



Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee

Hearing date: 1/05/2026

Questions taken on notice

Directed to: Country Fire Authority

Received date: 1/07/2026

1. P.16 Melina Bath

Question: Thank you very much indeed. I have multiple, multiple questions here, but I want to potentially first go to vacancies, and CFA vacancies. How many CFA assistant chief fire officer vacancies and commander positions are allocated to district 22, and how many of these positions were vacant in the week commencing 5 January 2026? You may need to take it on notice.

Jason HEFFERNAN: The exact number of seconded staff available in district 22 – I do not want to mislead the committee, so I will take that one on notice.

CFA Response:

District 22 – Has a total operational staff allocation of five (5) - 1 x Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) and 4 x Commanders.

For the week commencing 05 January 2026, two (2) operational staff were available.

2. P.21 Wendy Lovell

Question: -In the past six years, has CFA sought additional funding from government by any means, including business cases that have been denied by government departments or the government, and if so, can you provide the details of those?

Greg LEACH: Yes, certainly. We can, again, take that on notice

CFA Response:

CFA through DJCS participates in the annual budget bid processes ensuring the needs of the CFA are presented when budget bids are proposed. Funding considerations and allocations is a deliberative process of Cabinet, and questions to these deliberations should be referred to the relevant Minister.

3. P.30 Melina Bath

Question: -Can we please be provided a table with the breakdowns of all CFA appliances by type – pumper and tanker – and age profiles? I am putting that on notice. Can you include whether these appliances are brigade owned or CFA owned? I know that there is some data, but it is actually old data now. It is 2023 data, and it was released in 2024. I think it is important for the committee to understand those profiles.

CFA Response:

Table: CFA emergency response fleet number and age, by funding source (as at 15 January 2026)

Appliance type	Number CFA owned	VESEP / Brigade	Total Number	CFA owned - average age (years)	VSEP / Brigade - average age (Years)
Pumpers	214	4	218	16.8	17.5
Pumper tankers	41	3	44	21.9	19.7
Tankers	1,413	548	1,961	19.3	10.8
Specialist	55	83	138	13.3	11.5
TOTAL	1,723	638	2,361	18.9	11

Source: Total number from Whole of Victorian Government submission

Table: Appliance type, by age (all funding sources)

	0-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	15-20 years	20-25 years	25-30 years	30-35 years	35-40 years	Total
Pumpers	1	43	11	85	56	20	2	0	218
Pumper tankers	1	0	0	20	8	12	3	0	44
Tanker	260	229	408	339	186	242	231	66	1,961
Specialist Vehicles	25	44	28	20	12	6	3	0	138
Total	262	272	419	444	250	274	236	66	2,361

4. P.36-37 Gaelle Broad

Question: -Just with CFA, the volunteer numbers have dropped by nearly 14,000 operational firefighters – my understanding is it was 40,000 operational firefighters in 2009 to 28,855 in 2026 – despite high community interest. We have heard a lot about the lack of support that many CFA volunteers feel that they have got, and the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund-We have heard you mention today about the CFA needing to replace about 100 trucks a year, I think you said, and you mentioned the rolling fleet program had stalled over the last 10 to 15 years. I am just interested if you could, on notice, provide how many CFA appliances by type – and also FRV – have actually been purchased by our state each year over the last 12 years. If you could take that on notice.

And just with the recent government announcement, there was \$100 million announced for new appliances over the next 10 years – how many will this actually buy over the forward estimates and over the next 10 years? Are you able to provide that information?

Greg LEACH: We can give you some estimates of that. It will vary depending on what type of truck we build each year. For example, a medium tanker is around half a million dollars, a heavy tanker three-quarters of a million dollars and a pumper \$1.2 million, so it depends on the configuration that we will build each year. But we can give you some information around that.

