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3rd July 2012

Mr Tony O'Gorman, MLA
Chair
Community Development and Justice Standing Committee

Dear Mr O'Gorman

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE**

REQUEST TO ASSIST WITH INQUIRY

I refer to correspondence from Mr Tony O'Gorman, MLA requesting information in relation to CFA's experience in dealing with member stress and trauma arising from disasters, particularly the 2009 Black Saturday fires.

1 BACKGROUND

In order to respond fully to the matters of interest to the Committee, it is appropriate to provide an overview of CFA's welfare services.

1.1 CFA Welfare Services

1.1.1 The CFA provides a range of welfare support programs to CFA members and their families who may require support in response to difficult or potentially traumatic life events (**Welfare Services**). These events may be personal in nature or related to a member's involvement with CFA, for example attending at a critical incident.

- 1.1.2 Welfare Services includes Peer Support, Chaplain Support and Psychologist Support.
- 1.1.3 In response to a critical incident CFA uses an approach which is consistent with Psychological First Aid (**PFA**). PFA can be provided to individuals or groups and seeks to reduce anticipated stress associated with involvement in a 'critical incident' (an event which is outside the range of normal experience and has the potential to traumatize).

1.2 Peer Support

- 1.2.1 The Peer program began after Ash Wednesday in recognition of the welfare needs expressed by the CFA community.
- 1.2.2 Peers work in regional and district teams and there are approximately 160 Peers across the State of Victoria. Each CFA Region has a Peer Coordinator whose role includes assessing the level of need for Peers in each Region to ensure an adequate coverage of peer support for the members in that Region as well as the day to day management of Peer activities within the Region.

1.3 Recruitment and Training of Peers

- 1.3.1 A CFA member must apply for the position of Peer. Following an initial application process, the candidate will be interviewed by a panel. If the candidate is successful, they will be invited to attend a training and assessment process during which they are given introductory training and assessed against the requirements of the Peer role.
- 1.3.2 Upon successful completion of the introductory training and assessment process, a trainee Peer will undertake a Certificate III in Community Service from Kangan Institute. The Certificate III is part of the National Training Framework and is a nationally accredited course. The course consists of partial distance education and partial assessment activities undertaken by the students.
- 1.3.3 The Certificate takes 12 months to complete and during this period, the trainee Peers attend regular local training and statewide training once per year together with existing Peers. Following completion of the first six months of training, an interview is conducted with the trainee Peer to assess their theoretical knowledge.

The purpose of the interview is to assess how well the trainee Peer has integrated the knowledge developed through the Certificate III and attendance at local and statewide training into their understanding of the role of the Peer. If the trainee Peer is deemed competent, they will shadow an experienced Peer at suitable opportunities.

- 1.3.4 At the end of the 12 month training, the trainee Peer will take part in an assessment and if successful they are able to operate as a Peer under supervision. They are provided with ongoing support and mentoring by the Peer Coordinator.

1.4 Role of Peer

- 1.4.1 The role of the Peer (**the Peer**) within CFA is voluntary and either career staff or volunteers may apply to become a Peer.
- 1.4.2 The role of the Peer is to provide support to members and their families on issues relating to critical incidents either in an operational capacity or more generally to provide welfare and personal support to members when they are experiencing difficulties within their personal life.
- 1.4.3 The role of the Peer is to listen, reflect and refer on to either a Chaplain or psychologist if necessary. The role of the Peer is a facilitative role rather than a counselling role.
- 1.4.4 The operational activities of Peers are managed at a Regional level by the Peer Coordinator. The CISM Consultant receives reports which show Peer activities, however to ensure confidentiality, these reports do not give any details of who a Peer has spoken with or for what reasons. The reporting system allows CFA to monitor themes and trends and also allows for the monitoring of Peer engagement to ensure that a Peer is not overburdened.
- 1.4.5 Peers also perform a welfare support role at major incidents on the request of the Incident Management Team.

1.5 Chaplains

- 1.5.1 Chaplains are contracted by CFA through Converge International, an employee assistance program provider which specialises in Chaplains. Chaplains are allocated to each CFA Region to provide Chaplaincy services.

