



Wednesday, 5 February 2014

MEDIA RELEASE

CFA VOLUNTEERS RESPOND TO AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr Andrew Ford, CEO of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) has welcomed the release of the Auditor General's report *Managing Emergency Services Volunteers*.

"The Auditor General's report recognises that the volunteer resource is vital to Victoria's emergency management, and points to the importance of maintaining and building Victoria's emergency services volunteer capacity," Mr Ford said.

"The report is a major contribution towards maintaining and building Victoria's emergency services volunteer capacity," he said.

"It highlights the central role of volunteers, not only in emergency response but in building local community emergency preparedness and resilience by working with their neighbours through their community education and safety programs."

The report notes that CFA and SES volunteers deliver emergency services more cost-effectively than if they were delivered by a paid workforce – the 2006 official estimate was that the value of all volunteer work in Victoria was over \$16 billion per year. VFBV estimates the work value alone of CFA volunteers is at least \$1.2 billion per year.

Operationally, CFA's volunteers are first responders to all types of fires and emergencies including suburban house fires, bushfires, floods, industrial accidents and road accident rescue calls.

"One of the things that bugs volunteers is that they are often only characterised as a bushfire service. In fact, CFA volunteers provide fire and emergency services throughout Victoria, including 60% of suburban Melbourne, regional cities and all of country Victoria," Mr Ford said

"CFA volunteers also deliver community awareness, education and safety programs, and play a lead role in developing local emergency planning," he said.

"In all their roles CFA volunteers are qualified to professional standards.

"The Auditor General sums this up nicely where he says '*Volunteers are essentially unpaid professionals and valuable assets*,'" Mr Ford said.

[More...](#)

(2)

“The report recognises volunteers have the capacity, expertise and interest to do what needs to be done, but the management of and support to volunteers could be improved, to get the very best from this huge and vital resource.

“This isn’t a surprise to us, we want CFA and Government to invest in the best possible support to recruiting, training and equipping volunteers. And we want the volunteer capability to be utilised – put to work in the roles they train for – that’s the key to keeping them,” Mr Ford said.

“VFBV has been actively pushing the CFA and Government agencies on better workforce planning, including volunteer recruitment, support, training, engagement and retention policies, and actions under both the CFA Volunteer Charter and the requirements of the CFA Act.

“This Auditor General’s report publicly highlights many of the things we have been seeking and for this reason alone we welcome it,” Mr Ford said.

Ends...

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), represents Victoria’s 60,000 CFA volunteers.

CFA volunteers make up 97% of CFA’s workforce.

VFBV Media Contact: Peter Beaton 0419 504 111