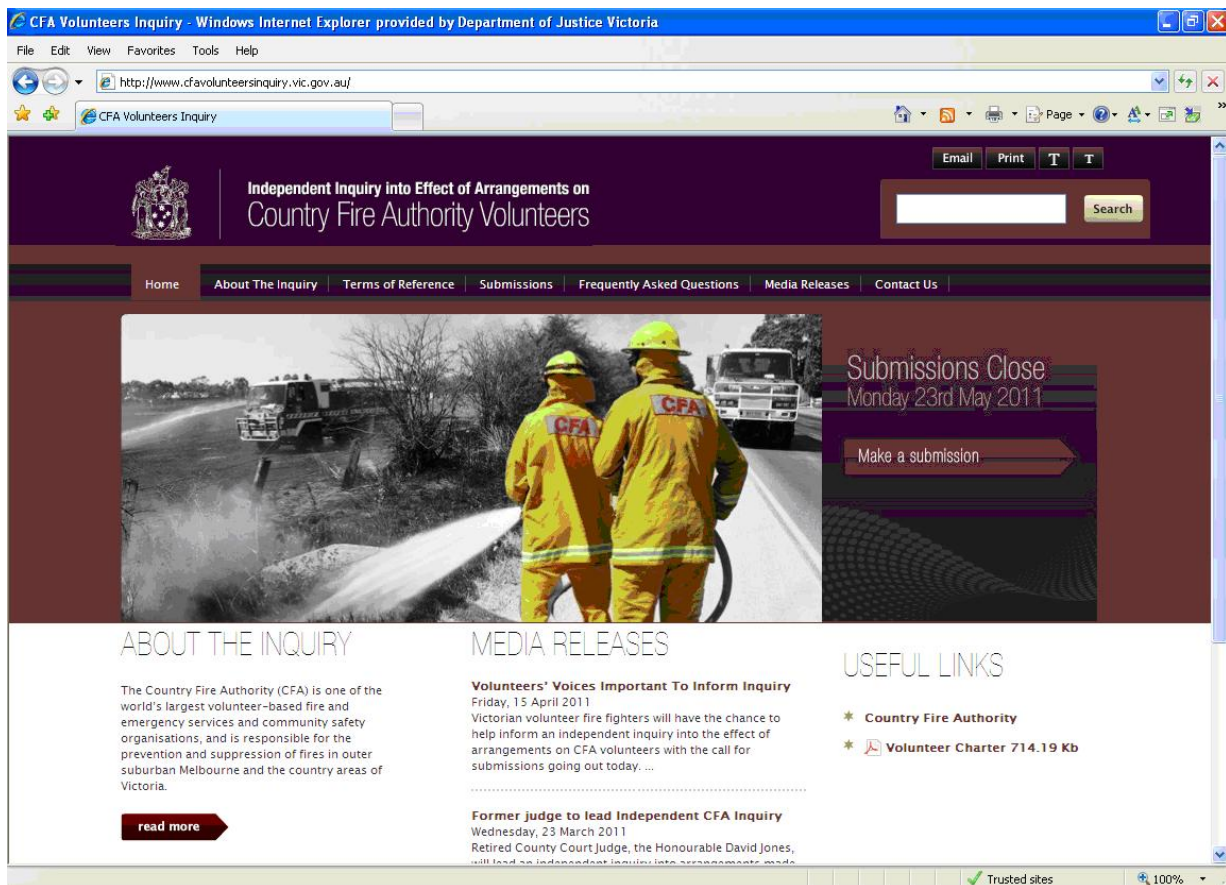
Hans van Hamond AFSM
President, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria



Kerry Murphy PSM, AFSM
Chairman, Country Fire Authority



APPENDIX D - CFA VOLUNTEERS INQUIRY WEBSITE CONTENT



ABOUT THE INQUIRY

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) is one of the world's largest volunteer-based fire and emergency services and community safety organisations, and is responsible for the prevention and suppression of fires in outer suburban Melbourne and the country area of Victoria.

Over 59,000 operational and non-operational CFA volunteers from all walks of life, ably supported by paid staff, make a significant contribution to the well-being and safety of the people of Victoria.

On 23 March 2011, Deputy Premier of Victoria and Minister for Emergency Services, Peter Ryan, announced the establishment of an independent Inquiry into the effect of arrangements made by the CFA on CFA volunteers.

