



Volunteer Charter

Signed By AH Parties

22/12/2001

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Preamble

Volunteers of the CFA are fundamental to emergency management in Victoria and their value and importance is recognised. Volunteers and the commitment they bring to the protection of the Victorian community remain the core strength of Country Fire Authority (CFA). The individual and collective interests and needs of Volunteers must be protected if they are to deliver their services safely and effectively. They must always be consulted about issues that affect them as volunteers. This charter recognises that the members of the CFA and their Associations operate under the Country Fire Authority Act 1958. The Charter is a statement of principle that will apply to the relationship between the CFA, the State of Victoria, and the CFA's Volunteers.

This Volunteer Charter ...

- is an agreed commitment by the State of Victoria, CFA and the Associations on behalf of CFA Volunteers to each other;
- ensures the State of Victoria and the Authority will commit to consultation with Volunteers about all matters which might reasonably be expected to affect Volunteers; and
- provides the framework for the three-way relationship between the parties, requiring the success of the relationship and the outcomes from the Charter to be judged against the following principles:
 - is it fair?
 - is it just?
 - is it reasonable?
 - does it discriminate against Volunteers?
 - is the outcome practicable and sustainable?
 - is it in the best interest of the safety of the Victorian community?
- is the framework for an enduring commitment between the parties. The Charter shall be reviewed as required by the parties or at the end of four years from its date of commencement.

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Volunteers in CFA ...

- selflessly bring time and life **skills** to protect life and property, prevent and suppress fires and thus to create a safer community. They actively promote fire prevention works and provide fire, emergency and community services across Victoria. Many Volunteers provide their own equipment to do so;
- are drawn from communities throughout Victoria in order to participate in an integrated fire service through a practical partnership based on mutual respect for CFA, people employed

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abilities.;

- depend on the goodwill and practical support of their families, friends and employers to enable them to serve. The time available to them is limited by the needs and demands of their employment, families and other obligations;
- do not contribute their time for financial reward but do expect to gain satisfaction from service, achievement, personal development and camaraderie.

The Volunteers will provide their services to the best of their abilities subject to the following principles; ...

To:

- provide their services for the protection of life and property, prevention and suppression of fires and undertake other relevant duties to create a safer community in a mutual, respectful and active partnership with people employed by CFA, other organisations and the community;
- operate safely and undertake appropriate training and planning to ensure their personal safety and enhance the delivery of services in creating a safer community;
- exercise the powers vested in them by the Country Fire Authority Act 1958 and Regulations in the best interests of the community;
- recognise and support the elected Association representatives and the consultative mechanisms as agreed with CFA;
- be committed to working in harmony and consultation with CFA and seek to resolve differences of opinion internally in the first instance.

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The CFA recognises the commitment of volunteers. The CFA shall provide its services and support to Volunteers subject to the following principles...

To:

- recognise, value, respect and promote CFA Volunteers who come from widely divergent communities with differing needs and characteristics, as core partners with people employed by CFA;
- recognise and acknowledge that a primary responsibility of the Authority and people employed by CFA is to nurture and encourage Volunteers and to facilitate and develop their skills and competencies;
- recognise and acknowledge the value of the time that Volunteers provide to CFA and ensure that Volunteer time is used to maximum advantage;
- acknowledge that policy development and change should always be considered in terms of its potential to support and facilitate the Volunteer contribution and the particular situation of local brigades;
- recognise that the Associations represent Volunteers in general and ensure there is meaningful consultation, allowing enough time for real involvement, with the elected representatives of Volunteers on all matters which may impact upon Volunteers before the adoption or implementation of any new or changed policies, procedures or approaches;

- or approaches which impact on them as CFA Volunteers;
- provide the resources necessary to enable new or changed policies, procedures or approaches which impact on them as CFA volunteers to be implemented efficiently and effectively;
- provide adequate resources to enable Volunteers in CFA to deliver agreed services;
- provide administrative, operational and infrastructure support to enable Volunteers to perform their roles safely and effectively within available resources;
- recognise and respect the needs of Volunteers which are derived from their volunteer service and provide effective and comprehensive support services within available resources including but not limited to:
 - a. where appropriate providing protection against the financial consequences of extended litigation and arranging adequate legal representation with respect to proceedings involving Volunteers arising out of CFA activities;
 - b. OH&S support and Development of the safest possible working environment for volunteers;
 - c. procedures to address issues of discrimination in a fair, just and timely manner;
 - d. counselling and welfare support;
 - e. training;
 - f. support and assistance for Volunteers in applying for employment as CFA employees; and
 - g. compensation for accidents, injuries and losses.

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The Government of Victoria recognises and acknowledges the Volunteers commitment. The State of Victoria will provide support to the Volunteers subject to the following principles

- recognise, value, respect and promote CFA Volunteers, their families and employers for their contributions to the well-being and safety of the people of Victoria;
- ensure that CFA legislation appropriately recognises the needs and interests of Volunteers in the delivery of services and protects Volunteers who provide their services in good faith and their dependants from financial losses and other liabilities; and
- consult with the elected representatives of Volunteers on all matters which may impact upon Volunteers including proposed legislation and the adequacy of resources to enable volunteers in CFA to deliver the agreed services.

The Commitment...

The parties commit themselves to use and apply the Charter in the spirit of mutual respect and goodwill and to work together in that spirit to resolve any disputes which may arise between CFA, the State of Victoria and the Volunteers by reference to the key principles set down in this Volunteer Charter.

This Charter is dated the 22nd day of December, 2001.

Signed:

Gary Lyttle, President, Victorian Rural Fire Brigades' Association

Rob Waterson, President, Victorian Urban Fire Brigades' Association

Len Foster, Chairman, Country Fire Authority

The Hon André Haermeyer, Minister for Police and Emergency Services on behalf of the State of Victoria.

The Hon Stephen Bracks, Premier

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MOST RECENT DRAFT 26 AUGUST 2003

THE LAKE BENNETT DECLARATION

The Assembly is aware of the efforts of firefighters and their achievements over the past year and believes their efforts have earned them the opportunity to be listened to.

This Assembly, being aware of the impacts on the volunteer fire service of the various inquiries following the major fire events of the last year determines to take the action described below.

This Conference of the Australasian Assembly of Volunteer Fire Brigade Associations calls upon the Australian Prime Minister and Federal Leader of the Opposition to work together to establish a National Consultation with Fire Agency Volunteers.

The National Consultation Council should be made up of the Prime Minister, the Federal Leader of the Opposition, state and territory Ministers for Emergency Services or bushfire related agencies and representatives of the Assembly and State and Territory fire agency volunteers.

The National Consultation Council should meet at least annually in conjunction with meetings of the state and territory Ministers for Emergency Services.

The purpose of the National Consultation Council shall be to decide appropriate actions to preserve and strengthen the volunteer fire service to ensure that it is always available to be called upon to act in time of need. These needs include wildfires and structural fires as well as a range of ill-defined chemical or biological threats such as major outbreaks of animal diseases. The National Consultation Council will be a forum for Fire Service Volunteers to present issues that can only be dealt with at a Federal level.

The parties to the National Consultation Council should jointly act to put into effect the decisions reached at its meetings without regard to partisan political considerations.

The National Consultation Council should at the earliest opportunity seek the involvement of the New Zealand government, Leader of the NZ Opposition and volunteer fire service in establishing itself as an Australasian Consultation with Fire Agency Volunteers.

Further, the Consultation Council's role should be ultimately extended to encompass a range of other essential agency volunteers