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# Options Paper – Appendices

## Contemporary Volunteer Membership Model (CVMM)



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# Appendix 1: The Contemporary Volunteer Membership Model Project

## The origins of this project

The 2025 Contemporary Volunteer Membership Model (CVMM) project is an evolution of a range of work done in the Operating Model improvement space at CFA in response to Fire Services Reform and overall improvements to the way we work at CFA.

From early beginnings in 2022 and building upon member engagement across CFA, with VFBV, CFA committees and CFA staff in 2024, the project has used these foundations to take a deeper dive into the identified challenges and map potential solutions as options to the model.

This Options Paper is the result of this work and the beginning of conversations with our membership and staff to make changes to our volunteer membership model.



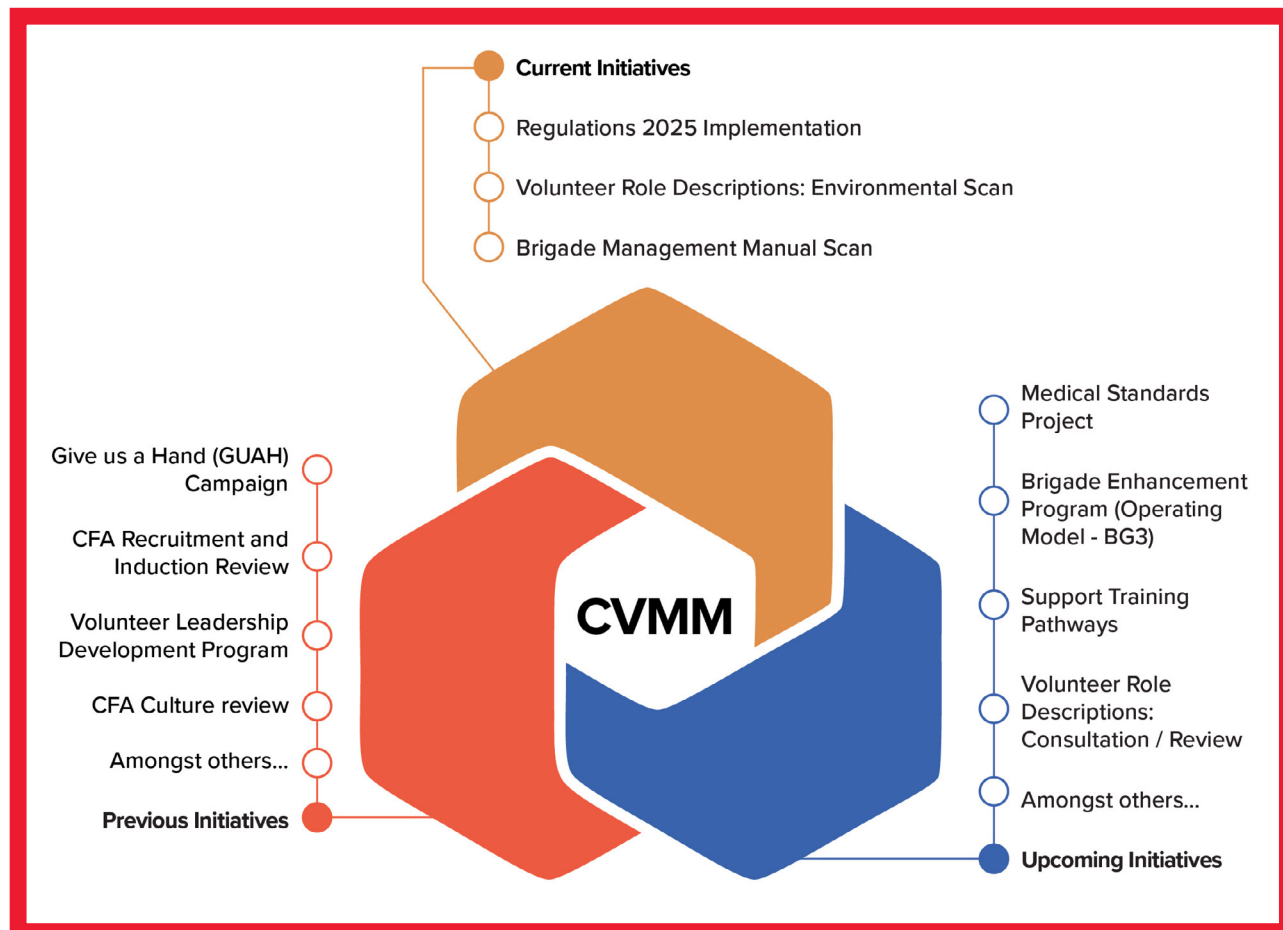
During 2024, the CVMM Project engaged widely across CFA and the VFBV to understand the experiences of members with the model and any potential barriers and enablers. We engaged directly with members at purpose-built focus groups, with a Your Say CFA CVMM Survey, and at various workshops meetings. DCO and ACFO groups as well as DPCs were also part of the engagement.

Continue reading to learn more about the CVMM's engagement in the last two years.

## How it fits

The CVMM project was part of CFA's Operating Model Program and is closely linked to other initiatives across CFA.

**Note: The lists in the diagram below provide some examples and are not exhaustive.**



### 2A) The opportunity with us now – External research

For more than 80 years, Victorian communities have been well served by their volunteer fire brigades. Tens of thousands of dedicated individuals, drawn from local communities, come together to donate their time and skill to build safer communities. Providing a vital contribution to emergency management in Victoria, CFA members undertake a range of operational and support roles extending beyond firefighting. This provides many opportunities for people from all ages, abilities and backgrounds to participate in volunteering with us.

However, the ways in which becoming and remaining a member of CFA's volunteer brigades (the Volunteer membership model) have been in place for several decades. Since that time, there have been rapid, large-scale changes to both CFA and our external environment. There is a clear need for new approaches to strengthen our current membership model.

Along with key external factors, the 2020 Fire Services Reform saw the CFA return to a volunteer, community-based service – prompting us to rethink and adapt to volunteerism being our primary model of service delivery. The Operating Model program was developed in response and contains a series of initiatives to improve and adapt the ways we work, including making our membership model more contemporary.



## A RAPIDLY CHANGING LANDSCAPE

### The nature of volunteering in Australia has changed dramatically.

People's time limitations are our greatest rival in ensuring a sustainable volunteer workforce.

Rising living costs, time constraints and other pressures have decreased the availability of volunteers for long term, formal volunteer roles.<sup>1</sup>

Research shows that many people are now seeking short-term, 'non-traditional' volunteering opportunities and a higher desire for flexibility, such as episodic volunteering – casual, short term or specific roles and projects.<sup>2</sup>

Long term, high commitment volunteering is becoming less attractive to potential volunteers because people's lives are busier and potentially more fragmented or transient. Changes in work and home demands and people moving location for work or lifestyle makes it harder to make a sustained commitment.

This, along with a shift in the motivations of volunteers – particularly young people – wanting to fit their volunteer experience in line with a range of their values – around purpose, enjoyment, skills development – are more likely to want to see immediate impact rather than committing to indefinite obligations.

Volunteering Australia estimates that formal volunteering has been declining since 2010, dropping sharply after the Covid pandemic, and not returning to the higher levels of 20 years ago.

#### The percentage of population in formal roles:



(Sources: ABS, General Social Survey, 2002 Australian Charities Report, 2024, Volunteering Australia)

<sup>1</sup>Parkin, Deb, Future Challenges for Volunteer-based Emergency Services, Australian Journal of Emergency Management, Vol 23. No 2, May 2008.; McLennan B (2022) Emergency Volunteering 2030: Views from emergency response volunteer representatives – Environmental scan report 4. Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Above

## Our populations are growing and becoming more diverse, while our rural communities are changing putting new and different demands on our services

Victoria is growing fast. From 6.5 million people in the 2021 Census to a projected 11.2 million by 2056, this puts more people in need of CFA services, both in Metropolitan areas and in many of our regional cities.

Our communities are changing too: more than 30% of Victorians were born overseas, and the population is ageing. To keep pace, our volunteer and paid workforce must reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.

In rural areas, the volunteer base is shrinking as people move away or age and can no longer manage the same volume of strenuous work, reducing capacity just as demand rises.

Among other things, this highlights two crucial things to improve our volunteering model.

1. There is *flexibility and portability* in place to support the movement of people resources across different brigades according to demands over peak periods and draw upon bigger pools of potential volunteers available in metropolitan areas.
2. There are *attractive options* for roles, locations and commitments for skilled and willing people of varying cultural backgrounds.