The Inquiry, led by His Honour David Jones, retired County Court Judge, will examine the effect of arrangements made by the CFA on the recruitment, training, deployment, utilisation and support of CFA volunteers, and may make recommendations to address any shortcomings or difficulties identified as a result of the examination of those arrangements, in accordance with its terms of reference.

Consultation with relevant organisations and interested individuals will be undertaken at the discretion of His Honour David Jones.

Interested persons or organisations, and in particular volunteer firefighters, are invited to make written submissions to the Inquiry on any matter the subject of the terms of reference.

The Inquiry is considering the feasibility of conducting some meetings with CFA volunteers as part of the Inquiry. Further details will be provided once arrangements are finalised. However, having regard to the timeframe of the Inquiry, if feasible, it is likely that only a limited number of meetings will be able to be held.

The Inquiry will submit its Report to the Minister by 30 June 2011.

MAKING A SUBMISSION

Written submissions will be received by the Inquiry until 5pm on Monday, 23 May 2011.

How written submissions will be used

Submissions received will be considered by the Inquiry and may help to clarify the issues and questions it needs to answer in accordance with its terms of reference.

Submissions will not be published on the internet.

Submissions may be summarised or referred to in the Report of the Inquiry provided to the Minister. Personal details, other than the name, and where relevant, the occupation and town/suburb of the submitter will not be disclosed in the Report of the Inquiry.

At the discretion of His Honour David Jones, the content of submissions may be discussed with other persons in the course of conducting the Inquiry.

The Inquiry will consider any requests for confidentiality. The Inquiry will contact you if any request for confidentiality is not granted and you will have the option to withdraw your submission.

The Inquiry will not automatically contact you in relation to your submission but reserves the option to contact you if required.

All written submissions may be provided through our online form, or by mail:

Submissions
CFA Volunteers Inquiry
GPO Box 4356
Melbourne VIC 3001

For further information about providing a written submission send an email to contact@cfavolunteersinquiry.vic.gov or phone the Inquiry's information line on 1800 243 650.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Written Submissions

What is the purpose of a written submission?

Written submissions, addressing the Inquiry's terms of reference, are an important way that individuals and organisations can contribute to the Inquiry.

Submissions received will be considered by the Inquiry and may help to clarify the issues and questions it needs to answer in accordance with its terms of reference.

When can I make a submission?

The Inquiry is now inviting written submissions, addressing the terms of reference, from individuals and organisations.

All written submissions may be provided by:

Email to: submissions@cfavolunteersinquiry.vic.gov.au

By mail to:

Submissions
CFA Volunteers Inquiry
GPO Box 4356
Melbourne VIC 3001

People wishing to making a written submission but do not have access to the Inquiry's website, can phone the Inquiry on 1800 243 650 for assistance.

Is there a closing date for written submissions?

The Inquiry will receive written submissions until 5pm on Monday, 23 May 2011.

How will the submissions be used?

Submissions received will be considered by the Inquiry and may help to clarify the issues and questions it needs to answer in accordance with its terms of reference.

Submissions will not be published on the internet. Submissions may be summarised or referred to in the Report of the Inquiry provided to the Minister. Personal details, other than the name, and where relevant, the occupation and town/suburb of the submitter will not be disclosed in the Report of the Inquiry.

At the discretion of His Honour David Jones, the content of submissions may be discussed with other persons in the course of conducting the Inquiry.

The Inquiry will consider any requests for confidentiality. The Inquiry will contact you if any request for confidentiality is not granted and you will have the option to withdraw your submission.

The Inquiry will not automatically contact you in relation to your submission but reserves the option to contact you if required.

Can I withdraw my submission after lodgement?

Submissions can be withdrawn through a written request to the Inquiry.

How can someone find out about submission process if they do not have access to the Inquiry's website?

People without online access and wish to find out more about making a submission, or the submission process in general, are encouraged to contact the Inquiry directly by phoning the Inquiry's information line on 1800 243 650.

MEDIA RELEASES

Volunteers' Voices Important To Inform Inquiry

Victorian Volunteer firefighters will have the chance to help inform an independent Inquiry into the effect of arrangements on CFA Volunteers with the call for submissions going out today.