CFA Response:

The number of new appliances received by CFA and delivered to brigades over the 12-year period is shown below in Table A:

Type	CFA	VESEP	Total
Pumper	50	1	51
Pumper Tanker	1	0	1
Tanker	385	337	722
Specialist	32	52	84
Total	468	390	858

Table A: Appliances delivered since 2014 as at 15th January 2026 (not including appliances transferred to FRV in 2020 as a requirement of Fire Services Reform)

Type	CFA	VESEP	Total
Pumper	65	1	66
Pumper Tanker	1	0	1
Tanker	385	337	722
Specialist	32	52	84
Total	483	390	873

Table: Appliances delivered since 2014 as at 15th January 2026 (including appliances transferred to FRV in 2020 as a requirement of Fire Services Reform)

CFA modelling suggests that the additional investment (\$100M over 10 Years) will allow CFA to purchase approximately 200 firefighting vehicles. The precise number and mix of appliances to be ordered is subject to a procurement process yet to be commenced. CFA will use its appliance cascade program to ensure priority removal of the oldest appliances as new appliances are delivered.

Additional questions

Wendy Lovell

CFA - Funding

- I. Have changes in government policy such as the establishment of the Community Safety Building Authority (CSBA) who are now responsible for the procurement and construction of new CFA fire stations realised financial benefits to CFA or the Victorian Taxpayer?
- What did it cost CFA previously to build a new / replacement fire station for a small rural community? Perhaps you could provide the cost of both a single and double bay station?
 - Currently, what cost are CFA being asked to pay to CSBA for them to construct the same types of station?

CFA Response:

Questions relating to Government Policy and deliberation considerations (including any benefit realisation) of the establishment of the Community Safety Building Authority (CSBA) are best directed to the relevant Minister.

The table below shows the cost to build different station types in the years 2018, 2020, 2022 by CFA commensurate with our Whole of Life Asset Plan.

Budget and cost considerations under the CSBA model is site specific and modeled based on the type of station approved and site-specific considerations of each build. Questions on the modeled cost structure used by CSBA during budget considerations are best directed to CSBA. Stations in small rural communities are station type **1A** and **1B**.

Typology	2018	2020	2022(*)
1A	\$550,000	\$650,000	\$750,000
1B	\$770,000	\$850,000	\$1,200,000
1C	\$1,650,000	\$1,750,000	\$2,500,000
2A	\$2,200,000	\$2,300,000	\$2,900,000
2B	\$2,600,000	\$2,700,000	\$3,500,000

(*) CFA forecast budget allowance against Whole of Life Asset Plan (WOLP)

Station Type	Risk Profile	Brigade Classification	Current Number
1A Station	Remote Rural	Class 1	556
1B Station	Rural	Class 2	376
1C Station	Small town or Semi Urban	Class 3	137

2A Station	Large Town or Urban Interface	Class 4	57
2B Station	Large Town or Fully Urban	Class 4 & 5	73

Table: station type, by risk profile and classification

2. Have changes in Government Policy regarding the purchase / disposal of vacant land for agency use impacted CFA in any way?

CFA Response:

No - In accordance with the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958 (CFA Act)* all funds resulting from the sale, exchange or letting of any property by the CFA is then applied in the purchase of property for the CFA or the improvement of the property of the CFA.

Questions about Government Policy regarding purchase and disposal of other lands across government are best directed to the relevant Minister.

3. Why is CFA dependent upon DEECA for fuel management funding?

CFA Response:

CFA's fuel management program expanded dramatically with the implementation of the Governments *Safer Together (ST)* policy. The joint agency program has supported CFA to build and operate its capability in fuel management and work in partnership with Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (**DEECA**) to improve the states fuel management program.

Primary funding from DEECA (*Safer Together* program funding) is used for the purposes of fuel management / mitigation programs.

CFA - Chief Officer

4. Many of your volunteers are unhappy with the way some of the fires were managed. What are you going to do to improve it?

CFA Response:

CFA is committed to an evaluation and improvement cycle - capturing lessons, translating them into changes, and ensuring they are reflected in our capability, training and operational arrangements. An after-action review (**AAR**) is a structured review or debrief process for analysing an incident to help us improve our performance. It considers what was planned, what happened, why it happened and how it can be done better/differently or sustained where positive outcomes were achieved. This is standard practice in CFA.

The 2025-26 Post Season Debrief Program is underway to gather feedback and insights from members. CFA has designed various mechanisms to gather input and is seeking to hear from a wide range of members across the state. Mechanisms being used include:

- Facilitated AARs with fireground leaders following significant incidents
- Tailored surveys to Strike Team Leaders, Sector Commanders and Divisional Commanders

- Targeted interviews with key personnel, particularly those involved in the transfer of control to an Incident Control Centre from a fireground
- District and Region surveys and facilitated AARs for those that had significant operational activity.