### Barriers for underrepresented groups

(First nations, newly arrived migrants, disabilities)

Volunteer's fear of rejection

Cultural and values alignment (such as similar social structures/gender roles)

Lack of information in format/language about the roles

(University of Canberra, 2023)

**Broader changes in ways of working and the increasing role of technology will impact on the types of volunteer skills and roles needed by CFA into the future.**

As the nature of work and communication evolves, CFA volunteer roles are no longer confined to boots-on-the-ground firefighting. Digital proficiency and community connection are skills that are now more important than ever as we navigate an era of rapid technical innovation and change, including AI. In a recent AFAC paper, the authors note that there is a growing recognition of the importance of non-technical people skills – such as cultural awareness, team building, transformation management and communication, yet the publicly available training options for EM volunteers were largely limited to operational response. If emergent skill needs (re innovation and the expanding roles of volunteers) are not identified and addressed, these organisations are likely to face growing skills gaps that will weaken their capability.<sup>6</sup>

Being able to shift into more flexible types of volunteering will mean CFA may begin to use more tech enabled platforms to recruit, train and manage their people and the work. This may mean greater need for volunteers with such skills to join CFA and support those in more traditional operational roles. As the requirements of firefighting capabilities in response or prevention change over time, CFA may also need to introduce additional capabilities and services that are not the sole responsibility of the Brigades to manage – for example, Arduous Firefighting Capabilities or Air services. Flexible arrangements within the model must be in place to draw these members from individual brigades to form a state managed capability, or from a headquartered brigade.



## 2B) Key data supporting the need for a more contemporary model

In seeking to understand the potential for contemporary volunteer models, we have examined volunteer movement data as well as key feedback from membership surveys which provide us with strong insights.

### CFA Volunteer numbers have changed over time:

Midway through 2024:		End of 2020:	
Operational:	Support:	Operational:	Support:
<b>28,854</b>	<b>22,944</b>	<b>29,816</b>	<b>24,607</b>

### THE TOP REASON PEOPLE LEAVE CFA IS BECAUSE THEY MOVE AWAY FROM THEIR HOME BRIGADE

Recent years data from Exit Surveys with former members reveal consistently the number one reason for leaving CFA is that they have **moved away or relocated**.

The other top reasons are

- They did not feel valued
- Brigade culture

It also revealed that for July – December 2023:

- 41% who left CFA did so in **5 years or less**.
- Over half of the volunteers who left (54%) were spending **less than 2hrs a week on CFA**.

**Insights:** If relocation is the number one reason for leaving, what could a more flexible model do to retain members? Instead of moving away from CFA when they leave town, could they relocate easily to a new brigade or be able to volunteer elsewhere in the organisation?

If spending as little as 2 hours a week at CFA this suggests that the less engagement a volunteer has, the more likely they are to resign. If they're not being engaged enough, what other parts of volunteering could they do within a more flexible model?

## **MOST JUNIORS ARE NOT TRANSITIONING TO SENIORS**

RMS data shows that Statewide, currently less than 15% of Juniors are transitioning to Senior membership upon turning 16-years-old, post-Covid. In comparison, this statistic was closer to 30% from 2015 – 2019.

**Insights:** In 2016, over 30% of 16-year-olds moved into senior membership after finishing their junior membership or leaving as 15-year-old juniors and rejoining upon turning 16 years old. After the COVID-19 pandemic, this rate fell by more than half, dropping to just 11% in 2022. Although this figure has fluctuated slightly since 2022, the annual average has remained below 15% in the post-COVID period. CFA should continue to explore ways to strengthen youth engagement and participation.

## **The demands on emergency volunteers are changing and growing – climate change, hazards, additional organisational expectations.**

The needs of CFA and its Brigades have evolved rapidly since the early days of the current volunteering model. Brigade needs are not homogenous as there are many different types of brigades, varying by size, risk profile, environment and focus. Any contemporary volunteering model needs to reflect that there is no 'one-size fits all approach' for volunteering across the state.

Broad agreement exists that the impacts of climate change on Australia are expected to increase extreme fire weather and lengths of fire seasons. The impact of drought on rural communities further exacerbates these impacts. This is expected to place even greater burden and expectations on volunteers to support communities in the impacted areas.<sup>3</sup>

Changing community and government expectations are reshaping what is asked of CFA volunteers. Professionalisation, corporatisation, and increasing regulation have improved safety and service standards but also placed heavier administrative and training demands on volunteers.<sup>4</sup> There are changing expectations on regulations, standards along with resource constraints as well as ever changing risk profiles and more pointed requirement of EM organisations to build community resilience that affect EMOs and their communities.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> McLennan, B (2022) Planning for an uncertain future: future scenarios for emergency volunteering in Australia. P7 Volunteering Australia website.

<sup>4</sup> As above. P6.

<sup>5</sup> Young, C and Jones, R (2025) The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint, Natural Hazards Research Australia.

## 51% OF PEOPLE CONSIDERING JOINING CFA DIDN'T PURSUE IT BECAUSE OF THE TIME BARRIER.

The 2024 Post Season Bushfire Survey (conducted by Roy Morgan) collected the views of 600 randomly selected members of the public in high fire risk areas. It found:

- 79% of people **had not considered** becoming a CFA member. Of those:
  - 18% of those said that they would not consider it because the **perceived time investment** in becoming a CFA member was a barrier,
  - 57% said they felt they were 'too old' to become a member.
- Over half (51%) who were considering volunteering with CFA never took the step to apply as they indicated they did not have sufficient time to commit to volunteering.

**Insights** – The perception of the high commitments of time toward volunteering with CFA is a major barrier for people who may be otherwise willing to contribute. And of those who may have had more time, they held the perception that they couldn't perform a role due to their age.

What would be the impact on community contribution and participation if our membership model allowed for flexibility in time commitments, as life circumstances change and to allow for peak summer periods?



## VOLUNTEERS ARE SEEKING MORE FLEXIBLE OPTIONS

The *YourSay CFA CVMM 2024 Survey* reinforces that volunteers and brigade leaders are themselves looking to the membership model and seeking more options.

In answering *What options would you like your brigade to explore?*

- Over 32% expressed interest in a 'Dual or Multiple' membership option
- More than 20% supported the introduction of a 'Seasonal' membership
- Over 16% indicated a desire to develop or access 'specialist skills'
- Nearly 10% showed interest in virtual or online opportunities including 'project-based roles'
- The remainder selected a variety of other options including corporate support from local businesses and farms with workers, Community Engagement, Incident Management among others.

**Insights:** Good support exists among the membership for introducing more flexible options into the membership model, if the details and implementation are carefully planned and have considered the impacts on Brigades.

Continue reading for further insights about this survey.

## VOLUNTEERS SAY THE CFA VOLUNTEER LIFECYCLE IS NOT LINEAR AND NEEDS TO RECOGNISE AND OFFER MULTIPLE POINTS OF ENTRY/RE-ENGAGEMENT.

Through workshops with volunteers conducted in 2024 about contemporary volunteering, it was identified that the current CFA volunteer lifecycle was simple and clear but did not reflect the various states of engagement, re-engagement and participation in a CFA volunteer experience.

**Insights:** This consideration shows us that it is top of mind for volunteers and staff looking at volunteer experience that there are multiple points where people enter, exit, want to retrain or change roles and that we can retain more of these members if we develop a model that can recognise the flexible nature of the lifecycle.

Continue reading for an indicative Future-State Volunteer Lifecycle Diagram

## 2C) Research & Engagement 2024 - 2025

Throughout 2024, initial member engagement and internal research was undertaken, along with external research to strengthen our understanding of volunteer models used globally. Initial CFA member and staff engagement for CVMM took place between March and August 2024 to better understand CFAs current membership model and the barriers and enablers for contemporary volunteering in CFA. Through both targeted and broad-based communications, CFA volunteers and staff were engaged in CVMM across a variety of different platforms, formats, and activities to ensure accessibility.

Direct engagement was conducted via online information sessions, CFA Brigade Magazine, surveys, Member Story focus groups, Member Online project pages, workshops, meetings, emails and phone calls, and the State Championships, to name a few.

Since then, CVMM engagement has been both broad-based and targeted. The monthly CVMM Project Reference Group (PRG) represented the diverse views of CFA membership and engaged even more broadly with their networks to inform the project. The PRG supported the development of key project activities and guided the project in current state analysis, problem identification, brainstorming of potential solutions aimed at enhancing the membership model, and conducting impact analyses for the solutions.

Other more targeted engagement included presenting at the DCO/ACFO/DPC Chair workshop, individual consultation with DCO's, presentation at four Joint Consultative Committee meetings, District Planning Committees, Regional Leadership Group meetings and updates at All Staff Sessions.

### CVMM Survey – Your Say CFA

A survey took place from 25th February 2024 to 30th April 2024 which featured questions adapted to the discussion on types of volunteering. Although a small representative of the overall CFA volunteer cohort contributed to the survey, the project received above average submissions for Your Say CFA survey results, the majority from those identifying as operational members.

An overview of the CVMM survey results can be found as you progress through this document. The CVMM survey focused on various flexible volunteering styles within CFA and the factors influencing them. Survey submissions revealed that CFA members were most interested in adopting dual / multi-brigade membership, followed by interest in seasonal volunteering options. Various barriers to adopting new membership options were identified among CVMM survey participants with organisational barriers mentioned as the main obstacle to new volunteering types.

## Focus Groups

The team proposed to engage with volunteers via focus group sessions to create, inform, inspire, and share member stories of various forms of contemporary volunteerism within CFA. Focus groups create meaningful targeted involvement with key project stakeholders whilst collecting insightful information towards creating a baseline picture of contemporary volunteer activities within CFA.