Read more: [Volunteers' Voices Important to Inform Inquiry](#)

Former judge to lead Independent CFA Inquiry

Retired County Court Judge, the Honourable David Jones, will lead an independent Inquiry into arrangements made by the Country Fire Authority (CFA) for CFA Volunteers, Deputy Premier and Minister for Emergency Services Peter Ryan announced today.

Read more: [Former judge to lead Independent CFA Inquiry](#)

CONTACT US

For enquiries about the Independent Inquiry into Effect of Arrangements on Country Fire Authority Volunteers, contact:

General enquiries: Tel: 1800 243 650

Media enquiries: Tel: 03 8684 0307

Email: contact@cfavolunteersinquiry.vic.gov.au

Postal Address:

CFA Volunteers Inquiry

GPO Box 4356

Melbourne VIC 3001

APPENDIX E – COMMON ISSUES RAISED AT CONSULTATIONS

OVERALL

- Volunteer service supported by career staff, or vice versa? Volunteers think it is currently the latter.
- Volunteers believe their contribution not valued. Treated as second class.
- Great diversity in size, location and risk profile – insufficient regard had to this.
- Ageing group.
- Concern regarding the sustainability of CFA as a volunteer service if present arrangements to continue.

INTERFACE BETWEEN VOLUNTEERS AND CAREER STAFF

- Critical to the success of CFA model.
- Critical at integrated stations – mutual respect, varies from station.
- Critical at Regional and District level.
- People skills critical, must be volunteer-focused – position descriptions must be appropriate – reflect this in selection process – have ability to make lateral appointments.
- Right people in right positions.
- Volunteers on interview panels.

RECRUITMENT

- Need to attract younger people including women.
- Avoid undue delays in recruitment process, if too long, lose interest.
- Role of volunteer has to be seen as attractive, focus on benefits.
- Involvement in schools.
- Prohibition against transfer – barrier.
- RPL/RCC process – barrier.
- Innovate to deal with churn – e.g. students returning home for holidays – maintain relationship with brigades.
- Ensure that Juniors continue as Seniors.
- CFA needs to develop in consultation with volunteers a comprehensive recruitment strategy.
- Complete an exit survey when volunteers leave.
- Integrate with ethnic communities.

JUNIOR CFA PROGRAM

- Being under utilised - Not able to get involved operationally.
- Problems in transition to adults - Too many lost.

VOLUNTEERS AS EMPLOYEES

- Difficulty in being recruited – no recognition, no lateral entry.
- Difficulty in being able to continue as a volunteer – pressure from career colleagues.

TRAINING

- The planning and organisation of training
 - Haphazard – ad hoc – poor contrast with career staff training.
 - Who is responsible for it? How is it developed?
 - Role of Groups and Planning Committees.
- The delivery of training – problems

- Scheduling – times and days.
- Location – the 1 hour rule.
- Duration – hours vs. days.
- Not consistent – varies from regions and instructors.
- Too much theoretical, not enough practical.
- Use of volunteers as instructors and assessors.
- Use of career instructors at integrated stations and neighbouring brigades.
- Availability of instructors – career and volunteer.
- Availability of Fiskville, Regional Field Training Grounds and props – access to ‘hot fire’ training.
- Availability of roadside burning exercises.
- The type of training
 - Minimum Skills – is it necessary for all?
 - Should Minimum Skills be based on risk profile of brigade?
 - Availability of specialist skills training – e.g. First Aid, Breathing Apparatus, Driver, Incident Management Team (IMT), Incident Control Centres (ICC).
 - Lack of operational team training for volunteers.
 - Lack of leadership management training for volunteers.
- Skills Maintenance Training
 - Where possible, should be done at brigade by volunteer instructors.
 - Advanced skills done by volunteer instructors, including at Field Training Grounds.
 - Needs to be properly recorded.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING/RECOGNITION OF CURRENT COMPETENCY

- Process too convoluted and complex.
- Not efficient and consistent.
- Too hard – lose interest – so do course.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS - TRAINING

- Training be on a needs basis. Horses for courses.
- Comprehensively planned based on needs.
- Flexible delivery.
- Substantial use of volunteers in delivery.
- Adequately resourced.
- Standardised.
- Properly recorded.
- Makes full use of modern technology in delivery and recording (National Broadband Network and Information Technology – Interactive).
- Use of TAFE and Secondary Schools.