Once this work is complete, CFA will ensure the key findings and our intended response are shared broadly with our members, including activities undertaken that improved operational outcomes and where the AAR outcomes recommend sustainment.

CFA - Sustainable brigades & volunteerism

5. From VBRC 2009 “Bushfire is an intrinsic part of Victoria’s landscape, and if time dims our memory we risk repeating the mistakes of the past. We need to learn from the experiences of Black Saturday and improve the way we prepare for and respond to bushfires”

- Are agencies such as CFA better equipped, supported and enabled now in 2026 than you were in the lead up to that tragic day in 2009?

CFA Response:

This is a complex, multi-dimensional question. The risk environment continues to change rapidly, with climate-driven increases in severity/frequency of emergency events and changes in where and how people live.

At the system level, advancements such as the single integrated emergency warnings platform for all agencies to leverage when seeking to alert the community in times of emergency has delivered significant benefits. Likewise, all agencies operating out of a single State Control Centre has improved co-ordination and connection.

Bushfire remains the most significant natural hazard to Victoria as demonstrated by the cyclical nature of major bushfire emergencies. The 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission made numerous recommendations specific to the State’s preparedness for and response to bushfire.

Significant advancements have been made since 2009, and CFA considers strengthened local fire management planning, response and prevention arrangements that empower brigades, communities, stakeholders and agencies to work together with a focus on bushfire hazard to mitigate fire risk, would build on the advancements since 2009 and further enable CFA and the Chief Officer in the execution of statutory functions and community preparedness outcomes.

6. Are CFA members receiving the quantity and quality of training they request?

CFA Response:

The diverse nature of CFA's membership brings a dichotomy of views on the suitability of CFA's training. CFA's training of volunteers in line with national public safety standards supports Local, State and National interoperability and safe operations.

CFA Training includes formal courses, awareness packages, fleet/equipment inductions and skills maintenance. Training occurs in a variety of settings (Brigade, Regional and State levels) and a variety of modes (face to face, blended, or online). CFA's training campuses are located across the State for ease of access to members (and made available to other agencies).

CFA has established a training pathway to support the developmental needs of members and provides guidance on the progression of qualifications required to meet the various roles within CFA. The training pathway is being implemented across the State and together with the redevelopment of the Brigade operating skills profile (under development) will better guide the CFA and Brigades in determining training demands and ensuring priority of courses.

CFA operates as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), through the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority, to deliver nationally recognised training and enterprise packages to volunteers. National units of competencies are aligned to the Public Skills packages.

In 2021, CFA commissioned the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) to conduct an independent peer review into CFA Training. Since then, a focused program of work to enhance CFA training offerings has been underway. This work is ongoing, including exploration of a General Firefighter 'on the job' training model for our Class 1 and 2 brigades in rural areas that may be better suited to their needs. The Training Enhancement Program (**TEP**), now in its second year, includes 23 specific initiatives to improve CFA's training offering to our members. CFA has committed to work jointly with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria to collectively and collaboratively implement the TEP.

7. What impediments exist in being able to improve the quality and meet the demand?

CFA Response:

CFA has made significant progress in strengthening training systems and governance, particularly through the implementation of the Training Enhancement Program (TEP) and the progressive delivery of recommendations from the AFAC independent peer review into training. These initiatives have provided a clear roadmap for improvement, strengthened governance arrangements, and enhanced the consistency and quality of training across the organisation.

However, several structural and operational factors continue to influence the ability to fully realise these improvements at pace and scale.

1. Balancing Quality, Consistency and Local Flexibility

CFA operates across a highly diverse volunteer-based service, with over 1,200 brigades and a wide range of training needs and expectations. Feedback indicates varying preferences, including demand for more online training, more face-to-face delivery, and differing views on training complexity and standards.

This diversity requires a balance between standardised, high-quality training frameworks (as progressed through TEP and AFAC recommendations) and the flexibility needed for regions and brigades to tailor training to local risk and capability requirements. Achieving this balance can inherently limit the ability to fully optimise both quality and accessibility simultaneously.