Focus groups are a well-known form of qualitative data collection. They contain the exchange of information to a tight range of ideas, questions, and inquiry. Best practice of focus group methodology is outlining the purpose of the discussion, inviting a sample group of participants (typically 6-12 members) and begins with a guided discussion on a specific research topic. A facilitator guides the discussion around clear and consistent research questions.

The focus groups were promoted through Members Online, the CFA State Championships, SRLT meetings, DCO workshops, member news articles, DCO email communications, and Regional VST Managers.

There were 5 Member Stories focus group sessions held across the state (1 in each region) throughout April 2024. Members were invited to share their valuable insights into diverse and flexible ways members can volunteer with their local brigades.

## Emerging Themes

1. **Need for Flexible and Diverse Membership Models**  
Members emphasise the importance of accommodating non-traditional volunteering roles, seasonal participation, specialist tasks, and members who live out of area.
2. **Managing Multiple or Dual Roles**  
There are recurring concerns about balancing brigade responsibilities with external or specialised roles (e.g., aviation tasks), and the need for clear parameters and expectations for dual memberships or roles.
3. **Operational Readiness and Training Requirements**  
Members raise issues around ensuring training standards are maintained when some individuals remain on brigade lists without participating operationally.
4. **Governance and Structural Considerations**  
Suggestions include categorising members, developing specialist non-voting roles, and creating separate brigades or structures to avoid quorum issues and role conflicts.
5. **Member Well-being and Support**  
The facilitator and members highlight the importance of supporting individuals who juggle multiple commitments and reducing organisational barriers that contribute to stress or role conflict.

## Summary of Feedback

*“Great initiatives but a lot of things need to change at headquarters and district levels to make contemporary volunteering work”*  
- CFA member.

*“For implementation, the project team needs to be across the existing barriers for different models of membership. I am not convinced that CFA can change it spots enough to cope”*  
- CFA member.

*“Keeping them [the focus groups] small gave people a chance to share”*  
- CFA member.

## Member Story Interviews

Member engagement was enhanced through interviews with volunteers that explored how their individual stories, and those of their peers, related to the recommended options. Key themes that emerged included dual memberships, brigade transfer procedures, recruitment and induction, and the development of youth members. The recommended options in the Options Paper are supported by both real and hypothetical member stories, some of which were shaped directly by this engagement.

## Options Paper – Volunteer Reading Group

As the Options Paper was being developed, it underwent multiple rounds of revision. During this process, it was shared with a group of volunteers who were asked to blind-read the draft and assess its readability, clarity, the suitability of the included stories, and how effectively it conveyed its overall message. This activity proved highly beneficial, as the project team received valuable feedback for further refinement, while the volunteers gained an opportunity to engage directly with the Paper.

*“Yes, makes the most sense by providing a practical example [incorporated member stories]”*

*“The paper is very clear and concise about what’s new with the proposed changes.”*

*“They’re [incorporated member stories] helpful in illustrating the proposals.”*

*“The impact and the way the stories work to the options was very good and I was able to relate how that would work in my brigade...”*

## External Benchmarking & Environmental Scan Activities

The project conducted benchmarking/environmental scan of good practice volunteer models looked at the following organisations:

- National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
- Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES)
- State Emergency Services (SES)
- Emergency Management Victoria (EMV)
- NSW Rural Fire Service, Tasmanian Fire Services, South Australian Country Fire Service
- Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC)
- Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Western Australia (DFES-WA)
- International Volunteer Firefighting Services
- Other Emergency Service Volunteer Organisations (Life Saving Victoria (LSV), Australian Red Cross (ARC)).
- Other volunteer organisation models (Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia)



## Purpose of Project Reference Group (PRG)

The Project Reference Group (PRG) served as a collaborative forum to support effective project delivery. The PRG's objectives were to provide guidance on deliverable-level issues, review key updates and decision points, ensure adherence to governance and regulatory requirements, monitor risk management practices, and offer timely feedback to the Projects Steering Committee throughout the project.

The membership of the CVMM PRG consisted of:

- Volunteers, including a Brigade Captain, Group Officer, District Commander, and Brigade Administrative Support Officers.
- Regional Managers from NWR, NER, WR, and SWR.
- VFBV Executive Officer.
- WAC & YAAC Members.
- Regulations Implementation Program Manager, Training Design & Development Manager, and the Health Services Manager.

## PRG Contributions in 2025

- Reviewed and validated the **Current State** draft work, Identifying **gaps and pain points** within the current membership model.
- Analysed each pain point to help develop **Problem Statements**.
- Collaboratively brainstormed solutions for each problem, ultimately informing the list of **recommended options**.
- Collaboratively conducted **change impact assessments** on the list of recommended options.



# Appendix 3: Insights from Survey and Focus Group Discussions

## Your Say CFA survey

Your Say CFA survey was conducted in 2024.

161 completed the survey with a further 9 responses completed in the CVMM focus group survey (same questions tailored to presentation of volunteering types in the focus group sessions) TOTAL = 170.

The questions centred around differing flexible and diverse styles of volunteering activity in the CFA and the enablers, barriers and member preferences to explore types of volunteering in their brigade.

No. of responses per region	% of total no. responses
North West = 39	24.2%
South West = 23	14.3%
South East = 43	26.7%
North East = 38	23.6%
West = 18	11.2%
<b>161</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Highlights

Total Visits:	<b>450</b>
Max Visitors Per Day:	<b>83</b>
New Registrations:	<b>0</b>
Engaged Visitors:	<b>162</b>
Informed Visitors:	<b>298</b>
Aware Visitors:	<b>360</b>

**88.8%** of members who participated in the survey were operational

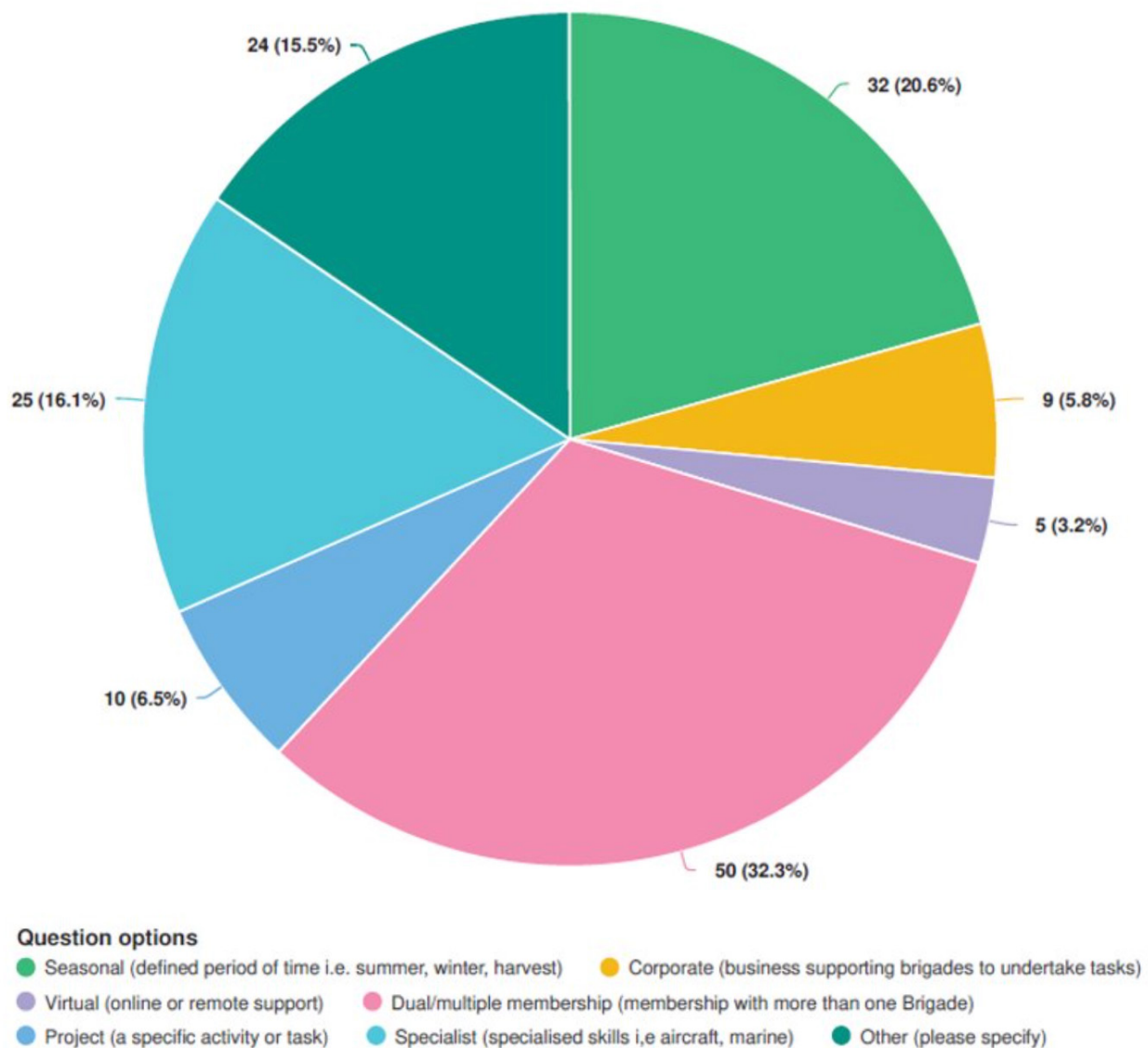


## What type of volunteering would CFA members most like to explore in their brigade?

(in order of importance)

