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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **FISKVILLE MUST BE REPLACED, SAY CFA VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), the association representing CFA volunteers, says the closure of the Fiskville training facility is a blow for firefighter training in CFA, and will leave a major hole in the State's capacity to train Victoria's firefighters.

Firefighting involves inherent dangers and unpredictable hazards. In an organisation like CFA, training is critical. Fiskville was a critical component of Victoria's emergency service training network, and its closure will leave a significant gap.

VFBV President Hans van Hamond AFSM said CFA volunteers want to know there is a plan to replace the large scale and sophisticated training capacity Fiskville has been providing. Easy, frequent and cost effective access to training is critical for fire services, particularly organisations such as CFA.

"VFBV's major concern through the Fiskville saga has been the safety of all CFA members, but now that the facility is closed, there must be serious and immediate attention paid to meeting the training needs of CFA's tens of thousands of firefighters," Mr van Hamond said.

"Fiskville has had a critically important role in CFA's network of facilities, training local Brigades in that part of Victoria and providing live-in training and specialist programs for CFA personnel from all over the state," he said.

"Even the recent temporary closure of the facility has led to some Brigades having to travel three to four hours away to visit a training facility with spare capacity."

CFA's large, geographically dispersed workforce and the volunteer-based nature of that workforce means that training needs to be available as close as possible to the volunteers' home location, and where there is a need for multi-day training, long duration experience simulation or learning, accommodation facilities become a necessary component of the state's training capability.

More...

**VFBV Media Contact:** Peter Beaton 0419 504 111



There is much public attention and emotion now involved with the Fiskville facility, but regardless of how these factors weigh into ultimate decisions, several things are certain;

- Any training ground used for hot fire or other training must be safe to use
- Investment to replace Fiskville’s significant state training capability will be required, as the rest of the fire services training network will not cope with the overall training load
- Firefighters who currently rely on Fiskville as their local training facility must have locally available access to state of the art training
- Support for any members who have been exposed to health hazards at Fiskville must continue; the closure of the facility does not mean their needs are at an end.

“CFA Brigades protect 60% of suburban Melbourne, regional cities and all of country Victoria every day and night of the year, and Victorians have a right to expect that their volunteers can access and continue to be trained to the professional standards to which the community is entitled,” Mr van Hamond said.

Ends...

**VFBV Media Contact:** Peter Beaton 0419 504 111