2. Workforce Availability and Competing Priorities

A key constraint across training delivery is the availability of instructors, subject matter experts (SMEs), and incident management personnel, many of whom are volunteers or operational staff. Competing operational demands—particularly during prolonged fire seasons—can delay program delivery, governance activities, and reform initiatives such as elements of the TEP.

While there has been a concentrated effort to grow the number of volunteer instructors, this remains a key objective to increasing training capability and access for our members.

3. System and Technology Constraints

The AFAC peer review of CFA training identified the need for more contemporary and fit-for-purpose systems, particularly in learning management and training administration. This has been reflected in TEP priorities, including stabilisation of, and potential replacement of, the Learning Management System (LMS).

While improvements are underway, current system limitations can impact the efficiency of training delivery, reporting, and the overall user experience for instructors and learners. CFA is currently embarking on a market approach to replace its problematic legacy LMS.

4. Complexity of Reform Delivery (TEP Implementation)

The Training Enhancement Program is a substantial, multi-year reform program spanning eight scope areas, including training model reform, program redevelopment, instructor pathways, and incident management capability building.

The breadth of this reform means that improvements must be sequenced and prioritised. At times, elements of the program have required adjustment or pausing to align with

operational priorities or resource availability.

This reflects the scale and complexity of transformation rather than a lack of direction.

5. Volunteer-Based Service Model

As a predominantly volunteer organisation, CFA’s training system must operate within a model where participation is discretionary and influenced by broader life commitments of our volunteer members. This affects both the demand for training (which continues to grow) and the capacity to deliver it.

It also requires training to be accessible, relevant and efficient, while minimising administrative burden—an ongoing focus of reform through both TEP and broader operating model initiatives.

Actions taken by CFA has dramatically increased the availability and delivery of training as outlined below, however acknowledge that more work is needed, including the consideration to development of a live-in campus (similar to the former Fiskville Training Center) to further accommodate volunteer needs from across the state.

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Courses delivered	1,869	1,916	1,997	2,182	1,669
Members trained	10,437	13,551	13,738	14,370	12,126

Table: Summary of number of courses delivered and members trained, by year

8. Why is CFA dependent upon other agencies such as EMV and FRV to deliver training?

CFA Response:

The Secondment Agreement between CFA and Fire Rescue Victoria (**FRV**), which is a key feature of Fire Services Reform, sets out the role types and number of roles that CFA can source from FRV. This includes Assistant Chief Fire Officers, Commanders and – relevant to training – Instructors (53 roles in total) and Practical Area Drill (**PAD**) staff roles (29 in total comprising 8 PAD Supervisors and 21 PAD Operators); those who maintain and operate CFA’s network of field training grounds.

The future growth in training delivery within the volunteer-focused CFA, places more emphasis on the use of volunteer instructors to meet growing demands.

CFA is seeking to strategically build and support the number of volunteer instructors who, along with the seconded instructors, are the backbone of CFA’s training excellence. Their dedication, experience, and passion for sharing knowledge is vital to ensuring that every member, whether they are a new recruit undertaking General Firefighter training or a long-serving member advancing in Incident Management, Advanced Firefighting, or Fire Investigation—receives the highest standard of instruction. Instructors deliver training and conduct assessments in accredited and non-accredited training courses. They play a critical role in building the capability, confidence, and safety of our members.

In relation to Incident Management Training (**IMT**), Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) provides centralised development and delivery of IMT training programs. CFA has access to, and has participated in, EMV-led incident management programs.

CFA has recently commenced rollout of an in-house IMT training program to better meet the needs of a volunteer workforce with a bushfire hazard focus. The delivery of this training will utilise both volunteer and paid IMT practitioners who have a wide range of operational experience in IMT's. This CFA IMT program will complement the EMV programs and provide a more volunteer-centric approach to IMT capability development.

CFA - Vegetation / roadside fuel management

9. Do CFA have adequate powers to require the management of vegetation on roadsides?

CFA Response:

The management of roadsides for fire prevention purposes is specifically referred to in the CFA Act in Section 43(1), which states that:

*It shall be the **duty of every municipal council and every public authority** to take all practicable steps to prevent the occurrence of fires on and to minimise the danger of the spread of fires on or from:*

*any land vested in it or under its control or management, **and any road under its care and management***

CFA has developed roadside fire management guidelines that focus on eliminating the source of ignition, but it does not have any power or authority to enforce these guidelines.