- Dual/multiple membership followed by
- seasonal and
- other i.e. virtual, project-based, corporate

Suggestions were made for various additional membership categories  
i.e. Associate, Specialist



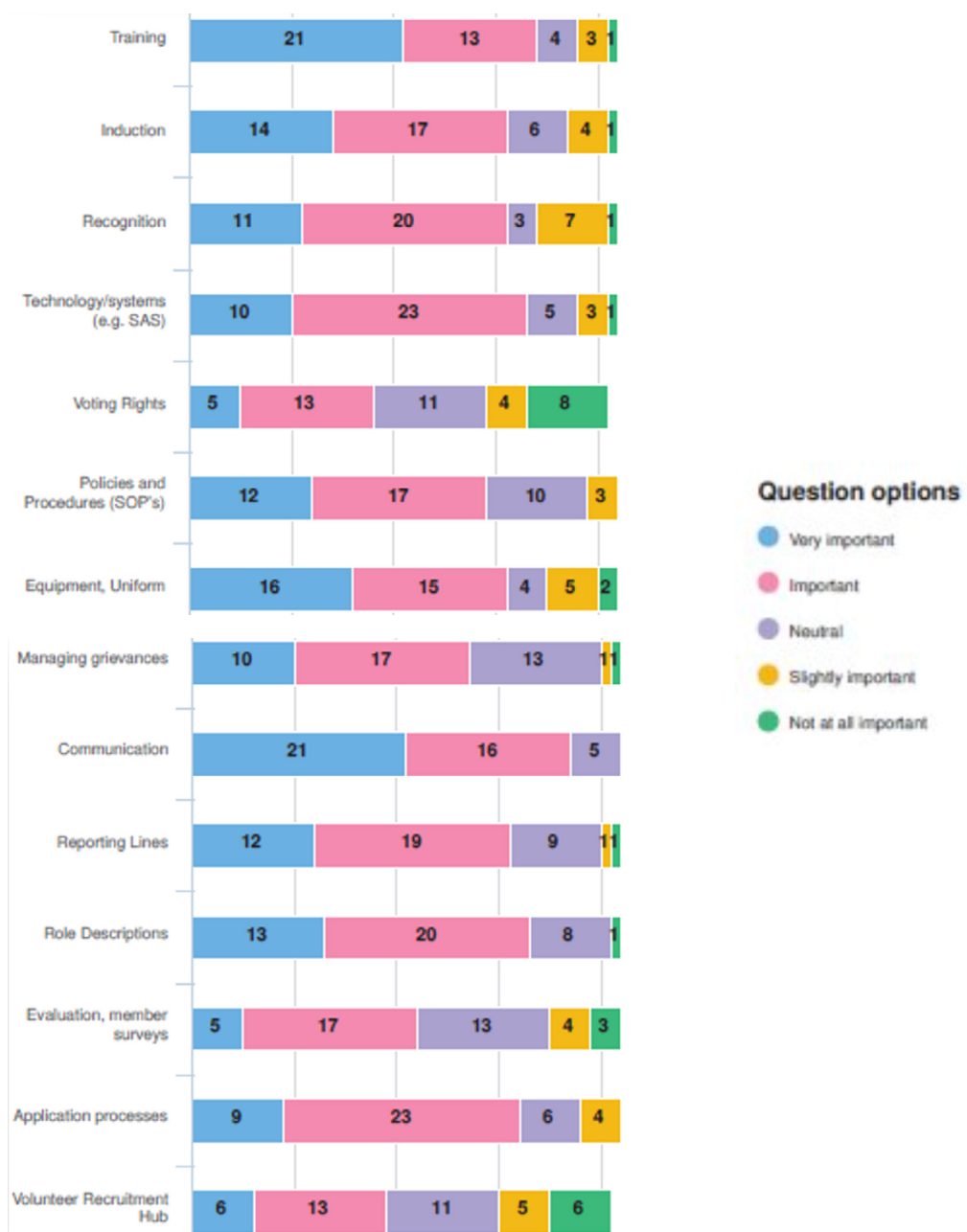
## What is the most important consideration in implementing this option?

(in order of importance)

(Very important and important)

1. Communication (37) and Training (availability and flexibility) (34)
2. Technology/Systems (33) and Role Descriptions (33)
3. Application Processes (32)
4. Recognition (31)

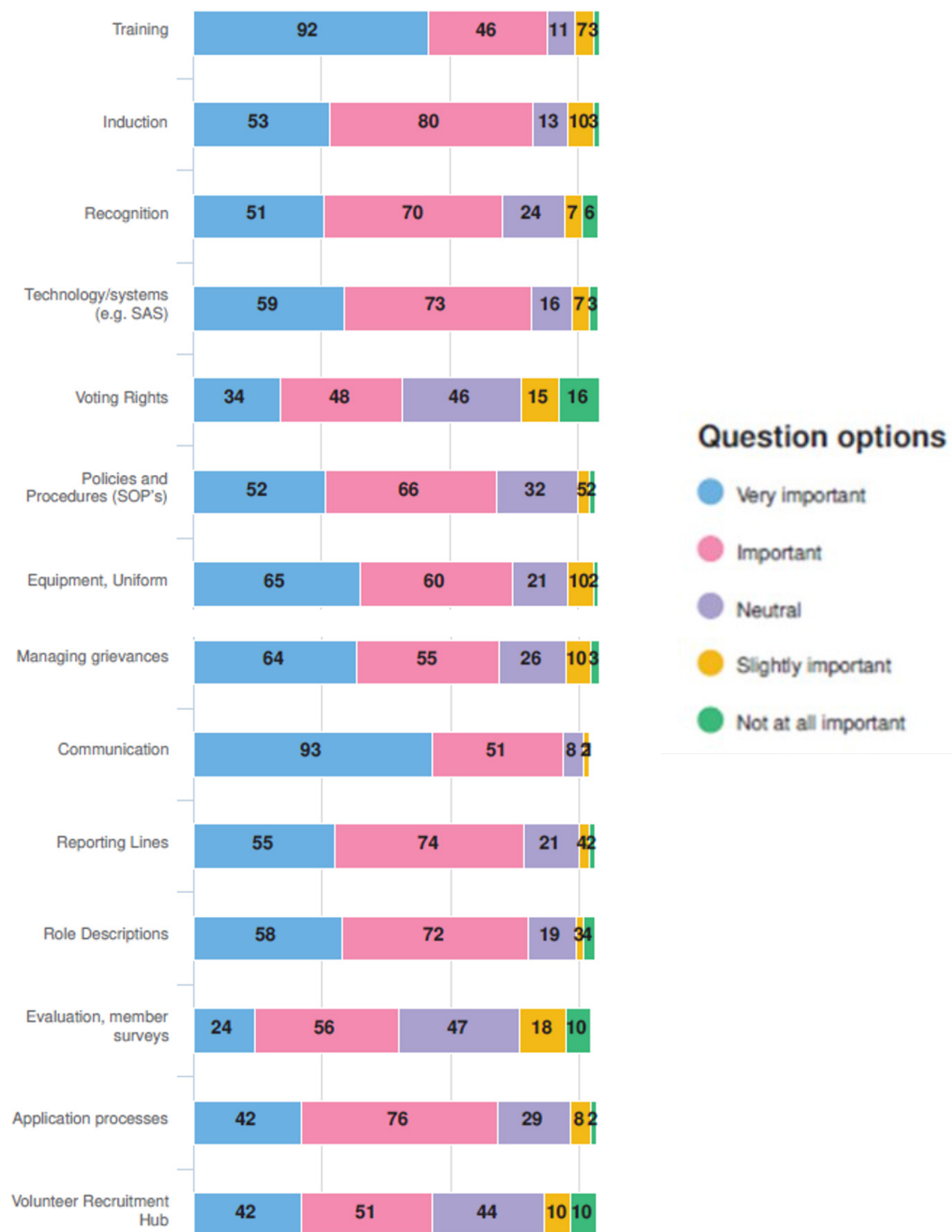
Please rank the following resources below based on their importance in supporting the volunteer membership option you've selected.