- 1.5.2 A Chaplain carries out a minimum of two hours of pastoral care per week in their allocated CFA Region. They can perform any number of hours according to the need in the region. They liaise directly with the Human Resources (**HR**) Manager and the Regional Peer Coordinator in the Region as to how to manage this time. The day-to-day activities of the Chaplains are managed locally because they work closely with the HR Manager, the Operations Manager and the Peer Coordinator in their Region to gain an understanding of member issues.
- 1.5.3 Chaplains have a specific role in providing pastoral care within their allocated Region. This includes spiritual, physical, psychological and emotional care and wellbeing support which is not limited to a faith. All Chaplains used by CFA hold qualifications relevant to counselling.
- 1.5.4 Part of the role of the Chaplain is to work closely with the Peer Coordinator. Following consultation with a Peer, it may be determined that a member needs counselling and the Peer will offer a referral to either a psychologist or a Chaplain.
- 1.5.5 Often the Chaplain is known within the Region and can travel to member's homes or brigade which can be more appealing than going to see a psychologist.
- 1.5.6 Given their additional training and qualifications, the Chaplain is able to offer support to the Peers in a collegiate manner. For example the Chaplain may provide technical advice to the Peer.
- 1.5.7 As with the Peer Program, to ensure confidentiality of the service offered CFA receives a quarterly report from Converge International, which reports on trends, themes and hours of service.

1.6 Psychologists (Member Assistance Services)

- 1.6.1 CFA contracts psychologists through a number of Employee Assistance Program providers including PPC Worldwide, Converge International and D'Accord as well as a number of private providers.

- 1.6.2 As our primary contract providers, PPC Worldwide and Converge International can be contacted directly by a member seeking counselling services. The member is offered three counselling sessions and CFA is invoiced for the cost of these sessions without any details being passed on to CFA to ensure confidentiality. Should additional sessions be required, PPC Worldwide or Converge International contacts the Manager Organisational Wellbeing for authorisation of additional sessions
- 1.6.3 A member can contact PPC Worldwide or Converge International directly and they will identify a psychologist local to the member and make an appointment. A member can also be referred by a Peer, Chaplain, Manager or brigade leader.
- 1.6.4 CFA receives a quarterly report from PPC Worldwide, which identifies themes, trends and hours of service.
- 1.6.5 CFA has identified a number of private providers around the State and from time to time a member may be referred to one of these private providers for more specialised services. These referrals tend to be made by either a Peer, Chaplain, the CISM Consultant or myself.
- 1.6.6 D'Accord provides psychologists who will travel to a member if required. They also provide a 24-hour welfare support line which is staffed by psychologists outside of business hours.

1.7 Additional Services

- 1.7.1 In addition to Welfare Services, CFA also offers services to members as part of the Occupational Health and Safety system.
- 1.7.2 As part of the OH&S system, CFA offers a compensation scheme which is available to both staff and volunteers and provides compensation for health problems (physical or psychological) relating to CFA activities. If a member requires psychological treatment resulting from exposure to a critical incident the member will be referred to the compensation scheme and ongoing treatment will be based on their individual needs. The cost of this will be met through the CFA Compensation scheme. Compensation can include loss of income and out of pocket expenses as well as providing the treatment required.

2 RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE INQUIRIES :

Whether existing agency responses adequately address the trauma experienced by staff and volunteers during and after declared natural disasters which have occurred since 2001.

2.1 February 2009 Fires

- 2.1.1 In the week before 7 February, it was evident from internal briefings and weather reports that the conditions were going to be extreme and that this could lead to a major incident. CFA notified all of its contract providers (PPC, Converge International and D'Accord) that we were expecting an extreme day and that there may be a surge in capacity required.
- 2.1.2 During the week before 7 February, the CISM Consultant contacted Peer Coordinators around the State to assess Peer resource availability.
- 2.1.3 During the fire danger period, CFA operates the CISM Duty Officer Roster. The role of the CISM Duty Officer is to manage the deployment of Peer resources around the state to major incidents as required.
- 2.1.4 Peers were deployed to provide support to members on the night of 7 February 2009. Peers provided welfare support at staging areas, brigades and incident control centres.
- 2.1.5 Initially Peers were deployed to support members on 7 February. As the welfare impact increased over 8 and 9 February, teams of Peers, Chaplains and psychologists were deployed to specific locations to provide comprehensive welfare support during the incident.
- 2.1.6 For a period of three weeks following 7 February, Peers, Chaplains and psychologists were operating through the medical unit in Incident Management Teams (IMT). Peers, Chaplains and psychologists attended at Staging Areas, IMT's and brigades, providing support to brigades, crews and family members , monitoring the psychological wellbeing of members and providing psychological first aid as required.
- 2.1.7 In February 2009, Peers from around the state provided approximately 5,000 hours of support to members in response to the fires. Chaplains provided 1366 hours and psychologists provided 350 hours on-site support. In the most affected Regions, contact was made by phone or face-to-face with brigade captains to assess the immediate impact on members and to facilitate the provision of immediate support to members.