10. Are public land managers who are responsible for roads and infrastructure (such as mobile phone towers and water systems) adequately managing fuel loads on their land? If not, what powers do CFA have to ensure public safety?

CFA Response:

Anecdotally, CFA understands that some critical infrastructure within the 2026 fire-affected areas had significant vegetation and fuel loads adjacent to the critical infrastructure that would could cause a critical outage or failure due to the intensity of heat during a wildfire. Whether this is the public land managers' responsibility (for those critical infrastructure sites located on public land) or the leaseholder's responsibility it is not known to CFA.

While CFA actively engages with critical infrastructure operators to provide guidance on fire risk management practices, CFA has no powers to compel land managers (other than private property where Municipalities fail to do so) to manage vegetation and fire risk or to comply with any relevant CFA standards.

11. Why is CFA dependent upon DEECA for funding vegetation management activities? Has this quantum reduced or is it at risk of not continuing?

CFA Response:

Refer to response to Question 3 and 12.

12. Have DEECA reduced the quantum of funding to CFA through the Safer Together initiative?

- If so, is this despite the fact that DEECA now receive funding certainty from the ESVF?

CFA Response:

For the ongoing Safer Together (**ST**) program over the period 2021-22 to 2025-26 funding has generally been allocated in roughly equal proportions between the CFA and DEECA. The quantum of funding to CFA has not reduced over that time.

Questions regarding the future funding of the ST program and the interplay with the ESVF are best directed to DEECA.

13. Have DEECA communicated a position in respect to the continuance of Safer Together and their ongoing partnership with CFA?

CFA Response:

There has been no formal advice from DEECA with respect to the continuance of the ongoing *Safer Together* partnership with CFA. Questions on DEECA's position in respect of the *Safer Together* program continuation are best directed to DEECA.

14. The establishment of the Office of Bushfire Risk Management was an outcome of IGEM's review into the 2019/20 Black Summer Bushfires and a decision taken by this Government. How would you describe the effectiveness of this new body and would any changes (either previously sought by CFA or new) to the current arrangements benefit bushfire at risk communities and CFA in meeting your statutory obligations of preventing fires.

CFA Response:

The establishment of the Office of Bushfire Risk Management has sought to establish system-level coordination, assurance and transparency in bushfire fuel risk reduction for Victoria. As the model continues to mature, CFA have identified practical challenges associated with operating within a multi-agency environment. These include ensuring clear role definition, aligning strategic risk frameworks with operational delivery realities, managing increased assurance and reporting requirements, and navigating the complexity of cross-tenure fuel management.

These are not uncommon in a system of this scale and complexity and are being progressively addressed through ongoing collaboration and refinement of arrangements.

CFA stands ready to assist the OBRM with facilitating its functions through embedded collaboration within the OBRM.

15. Reference Chapter 3 of the “Report of the Board of Inquiry into the occurrence of Bush and Grass Fires in Victoria” ordered by the Legislative Assembly in October 1977. This report provided considerable attention to roadside vegetation management. Some 50 years on, it appears these issues persist. Can CFA meet its statutory obligation to prevent fire and protect lives and property from bushfire under the current arrangements?

CFA Response:

See response to Question 9.

16. What is the status of the recommendations of IGEM review (fuel management) – why haven’t the recommendations been implemented despite the government accepting those recommendations?

CFA Response:

Questions regarding the status of recommendations arising from the IGEM fuel management review are best directed to the Inspector General, Emergency Management, or the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS).

17. Changes to the Emergency Management Act made under this government established ‘all hazards’ emergency management planning committees. In doing so, these changes removed the statutory requirement (under CFA Act) to establish municipal and regional fire management planning committees. Have these changes improved or hindered CFA’s efforts in preventing and mitigating bushfires in Victoria?

CFA Response:

The 2018 reforms improved planning by replacing hazard-specific structures with an integrated, all-hazards framework, enabling agencies to plan collaboratively for a wide range of emergencies (e.g. floods, pandemics, and infrastructure failures).

This has strengthened preparedness by promoting coordinated, multi-agency capability, consistent governance, and flexible plans that can be applied across different emergency scenarios, improving overall system resilience.