## What is ranked the most important resource in implementing this option?

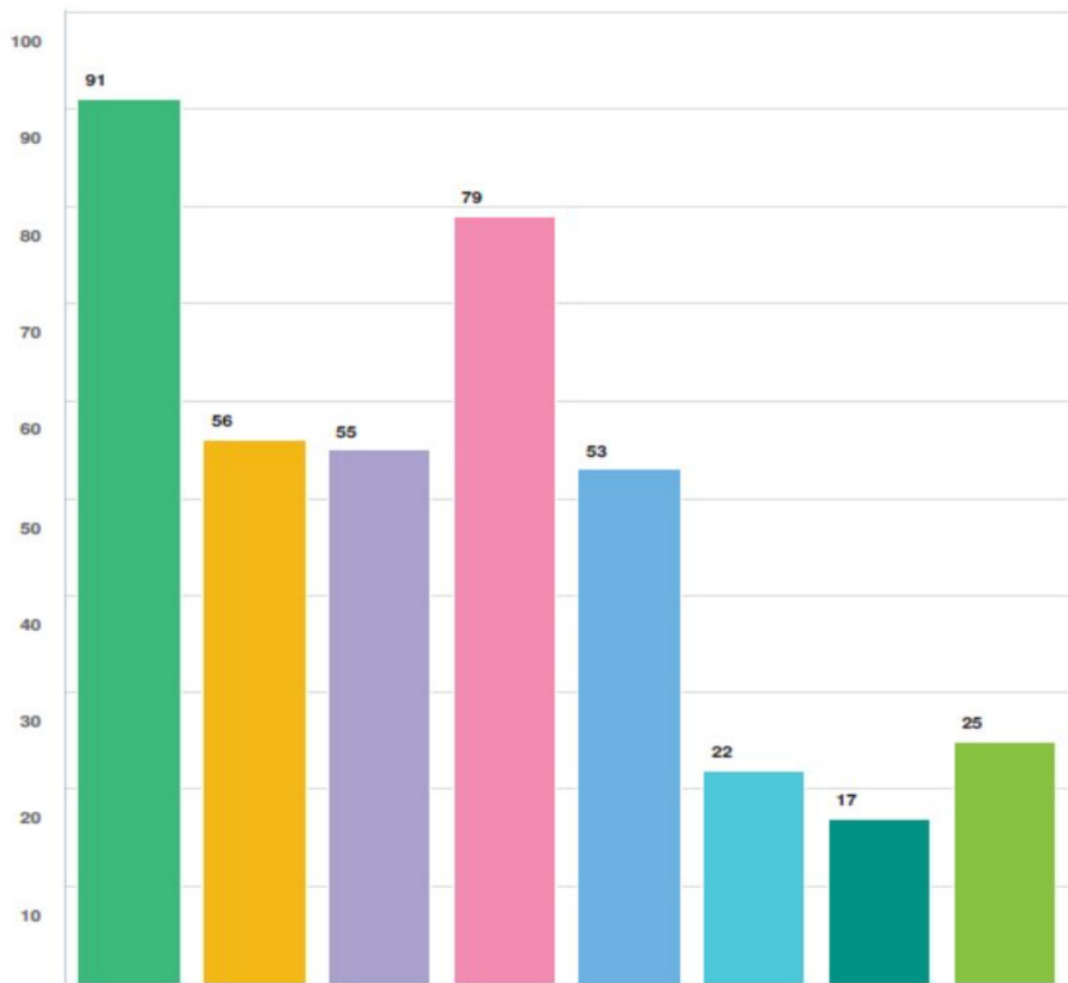
(Very Important and important)

1. Communication (144)
2. Training (138)
3. Induction (133)
4. Equipment, uniform (125)
5. Application Processes (118)



## What are the barriers to in introducing new membership types in brigade or Group?

1. Organisational
2. Training- availability and flexibility



### Question options

- Other (please specify)
- Financial
- Technical
- Culture (brigade or organisational)
- Training availability
- Policies and Procedures
- Leadership (Brigade, Group or District)
- Organisational

## Appendix 4: Contemporary Volunteering models being explored by CFA and other emergency service organisations

Various agencies worldwide have been investigating new practices for contemporary volunteering. CFA itself has also run various pilot programs and activities at a local level to explore ad hoc volunteering.

### Seasonal or short-term volunteering at CFA

- *Lorne Summer Crew* – From December 26 to January 15, the Lorne Summer Crew consists of 4 volunteers and an additional truck supporting the brigade to increase support at this peak time
- *Vols on Hols'* – District 11 Vols on Hols program is designed to boost the numbers in key holiday destinations throughout East Gippsland during the fire danger period.
- *NE Seasonal Volunteer Firefighter Program* – District 13 trialled an initiative in 2023/24 for an alternative type of membership with CFA for people who live within the FRV District. The trial program consists of an optional period of inactivity for Seasonal Firefighters from a participating CFA Brigade.
- *Strike teams in District 13* – Rowville and Boronia Fire Brigades encouraged a group of young people to join as seasonal firefighters, to assist in strike teams. Pairing up with experienced firefighters they carried out planned burns, attended to grass fires supported VICSES in storm and flood response.

### Spontaneous Volunteering

NSW SES noted an increase in volunteering numbers attributed in part to their Community Action Team Member category of membership and the incorporation of spontaneous volunteers\*. They also offer tailored opportunities for individuals and businesses to get involved in flood and storm response, IT and logistics support and operational support

Helping Hands offer opportunities for corporate volunteers to participate in Bush Fire Resilience Program and other programs tailored for time commitments and skills development.



## Supporting greater youth participation

CFA have trialled and introduced a number of strategies over the years to support youth and young adults. They include:

- Cadet camps for 16 & 17 year old members, since 2022, to enhance firefighting skills and knowledges along with developing teamwork and leadership skills
- The Junior Volunteer Development Program, since 2000, provides junior members with a formalised way to introduce the basics of fire safety and what it means to be a CFA Volunteer.

NSW Rural Fire Service also has a Cadet program in place for some brigades, where they provide training and development programs for young members (as young as 12 up to the age of 18) Junior membership is eligible for ages 12-15. The RFS Secondary School Cadet Program (SSCP) has been delivered for over 20 years and presents Year 9 and 10 secondary school students with the opportunity to train with the RFS during their School year.

## Exploring virtual volunteering

- At CFA, the role of social media monitor was performed remotely by a volunteer at a Tarwin Lower Brigade
- DFES created a social media monitoring surge capacity by partnering with Bankwest which allowed them to respond to vital misinformation and monitor intel across local social media channels which help operational activities.

## Supporting CALD communities and underrepresented cohorts

Despite the willingness of people with CALD backgrounds to volunteer, barriers to participation still exist in many EM agencies. Some examples of great work to engage these groups are:

- VICSES has adopted an approach speaking directly with a range of culturally diverse groups in the Greater Dandenong area adjusting training and assessment materials to use plain English and adapted uniforms and facilities to meet cultural requirements.
- Life Saving Victoria's (LSV) Multicultural Program (LSVMP) developed a stand-alone delivery team dedicated to engaging and supporting CALD participants.

CFA's Koorie Inclusion Action Plan demonstrates our commitment to Aboriginal inclusive strategies that support First Nations engagement and acknowledge First Nations knowledge in CFA. They include:

- Establishment of Bunjil Brigade – all indigenous crew
- Jigjja Indigenous Fire Training Program (2018)
- Dhungala National Indigenous Fire Workshop (2019)
- Smoking Ceremonies District 20 (2016-2020)

### What other agencies are doing

As with CFA, several other Australian EM agencies are currently reviewing their membership models in response to the change in community expectations, demand for services and decline in the amount of time volunteers have to offer. Agencies are at varying stages of innovation and the availability of data on the success of new initiatives is limited.

## Other Australian Agency Membership Models



### ACT Rural Fire Service have categories of

- Active Firefighter
- Operational Support
- Brigade Support
- Junior member
- Reserve



### QFES have categories broadly as

- Operational
- Organisational Support
- Community Educator



### NSW RFS have categories of

- First level – FIXED, Associate Junior, probationary
- Second level – FLEXIBLE- Reserve, operational, operational support, admin, social and
- Third level-OPTIONAL – multiple roles, fundraising, training, Treasurer, First Aid, station officer.



### WA has six emergency services agencies with volunteer membership under broad categories of

- Probationary
- Active
- Support/Auxiliary
- Junior/Cadet



### NSW SES has four categories of volunteer membership

- Corporate member
- Community Action Team member
- Unit volunteer
- Spontaneous volunteering