- 2.1.8 CFA received an offer of support the Global Rapid Response Team from World Vision International. The World Vision Team assisted CFA in applying this framework to develop the 2009- 2011 Member Welfare Support and Recovery Plan (**the Plan**). A copy of the Plan is attached **Annexure 1** for your reference.
- 2.1.9 The Plan was developed, recognising that the existing welfare services offered by CFA were sufficient, but needed to be enhanced in the event of a large scale incident.
- 2.1.10 In creating the Plan, emphasis was placed on the existing services and ensuring that the programs that members were familiar with were maintained and available rather than trying to introduce new people and new services who were not familiar to members.
- 2.1.11 The Plan was drafted within a few weeks with the assistance of World Vision in a facilitation role. Jennifer Hartman, a psychologist consultant who works with CFA, provided technical input.
- 2.1.12 The impact of 7 February varied between CFA Regions and it was recognised that each region would need to have a welfare plan tailored to suit the welfare needs of that region. Once the CFA Plan was drafted, the HR Manager and (then) General Manager in each CFA Region were consulted as part of the development of the Plan. This was to ensure that the Plan was able to meet their specific welfare needs.
- 2.1.13 The Plan gave each CFA Region a framework which could then be developed into a specific Regional Plan. As part of the Plan, a consulting psychologist was appointed to each Region to work with the leadership team in developing their specific welfare plan.
- 2.1.14 The general preposition of the Plan is that the Peers, Chaplains and other key CFA personnel worked together as a team to determine the support needs and undertook the specific tasks required to address the welfare needs of members. The HR Manager coordinated the team, and the consulting psychologist provided technical support to the team in developing, implementing and monitoring their specific plan.
- 2.1.15 The Plan provided a framework for the identification of short, medium and long term support needs to ensure that members have the appropriate support as required.
- 2.1.16 The Plan was a 24-month plan in recognition of the fact that recovery can be a long term process. For some members recovery can take place in days or weeks and for others it may take years.

- 2.1.17 As part of the Plan's communication strategy, a number of documents were put together including a one page flyer with useful contact numbers for welfare and recovery. A copy of this document is attached at **Annexure 2**. A copy of this document was distributed widely within CFA and included additional services as well as Welfare Services.
- 2.1.18 Other communication tools included enhancement of the member welfare page on the CFA internal Intranet, promotion of services on "CFA Connect" and publication of articles in The Fireman. Copies of examples of these articles are at **Annexure 3**
- 2.1.19 In addition to the development of specific Regional plans, CFA developed a number of education sessions for delivery to brigades to support recovery. These included early intervention following distressing events, psychological first aid, community recovery following a disaster as well as psychological preparation for the next fire season. Copies of examples of these education sessions are at **Annexure 4**.
- 2.1.20 CFA extended its counselling services to a minimum of 6 sessions per person for bushfire related referrals.
- 2.1.21 A key focus of the Plan was to ensure that members of the peer program were appropriately supported and that the welfare needs of Peers themselves were met. To achieve this, the CISM Consultant worked closely with Peer Coordinators to monitor the wellbeing of Coordinators and Peers. At the end of March 2009, a survey was conducted with Peers to identify their immediate and ongoing welfare needs. Peers were provided with opportunities to discuss their experiences in informal forums and access to counselling services was arranged if required. In addition, local and state-wide functions and education sessions were conducted to enable social reconnection amongst peer teams.
- 2.1.22 The Plan provides the framework should another significant event occur.
- 2.1.23 The success of the Plan can be measured in a number of different ways which are outlined at page 11 of the Plan. For example member wellbeing surveys, take up rates of Welfare Services and requests for education sessions.
- 2.1.24 One of the outcomes of the Plan has been an increase in the use of Welfare Services. Further to this, our members through their involvement in welfare activities have developed a greater understanding of welfare and psychological health and wellbeing.