Post the implementation of changes several municipal bushfire committees continued to function across a number of CFA Districts and Regions. Unless strong commitment is given by Municipalities and Agencies, CFA holds concerns that the current arrangements may risk a shift of focus away from bushfire prevention and mitigation reducing the effectiveness of bushfire risk mitigation at the local level, unless strong mechanisms exist to ensure compliance.

Following the repeal of the statutory requirements MFPCs, reduced visibility and influence of CFA at the municipal level does create challenges for CFA and Chief Officer in forming applicable views and applying statutory powers under Section 45(1) and 41F of the *CFA Act 1958*.

18. Now municipalities have a reduced role in fire prevention (as per the planning legislation changes) why do they retain other statutory responsibilities under CFA's legislation?

CFA Response:

CFA's legislation was drafted many decades ago at a time where the role of municipalities in managing / mitigating fire risk was a much higher focus than is CFA's experience today.

The role and expectations of both municipalities and CFA have shifted over time, with expectations on CFA to lead and manage fire risk increasing whilst anecdotally reported resource constraints are inhibiting some municipalities from contributing to the levels preferred or required.

These shifts are illustrated in the operation of fire management planning arrangements, roadside and vegetation management, fire trail / track maintenance, provision of resources under the emergency resourcing program and changing expectations as it pertains to relief and recovery.

In the most obvious example, many municipalities are now requiring a fee payable by residents seeking a permit to burn during the declared Fire Danger Period; CFA do not charge a fee for application. A review of the role of Municipalities and CFA functions and accountabilities and where it is best placed would be a matter for consideration of the Government.

•Should municipalities be required to issue fire permits under CFA legislation?

CFA Response:

Yes, this is the current function of Municipalities under the CFA Act.

There are many municipalities that have stopped issuing permits to burn since introduction of the online permit system. That has seen an increase in workload for CFA officers. A review of the accountabilities of Municipalities and CFA for bushfire mitigation and management and where it is best placed, would be a matter for consideration of the Government.

19. Should municipalities be required to monitor fire safety and enforce fire prevention notices?

CFA Response:

Yes, this is the current function of Municipalities under the CFA Act.

A review of the role of Municipalities and CFA accountabilities for bushfire mitigation and management and where it is best placed, would be a matter for consideration of the Government.

20. Is it reasonable for municipalities to undertake these functions to the satisfaction of CFA within their constrained resources (rate capping)?

CFA Response:

This question is probably more appropriate to be directed to the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and/or municipalities themselves rather than CFA.

21. Why aren't CFA primarily responsible for administering your own legislation?

CFA Response:

CFA is primarily responsible for administering its own legislation, in line with the statutory responsibilities that the CFA Act assigns to the Authority and roles of Chief Executive Officer and Chief Officer. A review of the role of Municipalities and CFA accountabilities for bushfire mitigation and management and where it is best placed, would be a matter for consideration of the Government.

CFA - Fire Service Reform impacts on CFA

22. Did the District 22 ACFO attend the Longwood fire on the 7/1/2026 soon after it started, only to depart a couple of hours later and leave volunteer firefighters staring at the worst fire they have ever seen without support and leadership to return home and rest?

CFA Response:

The Committee has heard firsthand from CFA members, including via the 'open mic' sessions, about their experiences, reflections and views regarding the management of fires throughout the Northeast Region and the level of support provided by CFA District teams. Many CFA members have raised concerns around the operation of the current resourcing model and CFA's chain of command directly with the Committee.

CFA values the significant contribution of Assistant Chief Fire Officers and their Command staff who perform critical roles within CFA, directly supporting brigades and volunteer leaders with skills, knowledge and leadership that is critical to enabling success and maintaining safe systems of work, including fireground attendance. CFA also recognises for both staff and volunteers the importance of compliance with applicable health and safety standards, policies and, for employees, relevant provisions of enterprise agreements.

23. What has been the reaction from your volunteers to the actions of the District 22 ACFO?

CFA Response:

The Committee has heard firsthand from CFA members, including via the 'open mic' sessions, about their experiences, reflections and views regarding the management of fires throughout the Northeast Region and the levels of support provided by CFA District teams. Many CFA members have raised concerns around the operation of the current resourcing model and CFA's chain of command directly with the Committee.