Tasmania Fire Service

### Tasmania Fire Service has three broad categories of volunteer membership

- Operational
- Operational Support
- Junior and Cadet



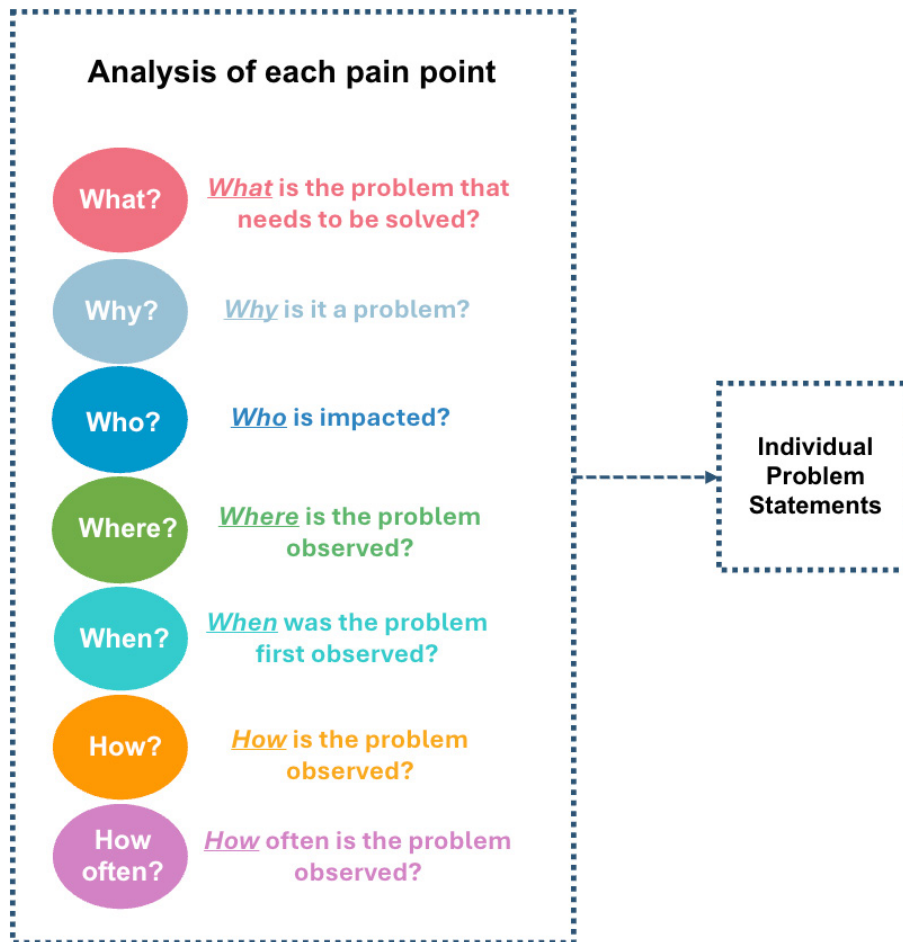
### SA Country Fire Service (CFS) has three broad categories of membership

- Firefighter
- Operational Support
- Cadets

- NSW RFS have categorised their membership under broad sections of FIXED, FLEXIBLE and OPTIONAL.
- QFES – partnership with NAB supporting a Volunteer Wellbeing Project and 2018 Energy Queensland has supported the RFS with sponsored projects such as solar power collection and storage units for remote brigades.
- NZFES have developed comprehensive assets to support employers of volunteers and information on agreements for incident release, training and loss of income, injury while volunteering and recognition and wellness and support. Recognising employers | Fire and Emergency New Zealand
- Life Saving Victoria's (LSV) Multicultural Program (SLVMP) developed a stand-alone delivery team dedicated to engaging and supporting CALD participants.
- The LSV delivery network approach works with over 450 collaborating organisations, schools and agencies, partner funders such as VicHealth and LGA's, and activity and employment providers as well as support services such as community groups and migrant resource centres to establish and promote role models within the CALD community.
- NSW SES have included corporate membership and spontaneous membership options as part of a Community Action Team Member category, to give a degree of flexibility and have noted an increase in volunteer numbers under this category.

# Appendix 5: Development of Problem Statements

## How were the Problem Statements Developed?



The identified pain points were collaboratively analysed with the Project Reference Group and Steering Committee using the 5W2H methodology.

- What is the problem that needs to be solved?
- Why is it a problem?
- Who is impacted?
- Where is the problem observed?
- When was the problem first observed?
- How is the problem observed?
- How often is the problem observed?

## 1. Membership Model Framework definitions

### **Problem Statement**

No authoritative single source, that clearly, and/or consistently defines CFA's full Membership Model Framework:

- Membership Categories and Types (e.g., Senior/General, Junior, Life Member, FIB member)
- Membership Classifications (e.g., Operational, Non-Operational)
- Membership Status (e.g., Probationary, Active, Reserve, Auxiliary)
- Membership Roles (e.g., Firefighter, Support Officer)
- Operational Ranks & Elected Positions

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### **Problem Description**

Beyond CFA's Regulations 2014, there is no single source of authority, clear, and/or consistent definitions describing the Membership Model Framework and its operation. This includes terms such as membership Categories, Subcategories, Types, Classifications, and member Status.

This lack of clarity and inconsistency between artefacts leads to confusion among staff and volunteers regarding the structure and application of the membership model across brigades. It can further create administrative burdens, introduce challenges for new members, and result in sub-optimal volunteer experiences.

These inconsistencies are evident across multiple CFA documents, including the CFA Regulations 2014, Members Online, the VRH Manual, the Brigade Management Manual (BMM), Public CFA website, CFA ICT systems, BCPA, and prior project documentation from the Brigade and Membership Classification project. For example, while CFA's Regulations define membership categories as Juniors and Seniors, other sources refer to these same groups as membership classifications and types, creating inconsistency in terminology.

## 2. Definitions and standards associated with roles

### **Problem Statement**

Absence of clear and consistent definitions and standards associated with volunteer roles (Junior, Operational, Non-Operational).

A further consequence of this is the lack of guidance for brigades to establish and maintain support groups, such as Brigade Support Teams or Auxiliaries.

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### **Problem Description**

A current challenge is the absence of clear and consistent definitions and supporting standards associated with volunteer roles available to be undertaken within CFA. This current state challenges CFA in being able to effectively support the membership and align roles with skills and other pre-requisites. In the current membership model, these issues apply equally to:

- Junior,
- Operational,
- Non-Operational / Support members,

The documentation supporting these roles is either missing or inconsistent, leading to confusion among both new and existing members and creating challenges in defining accountabilities. Additionally, the lack of standardisation makes it difficult to follow any established guidelines and can create administrative challenges.

This lack of role clarity also creates operational challenges for Brigade Management Teams, including difficulties in prioritising training and optimising limited resources such as uniforms, PPC, and other equipment. Moreover, the absence of defined role standards and performance criteria can lead to misaligned expectations between individual members, the brigade, and CFA.

Furthermore, there is currently a lack of clear provisions around brigades establishing and maintaining brigade support teams / cohorts (e.g., Brigade Auxiliaries and Brigade Support Teams), and how the memberships of such cohorts are categorised and managed. This gap creates barriers for community members who are willing to support their local brigade but are deterred by the formal recruitment process.

### 3. Utilisation of capability

#### **Problem Statement**

The current membership model is ineffective in supporting CFA's total capability requirements.

Not all service delivery capabilities are managed at Brigade level, yet an individual can only be a member of CFA through being a member of a Brigade.

For example, CFA build, manage and deploy some capabilities (such as Aviation, Fire Investigation and Incident Management) through other organisational tiers drawing upon the full membership of CFA.

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#### **Problem Description**

In some cases, the current brigade operating models are misaligned with the volunteering interests of community members and CFA's organisational needs and offerings leading to challenges in engagement, missing recruiting opportunities, and limiting participation. This misalignment is particularly pronounced for individuals residing outside the CFA area or brigade turnout area, as well as those whose interests / expertise are not functionally required by their local brigades.

Traditional approaches, which primarily recruit volunteers based on residential location, should also accommodate the diverse interests and skills of potential volunteers, such as those interested in non-firefighting roles or possessing specialist skills such as aviation and/or community safety. Without such tailored pathways and membership arrangements, CFA risks limiting its potential volunteer recruitment pool by failing to support brigade members whose primary focus or role differs from that of their local brigade.

Additionally, non-operational members face difficulties in contributing meaningfully if their interests do not align with the available roles within / focus of the local brigade. Whilst CFA may have a specific capability need, that capability may not be the direct responsibility of the brigade (e.g., Incident Management, Aviation, Fire Investigation etc.).

Overall, a focus limited to timely operational response, limits CFA's potential to build diverse capabilities, can alienate potential volunteers, and limit the pool of community members considering volunteering – ultimately hindering CFA's ability to effectively leverage community resources.

This misalignment impacts the individuals eager to contribute, brigades that could benefit from their involvement and CFA's overall ability to build and maintain a volunteer workforce with the requisite capabilities.



#### 4. A “One-size fits all” approach for new and transferring members

##### **Problem Statement**

A “one-size fits all” approach is currently applied to all membership changes, including transfers between brigades. Additionally, new members are required to follow this same process when joining the CFA, regardless of their intended role or the classification of the brigade.

##### **Problem Description**

There is currently a ‘one-size fits all’ recruitment criteria and process for both new and transferring members at CFA, regardless of role. As a result, existing members transferring across brigades are required to undergo repeated processes and procedures.

Furthermore, new CFA members are required to follow a single-entry pathway, which in some cases introduces unnecessary barriers and steps. This can reduce the member experience and discourage individuals from progressing through the recruitment process. For example, a member wishing to join a brigade to assist with community engagement, fundraising, managing finances or recruiting is required to complete the same steps as a member joining to become an operational firefighter.

The lack of clarity around role definitions and standards further contributes to the inability to support tailored recruitment pathways. This absence of structure fuels frustration and trust issues, especially as brigades often apply their own informal rules. Additionally, members may be disadvantaged during the transfer period due to default probationary status.



## 5. Inefficient process for Juniors transitioning to Senior membership

### **Problem Statement**

Inefficient and disjointed process for Juniors transitioning to Senior membership.

### **Problem Description**

The transition process from a Junior to Senior membership at CFA is currently inefficient and disjointed. Upon turning 16, Juniors must reapply as Senior member, which many find discouraging.

Additionally, there is confusion with some brigades requiring 16–17-year-olds to obtain a Working with Children Check (WWCC), further challenging the transition. Although there isn't any formal documentation stating this as a requirement for members under 18, member stories have validated this requirement across brigades.