2.1.25 CFA has used a number of methods to monitor Welfare Services and seek feedback from members. For example, between September 2009 and January 2010 CFA engaged PPC Worldwide to telephone approximately 1,100 members to request feedback on Welfare Services following 7 February 2009. A psychologist rang each member and asked them a series of questions about their experiences of Welfare Services and their wellbeing. A psychologist was used to ensure that any welfare issues members had could be immediately addressed. CFA has also used pre-fire season member wellbeing sessions to assess the welfare of members and the effectiveness of Welfare Services.

2.1.26 In 2010 CFA engaged an independent consultant to undertake a qualitative review of members' experience of the Plan. A summary of the report findings is attached at **Annexure 5**.

2.1.27 CFA has created a specific welfare support role to assist members required to participate in various court cases to ensure that welfare needs of member and their family are met at every stage in the process.

2.1.28 In 2011 CFA engaged a clinical psychologist to conduct a literature review on the long term impact of disaster on emergency service workers. A summary of the findings is attached at **Annexure 6**.

2.1.29 The report provides evidence of the anticipated long term impacts of disaster as well as identifying risk factors and resilience features.

2.1.30 We have established a State Wellbeing Advisory Committee to advise the Board and senior leadership on member wellbeing issues.

2.1.31 The State Committee is supported by Regional Committees. Regional Committees are made up of HR Managers, Peer Coordinators, Chaplains, Operations staff, OHS officers and their role is to oversee the development and implementation of an annual member wellbeing plan and to advise the State Committee of any member wellbeing or welfare issues with organisational implications.

2.1.32 CFA is currently developing a Member Wellbeing Strategy which focusses on developing practices to support prevention of exposure to psychological safety risk, preparation of members, as well as enhancing response and recovery services.

2.1.33 In support of the strategy CFA will be undertaking research with members later this year to seek members understanding of mental health issues, their awareness of the services offered and their attitude to the services provided. Their feedback will assist us to enhance our services and target mental health training and education.

2.2 Lodden Mallee Drought – 1997 to 2011

2.2.1 Between 1997 and 2011 communities in the Victoria's North West endured 14 consecutive years of drought.

2.2.2 For many dry-land communities the cycle of drought had become the norm rather than the exception.

2.2.3 In order to remain sustainable, dry-land farmers had to adapt to the changing environment by becoming more efficient in their farming practices. Many embraced new technology in order to remain competitive. This placed an additional debt burden on businesses already suffering from prolonged effects of drought.

2.2.4 By 2007, water allocations to Murray River Irrigators were at the lowest level ever (23% at 20 November 2007).

2.2.5 In November 2007 temporary irrigation water traded over \$1,000 per ml (usually approximately \$ 200 per ml).

2.2.6 Cost of water had a major impact in the dairying, market gardening and horticulture/viticulture industries reliant on the Murray River for their water.

2.2.7 Production costs rose dramatically. Debt increased. Many were forced to stay in unsustainable businesses because they were unable to implement a suitable exit strategy.

2.2.8 The economic, social and welfare issues that resulted from this disaster were a threat to community viability and subsequently the viability of CFA brigades in those communities.

2.2.9 CFA recognised these factors and how they impacted on volunteer capacity. For example, many volunteers were unable to afford the cost of petrol to attend brigade training.