DEPLOYMENT AND UTILISATION

- Not enough volunteers used as instructors and assessors.
- Not enough volunteers in IMTs and ICCs.
- When career and volunteers involved in incidents, career take over leadership.
- CFA needs to recognise importance of volunteers in roles and facilitate them.
- ‘Hurry up and wait’ – waiting in strike teams.
- Some career staff using volunteers to only mop up at incidents

SUPPORT

- Insufficient BASOs.
- High turnover of Operations Officers – lack of support.
- National harmonisation of Occupational Health & Safety laws.
- Are the rules appropriate – are the structures appropriate?
- Is the Group arrangement viable?
- Do they need greater support – BASO, Operations Officer.
- Adequate processes to resolve disputes.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

- Lacking – ad hoc.
- Them vs. Us culture results.
- Process needs to be formalised and structured - Must be improved.
- Utilise modern communication technology.
- Role of VFBV – its performance and resourcing.
- Lack of centralised record-keeping – volunteer personal profile, career and training development pathway, attendance at incidents.
- Lack of interface between FIRS and TRAIN.

APPENDIX F - MEETINGS CONDUCTED BY THE INQUIRY

WorkSafe Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Cox, Senior Legal Officer, National Health & Safety Reform
VFBV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Ford, Chief Executive Officer • Garth Head, Consultant
Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Brockington, (former CEO of VBRC) Executive Director, Public Policy and Organisation Review, State Services Authority • Susannah Robinson, Senior Advisor, Public Policy and Organisation Review, State Services Authority
CFA Steering Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mick Bourke, Chief Executive Officer • Kerry Murphy, Chairman • Lex de Man AFSM, Executive Manager, Operational Training and Volunteerism • Peter Harmsworth, Board Member • David Gibbs AFSM, Board Member
CFA Chief Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Euan Ferguson, Chief Officer
VFBV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ex Captain Hans van Hamond , President • Bruce Vine, Vice President • Captain Bill Maltby, Vice President Urban • Gary Lyttle AFMS, Board Member • Tom Brodie, AFSM, Board Member • Ex Captain Mick Taylor AFSM, Board Member • Captain Nev Jones AFSM, Board Member • Lieutenant Frank Zeigler, Board Member • Andy Cusack AFSM, Board Member • Andrew Ford, Chief Executive Officer • Allan Monti, Executive Officer • Adam Barnett, Executive Officer • Garth Head, Consultant
CFA Facilities and IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lex de Man, AFSM, Executive Manager, Operational Training and Volunteerism • Mark Connell, Director, Asset Management • Michael Foreshew, Executive Manager, Technology Services
CFA Regional Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark Reid, Regional Manager, Gippsland Region • Bob Barry, Regional Manager, Barwon South West Region • Peter Schmidt, Regional Manager, Southern Metropolitan Region • Pat O'Brien, Regional Manager, Loddon Mallee Region • Don Kelly, Regional Manager, Grampians Region • Lex de Man, AFSM, Executive Manager, Operational Training and Volunteerism
Chief Parliamentary Counsel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gemma Varley, Chief Parliamentary Counsel
Defence Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brigadier Bill Sowry

APPENDIX G - ROYAL COMMISSION RESOURCES

Key Witnesses

- Alexander de Man, General Manager and Volunteer, CFA
- John Haynes, Deputy Chief Officer, Operations Policy and Planning, CFA
- Allan Monti, Executive Officer, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria
- Andrew Ford, Chief Executive Officer, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria
- Allan Small, CFA Volunteer

Other Relevant Witnesses

- Russell Rees, former Chief Officer, CFA
- Mick Bourke, Chief Executive Officer, CFA
- Penny Armytage, Secretary, Department of Justice
- Len Foster, former Chief Executive Officer, CFA
- Neil Bibby, former Chief Executive Officer, CFA
- Rodney Holland, CFA Volunteer
- David Ackland, CFA Volunteer
- Nevyn Jones
- Ronald Beer, CFA Volunteer
- Philip Hawkey, CFA Volunteer

Other Key Evidence

- Parties submissions on:
 - systemic issues relating to resourcing of IMTs and training
 - organisational structure
- Exhibit 916 – UFU Position Paper on organisational restructure

APPENDIX H - BRIGADES WITHIN 30 AND 60 MINUTES DRIVE OF A CFA TRAINING GROUND