The absence of structured support and mentorship during this transition leaves Juniors feeling overwhelmed and undervalued. This issue is evident through historical conversion rates and from member feedback captured through VFBV's VolWel surveys, which highlight the need for improved youth retention across brigades. Additionally, RMS data can provide insight into long-term trends in Junior-to-Senior transition rates.

## 6. Seasonal / Time-limited volunteering

### Problem Statement

There is currently an absence of a seasonal or time-limited level of participation embedded within the membership model framework.

### Problem Description

The current membership model does not adequately consider a clearly defined classification or subcategory, with standards or management protocols to support a seasonal level of participation by operational volunteers, despite the fact that many Class 1-2 brigades effectively function with a seasonal model.

The transient nature of some cohorts within our communities makes it challenging for those members to remain consistently engaged (year-round) with their CFA brigade. Seasonal workforces, students studying away from home, and those who have limited available time to volunteer are all ineffectively supported by the current membership model, making their volunteering experience challenging.

CFA have an existing and growing need to draw upon a greater portion of its membership during the high-risk weather season more frequently and for longer periods of time.



## 7. Information regarding Dual / Multi-Brigade Memberships

### **Problem Statement**

Currently, there is no clear documentation, doctrine, or policy that defines the rules and parameters governing Dual / Multi-Brigade Membership.

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### **Problem Description**

Currently, the Dual Membership option is utilised across various brigades, including Headquarter (HQ) Brigades, Coast Guard Brigades (CGB), Oscar One Brigades, and Industry Brigades. However, there is an absence of clearly documented information around this membership option, including definitions, criteria, and parameters and rules for application.

Additionally, due to the lack of policy and procedure to support, enable or manage this option, it is unclear if a member can be considered a member of two or more local brigades, other than the brigades mentioned above, and how their membership is to be managed.

There are potential efficiencies should an individual member be able to perform a functional role (such as Secretary or Treasurer) across multiple brigades.

## 8. Information regarding HQ Brigades

### **Problem Statement**

No clear and consistent understanding of the process and criteria to enter a HQ brigade, the roles a HQ brigade member can conduct, and the parameters by which they must operate.

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### **Problem Description**

There is currently no clear and consistent understanding of the processes and criteria of joining a Headquarters (HQ) brigade. This applies to existing CFA brigade members from other brigades with dual membership, former active CFA brigade members wish to continue contributing to CFA, and a new CFA member directly joining a HQ brigade.

This problem is further exacerbated by the inconsistent information available regarding the types of roles HQ brigade members are permitted to perform. Given that the purpose of a HQ brigade is to provide non-firefighting support to their respective district, SOP 2.04 'Headquarters Brigade' states that HQ brigade members can provide support to fireground operations without engaging in firefighting. However, non-operational members are not permitted access to firegrounds. This information gap creates uncertainty about whether HQ members need operational training and qualifications.

## 9. Information regarding Casual Firefighters

### **Problem Statement**

Limited information around Casual Firefighters outside of the CFA Act 1958, including information about activities they can perform, general restrictions such as age, and parameters / guardrails of operations.

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### **Problem Description**

There is limited guidance and documentation regarding Casual Firefighters beyond what is outlined by S.62 of the CFA Act 1958. Critical information—such as permitted activities, age restrictions, and operational parameters—is either unclear or unavailable.

This lack of clarity raises concerns around safety and operational risks for both Casual Firefighters and CFA volunteers during incidents. Whilst CFA guidelines around the use of private firefighting equipment informs farmers, community members, and others with responsibilities called for by S.34 of the CFA Act 1958 to assist, many involved in operational response activities are likely unaware of expectations, responsibilities, and limitations associated with the role of Casual Firefighters.

The broad provisions provided for by S.62 could provide CFA an opportunity to construct a policy framework to encompass and manage a community's desire to spontaneously volunteer and support during times of crisis.

## 10. Spontaneous / Ad-hoc Volunteering

### **Problem Statement**

CFA cannot currently integrate spontaneous or ad-hoc volunteering trends within its current Membership Model Framework in a safe, controllable, scalable, and sustainable manner.

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### **Problem Description**

CFA cannot currently integrate Spontaneous Volunteering trends – defined by Volunteering Victoria as the activity of informally volunteering to assist during and/or after disaster or emergency events – within its current Membership Model Framework in a safe, controllable, scalable, and sustainable manner.

## 11. Information regarding Volunteer Auxiliary Workers (VAWs)

### **Problem Statement**

Lack of consistent documentation around Volunteer Auxiliary Workers (VAWs), including definition, scope of activities, limitations, rules, and parameters.

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### **Problem Description**

There is currently an absence of a policy framework to manage and operationalise the powers provided for by S.17 of the CFA Act 1958 in respect to Volunteer Auxiliary Workers (VAWs). These legislative provisions provide for brigades to engage additional resources for defined purposes, providing both risks and opportunities for CFA.

Additionally, there is a noticeable gap in members' understanding of who VAWs are, including the criteria and limitations for their appointment, and how they differ from Brigade Support Teams and Brigade Auxiliaries.

## 12. Ongoing engagement of members transitioning out of active roles / membership

### **Problem Statement**

The current membership model does not support the ongoing engagement of long-serving members who are transitioning out of active CFA roles / membership.

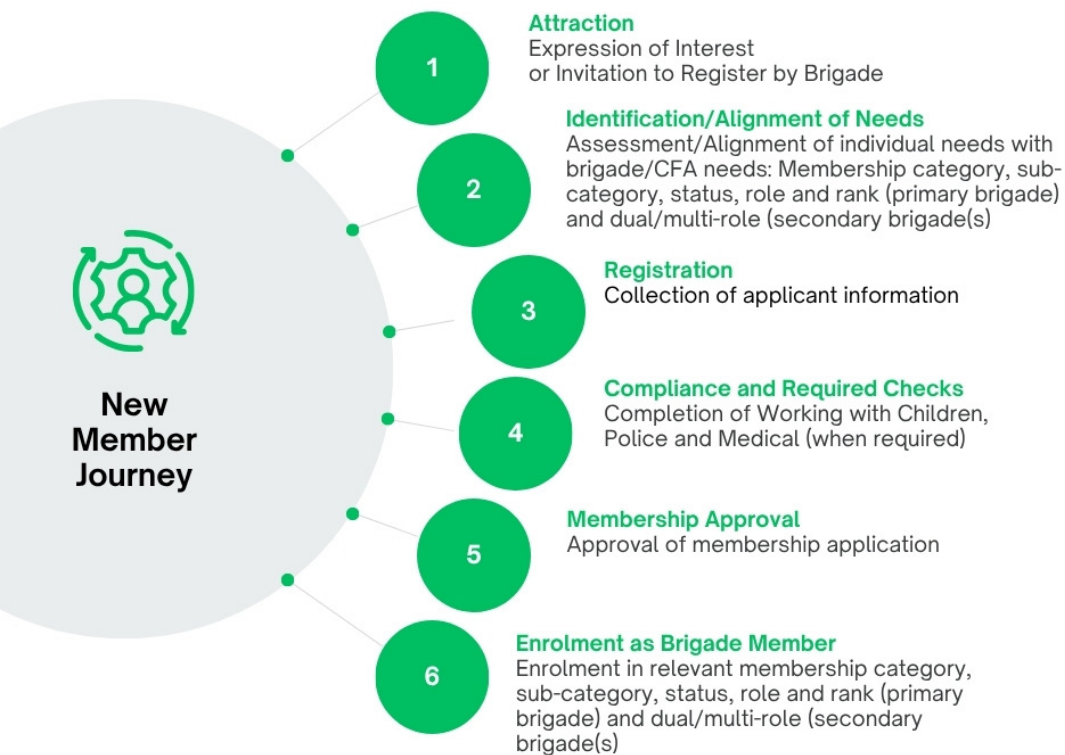
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### **Problem Description**

CFA's current model lacks the classification and management arrangements to effectively support members who are transitioning out of active operational roles and/or leadership positions. There are numerous benefits to both CFA and the individual when considering retaining a level of engagement and participation from members with significant experience or who have made strong contributions.