CFA values the significant contribution of Assistant Chief Fire Officers and their Command staff who perform critical roles within CFA, directly supporting brigades and volunteer leaders with skills, knowledge and leadership that is critical to enabling success and maintaining safe systems of work. CFA also recognises for both staff and volunteers the importance of compliance with applicable health and safety standards, policies, and for our employees relevant provisions of enterprise agreements.

Volunteers have expressed their disappointment regarding the staff resourcing on 07 January 2026, and CFA continues to work with FRV to ensure that seconded ACFO and Commander positions are filled.

24. Did you or CFA have any say in the decision to appoint the incumbent to the position of District 22 ACFO – the Officer in Charge of 73 CFA Volunteer Fire Brigades.

CFA Response:

Under the secondment agreement and associated policy, Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) holds primary responsibility for recruitment and selection into CFA seconded positions, both on a permanent and temporary basis.

25. How would you describe the effectiveness and performance of District 22 prior to the change of leadership? Who appointed the previous ACFO in District 22?

CFA Response:

CFA values the significant contribution of Assistant Chief Fire Officers and their Command staff who perform critical roles within CFA, directly supporting brigades and volunteer leaders with skills, knowledge and leadership that is critical to enabling success and maintaining safe systems of work.

The recently retired ACFO of District 22 served for approximately 6 years in the role and was appointed prior to fire services reform (which came into effect on 01 July 2020).

26. How many CFA Commander positions are allocated across the four CFA Districts that encompass the Gippsland EM region? How many of those commander positions were filled by an incumbent and available for work on the 17/2/2026 when the region was subject to a TFB.

CFA Response:

CFA Workforce Status (week commencing 16/2/26) limited to Gippsland EM Region:

Ranks	Allocated	Available
ACFO	4	4
Commander	14	5

CFA operates as a statewide, integrated network of brigades, command personnel and specialist capabilities that enable the dynamic movement of resources to areas of greatest need during periods of heightened operational demand.

This model is supported by coordinated regional structures, state-level oversight, and interoperable systems, allowing command personnel and specialist resources to be rapidly redeployed across geographic boundaries. During peak events, this surge capacity ensures that local capability can be reinforced by resources drawn from across Victoria, maintaining an effective and sustained response to emergencies while supporting communities and volunteers impacted by prolonged operations.

27. Has CFA communicated the capabilities it requires from FRV through the secondment agreement? If so, are they being met?

CFA Response:

The CFA Capability Statement for seconded positions was first developed and provided to Fire Rescue Victoria in June 2022 and sets out the required technical skills, behavioral and personal attributes, knowledge and experience for CFA seconded positions. This is an important document because CFA's operating context is vastly different from that of FRV and its organisational needs vary from FRV's.

The CFA Capability Statement provides a clear articulation of these requirements against what it requests FRV to supply with the appropriate numbers of staff.

CFA and FRV established a Joint Secondment Workforce Advisory Group, comprising key representatives from both agencies, to develop an action plan supporting implementation of the CFA Capability Statement. However, progress has been slower than anticipated, noting that proposed measures to address capacity and capability must be consulted through the relevant industrial processes, in line with the FRV/UFU Enterprise Agreement.

28. How would you describe FRV's ability to supply you with the required personnel?

CFA Response:

FRV's ability to supply the required personnel continues to present challenges for both FRV and CFA. The application and operation of the Secondment Agreement is monitored by the Fire Services Implementation Monitor (FSIM). CFA and FRV remain focused on developing workforce planning frameworks to develop the pipeline of FRV personnel to be eligible for secondment to CFA.

29. Do you believe FRV genuinely seek to provide you with the capabilities CFA require?

CFA Response:

CFA considers that FRV is committed to maintaining the secondment model and, through established governance forums, demonstrates an ongoing willingness to engage in discussions and to explore all options to ensure CFA is provided with the requisite number of ACFO's and Commanders at the required capability and capacity.

30. Why don't CFA train and develop your seconded (middle management) workforce – this would be part of any organisation's priorities – to develop their middle / senior management cohort and would it deliver better outcomes if you were responsible?