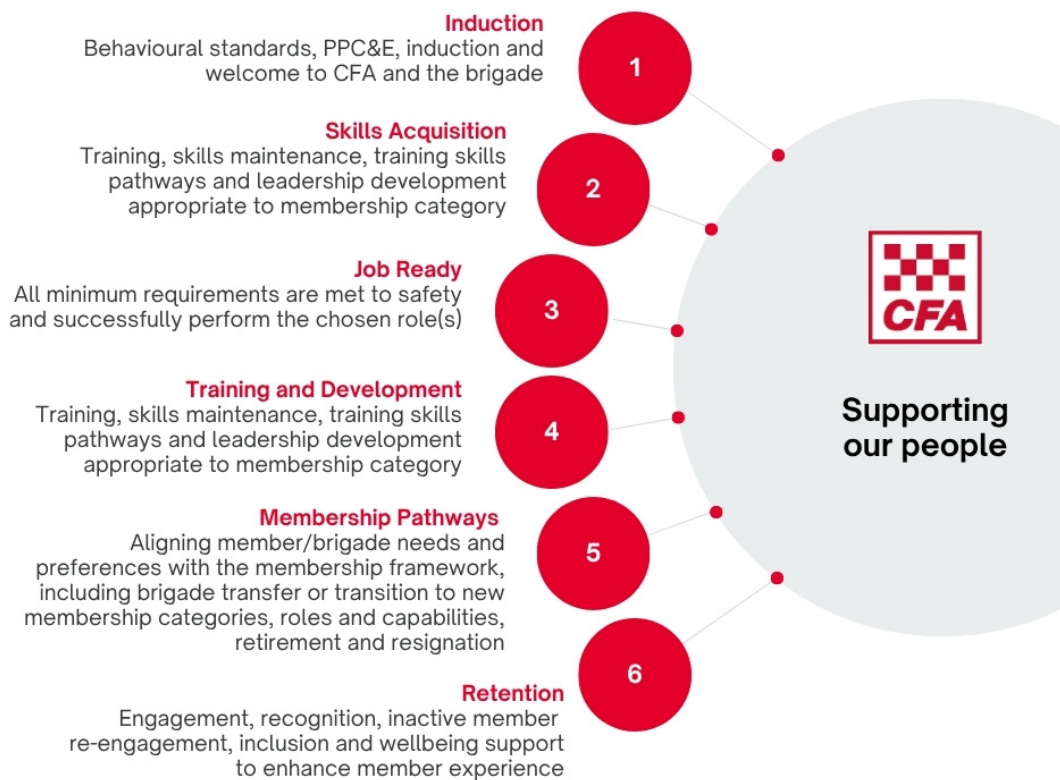
Currently, CFA life members can still 'resign' or be de-registered, defeating the purpose of a life membership. Furthermore, the current membership model does not include an 'alumni' category or similar status. As a result, life membership is treated primarily as an award rather than a lasting membership status, offering no formal ongoing recognition within the CFA membership framework.

# Appendix 6: An Opportunity – A Future Volunteer Lifecycle



CFA is an attractive proposition to the broadest possible cohorts of community and provides a great first experience

Making CFA a great place to volunteer



[Click here](#) to view the 13 recommended options which make this lifecycle possible

## Appendix 7: Definitions Factsheet

The Contemporary Volunteer Membership Model Definitions Factsheet gives shared and established definitions of the key terms for the Contemporary Volunteer Membership Model (CVMM) project.

Some great examples are provided of what CFA Brigades and members are already doing to attract, support, and retain a diverse range of volunteers (operational and support) for future organisational sustainability.

The terms and definitions below are taken from current CFA strategies and documents as well as volunteerism research and established definitions from other Emergency Management (EM) agencies.

### Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
<b>Contemporary</b>	Conforming to modern or current ideas in style, fashion, design, etc.
<b>Contemporary Volunteerism</b>	Contemporary Volunteerism is an umbrella term that incorporates a selection of volunteering options such as virtual, seasonal, and project. This term describes volunteering activities and programs that are fluid and digitally enabled with a volunteering culture that supports flexibility, diversity, and inclusion.
<b>Corporate</b>	A particular business corporation.
<b>Dual</b>	Two parts, functions, or aspects.
<b>Flexibility</b>	Something or someone flexible can change easily and adapt to different conditions and circumstances as they occur.
<b>Portability</b>	The state or quality of being portable. Portability refers to ease of movement across membership. For example, changing roles, transferring across brigades or from non-operational to operational and vice versa.
<b>Project</b>	A specific activity or task.
<b>Project Volunteering</b>	Project volunteers are defined as people and/or businesses who prefer to have short-term volunteering opportunities that are targeted, task-based and generally non-operational.
<b>Seasonal</b>	A seasonal factor, event, or change occurs during one particular time of the year.
<b>Seasonal Volunteering</b>	Describes a defined period of volunteering activity and inactivity.
<b>Semi- formal</b>	Semi-formal refers to activities that are within legislative boundaries but are not reflected in the current membership model and are largely enabled at the discretion of individual brigades or Districts.
<b>Spontaneous</b>	Spontaneous acts are not planned or arranged but are done because someone suddenly wants to do them.
<b>Virtual</b>	Pertaining to or taking place in cyberspace or virtual reality.
<b>Volunteering</b>	The activity itself, is the work that volunteers do before, during and after emergencies.
<b>Volunteerism</b>	The culture within organisations and the culture within the community.
<b>Volunteers</b>	The dedicated people who do the work in local communities before, during and after emergencies.

## Contemporary Volunteerism

Contemporary Volunteerism is an umbrella term that incorporates a selection of volunteering options such as virtual, seasonal, and project.

For the CVMM project, the definitions describe volunteering activities and programs that are fluid and digitally enabled with a volunteering culture that supports flexibility, diversity, and inclusion.

Example:

*The establishment of The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust (LTAT) Brigade with members of CFA's all-Indigenous crew protecting their land as they have done for many years and having leadership and management decisions for firefighting operations as a registered CFA fire Brigade. Find out more here:*

<https://www.members.cfa.vic.gov.au/news/all-indigenous-crew-officially-becomes-a-cfa-brigade>

## Flexibility in CFA Membership

Flexibility in CFA Membership can be divided into sections as follows:

- **Functional** - with shifting use of skill sets and levels of responsibilities, e.g., content of work changes
- **Numerical** - e.g. belonging to a large pool of volunteers, individual volunteers, or small group
- **Temporal** - time commitments are changeable
- **Geographical** - which can include virtual, seasonal, and project.

## Seasonal Volunteering

Seasonal volunteering in the CFA involves operational members and/or Brigades assisting other Brigades/Districts for a defined period.

Seasonal volunteering could be within a Brigade, Group or as individuals for a set period.

A season could be categorized as:

- tourist or retired holidaymaker “grey nomad”
- agricultural i.e. harvest or
- cultural e.g. NAIDOC Week.

Example:

*Lorne Summer Crew- a rotating group of four volunteers and an additional truck to support the Brigade on busy events. Find out more here:*

[Lorne gains extra volunteers for holidays | CFA Members Online](#)

## Spontaneous Volunteering

A spontaneous volunteer could typically be described as a member of the community that has no affiliation with CFA. The spontaneous volunteer is the person who arrives unannounced to lend their support during times of need – often during and after an emergency event.

Example:

*Indigo Valley in 2015 where community members became spontaneous volunteers to assist Indigo Valley Fire Brigade with important tasks such as:*

- *preparing food and collecting food from suppliers in nearby towns*
- *assisting CFA welfare personnel where required and possible*
- *Incident Control Centre administration support (phones, timesheets, printing and collating of Incident Action Plans etc)*
- *local knowledge support to Incident Control Centres*
- *assist in transporting essential supplies between supplier, District offices and Incident Control Centres.*

## **Project Volunteering**

Project volunteers are defined as people and/or businesses who prefer to have short-term volunteering opportunities that are targeted, task-based and generally non-operational.

*Example:*

*Volunteer grassland observers or citizen scientists- a way to contribute to CFA and Victoria's understanding of the landscape for this summer and beyond.*

*Find out more here: <https://youtu.be/-ZocdZxVqhQ>*

## **Corporate Volunteering**

Corporate volunteering can happen in a variety of different ways and be included as a form of project volunteering. Large or small businesses may want to assist a Brigade in fundraising events, such as silent auctions, or providing space for a sausage sizzle.

CFA endeavours to partner with corporate and community entities with common aims when it comes to public safety and community involvement.

## **Virtual Volunteering**

Time and skills are shared freely online e.g. a non-operational Headquarters (HQ) Brigade that completes tasks for Brigades across the state or an individual member who volunteers for a Brigade remotely.

*Example:*

*CFA member lives in Melbourne but volunteers remotely, fulfilling a vital support role for Tarwin Lower and District brigade as its social media manager. Find out more here:*

*[Volunteering remotely the best of both worlds | CFA Members Online](#)*

Other tasks done virtually may include:

Finances, research, archiving and historical documentation, graphic design, grant writing and event organising, and community engagement.

## Dual Membership

Membership with more than one Brigade. CFA currently has the option of membership of Coastguard and HQ Brigades and Oscar One and HQ Brigades.

*Example:*

*Coastguard Brigade member becomes a member of the Group Management Team (GMT) of the Westernport Group. Find out more here:*

*[Coast Guard Captain becomes first Deputy Group Officer of his kind | CFA News & Media](https://www.facebook.com/cfavic/videos/301764339328525)  
<https://www.facebook.com/cfavic/videos/301764339328525>*

## Specialist Volunteers

Volunteering in a specialised and skilled area and not limited to one Brigade.

*Example:*

*Aviation response – find out more here:*

*[Volunteers who help with aviation response | CFA Members Online](#)*

*Language translation/ interpretation – find out more here:*

*[Noble Park Brigade proud of its diversity | CFA Members Online](#)*

## Portability

Portability refers to ease of movement across membership. For example, changing roles, transferring across Brigades or from non-operational to operational and vice versa.

*Example:*

*University student who studies in Melbourne but grew up in Tatura and volunteers as a firefighter when back at home.*

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