CFA Response:

Senior operational leaders in CFA (operational middle management ranks including ACFO's and Commanders) are employees of Fire Rescue Victoria (**FRV**), and as such, FRV retains primary responsibility for the recruitment, professional development, and ongoing capability of this workforce. FRV holds the budget for these positions, including associated on-costs including training, which underscores FRV's role in managing workforce development. CFA also notes relevant provisions within the secondment agreement and FRV operational employee's enterprise agreement that also informs training and development.

While this may limit CFA's ability to directly train and develop the seconded middle and senior management cohort in a formal or mandated way, CFA recognises its responsibility

to support these personnel to be effective in the CFA operating environment. In particular, the transition into CFA, leading a volunteer-based organisation with unique community, governance, and operational characteristics, requires targeted induction and support.

In that regard, CFA is undertaking work to strengthen induction arrangements, improve onboarding, and provide clearer guidance and support frameworks to assist senior operational leaders to adapt to the specific requirements of their roles while working in CFA.

31. Are paid CFA instructors (seconded from FRV) delivering the same quantity of training sessions and courses as CFA instructors did prior to reform?

CFA Response:

As a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), CFA is required to meet nationally mandated vocational education and training standards, including maintaining the quality, consistency and integrity of training delivery and assessment. This requires all instructors regardless of whether they are staff or volunteer to meet the same competency, accreditation and quality assurance requirements.

In practice, this means that trainer qualifications, assessment practices, moderation, and ongoing professional development obligations apply equally across the workforce to ensure compliance with regulatory standards and the credibility of qualifications issued. While this approach supports a consistent and high-quality training system, it also introduces complexity within a predominantly volunteer-based model, where maintaining instructor capability and availability must be balanced with broader operational and personal commitments.

The network of CFA staff Instructors (seconded from FRV) and CFA volunteer Instructors provides a significant statewide training capability to deliver the planned CFA Training Program.

32. What feedback are you receiving from CFA volunteers in respect to the impacts of reform & support they are receiving from your senior leaders?

CFA Response:

CFA acknowledges the significant contribution of many senior operational leaders who continue to support the organisation, its brigades, and volunteers with a high level of professionalism and commitment.

The most reform-related feedback that CFA receives from brigades, groups, and volunteers relate to challenges associated with senior operational roles (i.e. ACFO and Commander positions) being vacant and/or not relieved or subject to frequent change. Volunteers report this makes it difficult where it occurs, to establish trusted relationships and maintain momentum on local support initiatives.

CFA and FRV, through a number of standing Working Groups and other governance forums, continue to collaborate to seek to ensure that all seconded positions within CFA are filled, and that the seconded officers have the capability and capacity to perform their roles effectively.

The application and operation of Fire Services Reform is monitored by the Fire Services Implementation Monitor (FSIM).

33. There were media reports at the time of the Clarkfield fire of CFA cancelling FRV fire trucks from responding to a fire that impacted a caravan storage facility? Was this true? Are issues of one fire service ignoring the capability / availability of the other fire service in dispatch and response still an issue?

CFA Response:

Both FRV and CFA attended a grass fire near Clarkfield that impacted a caravan storage facility. CFA is not aware of any response issues that negatively impacted the management of this fire.

In general terms, from time to time CFA is made aware of instances where the process for the dispatch of resources can be improved. CFA and FRV continue to work, along with other stakeholders such as Triple Zero Victoria (TZV) to implement a complementary fire service model across Victoria.

The application and operation of Fire Services Reform is monitored by the Fire Services Implementation Monitor (FSIM).

34. Fire Services Reform was intended to provide for a complimentary fire service to Victorians' – how do examples of the closest fire stations not being dispatched to emergency calls because of the agency badge reflect a complimentary fire service?

CFA Response:

CFA operationalises the intent of the Government's fire service reform policy for a complementary fire service so that all Victorians can rely on the best fire and emergency service response, regardless of where they live. CFA works with FRV and other partners (including TZV) to ensure that the nearest and most appropriate appliances are dispatched to all incidents.

CFA's mission is to protect life and property in the Country Area of Victoria, engaging actively with the community to support the prevention of fire, and with partner agencies in managing emergency incident response.

The application and operation of Fire Services Reform is monitored by the Fire Services Implementation Monitor (FSIM).