- 2.2.10 CFA support commenced in the North West Area (NWA) in 2005 by providing support to some rural communities; this included support, through brigades, to rural schools to enable the school camps to take place and the provision of school Christmas trees.
- 2.2.11 No distinction was made between CFA families and non-CFA families, as the majority of families in the small rural communities either directly or indirectly associated with CFA, or give to their community in some other way.
- 2.2.12 In 2007, the North West Area Management Team formulated a number of strategies to assist brigades, individual volunteers, their families who were directly, and staff who were directly and indirectly, affected by the drought.
- 2.2.13 The objective of the strategies was to provide social and emotional support within local NWA capacity, and at the same time assist in sustaining community resilience, by facilitating community gatherings that help to promote and strengthen cohesion.
- 2.2.14 The importance of social connection was recognised as a critical component of the support strategies.
- 2.2.15 We sought to help remove the sense of isolation, both physical and emotional, and to replace that with a sense of well-being and support through gathering with others, and, where possible, celebrating a special occasion, within local communities.
- 2.2.16 The gatherings provided the opportunity to remind our members that they were not alone and to remind them that there was help and support available to them, regardless of what they might have been facing.
- 2.2.17 CFA recognised that it was in a unique position to lessen some of these stressors by facilitating brigade/community gatherings which included a meal, with no cost attached to communities. By removing the financial considerations there was no contribution required of, and consequent pressure on, volunteers. The gatherings did not have to be "a BBQ". The meal could be in a format the brigade chose.
- 2.2.18 The Fire Ready Victoria Extension programme 2007/08 enabled the NWA to initiate and conduct community gatherings.
- 2.2.19 The gatherings were facilitated through the Community Education Co-ordinators by providing a meal or light refreshments and activities for children while the safety message was delivered. They also provide the opportunity to distribute grocery hampers which were donated or funded from donations from charities, private individuals and numerous CFA Brigades and Groups from Outer Metropolitan Melbourne.

2.2.20 The Fire Ready Victoria programme was also incorporated into other brigade occasions such as truck handovers, long service medal presentations, station openings and routine or special community gatherings.

2.2.21 In many cases, the gatherings had a two-fold effect as donated money, to assemble food hampers, was spent in small rural community businesses that were also struggling and just as much a part of the rural infrastructure which supports our volunteers.

2.2.22 The facilitation role undertaken by Peers and field staff consisted of assisting volunteers or members of their family to access a Federal or State Government provided service or professional support and has been ongoing since 2004.

2.2.23 This facilitation role took many different forms:

- Locating the nearest rural councillor and providing contact details;
- Obtaining forms from the Salvation Army for accessing food support;
- Funding bus transport to take volunteers and their families to and from information sessions at townships;
- Researching with local health service how counselling services could be provided from outside the immediate area as people had a fear of other local community members finding out that they were receiving support; and
- Advising other agencies or charities of individuals and families in need.

2.2.24 On many occasions it was noted by members that it was enough for Peers or field staff members to simply listen to what was happening to individuals and how they felt at that specific time. They did not expect CFA to solve the problem. Just knowing that we cared was very important to them.

2.2.25 A copy of the 2007-2008 Drought Strategy is attached at **Annexure 7**.

2.2.26 CFA's response to the drought highlighted its ability to provide leadership in local communities, including to local government, and that it was well positioned to facilitate a coordinated response by Federal and State government agencies, NGOs and local government to meet community needs by initiating joint community information sessions and, on occasion, providing venues for these in fire stations. The importance of a coordinated response became increasingly apparent during the 2011 floods in Loddon Mallee.

2.3 Lodden Mallee Floods - 2010 to 2011

- 2.3.1 Although Victoria experiences major flooding every 10 to 20 years, the floods which occurred between September 2010 and February 2011 were amongst the worst in the State's history.
- 2.3.2 Approximately one-third of Victoria, including 70 local government areas, experienced some form of flooding or storm damage, resulting in enormous cost and disruption to regional, urban and rural communities¹.
- 2.3.3 CFA members experienced significant losses, including damage and isolation to homes and farms and associated infrastructure and equipment, horticultural damage and loss, crop disease, soil movement and erosion, as well as stranded and lost livestock and fodder loss.
- 2.3.4 Our own internal assessment suggested that in:
- a. District 2 approximately 20% of brigades and communities were effected;
 - b. District 18 approximately 30% of brigades and communities were effected; and
 - c. District 20 approximately 60% of brigades and communities were effected.

Annexure 8 provides a map of Victoria including CFA District and Region boundaries.

- 2.3.5 Building on the drought support strategies implemented over the previous ten years, CFA was well placed to quickly implement a support strategy to members impacted by the floods.
- 2.3.6 The objectives of the Flood Recovery Plan were to:
- Support individual volunteer wellbeing and brigade viability.
 - Meet specific welfare needs of volunteers and their families within our capability.
 - Support the wellbeing of all staff.
 - Monitor the effects of floods on CFA people.
 - Ensure communication was relevant, complete, targeted and timely.
 - CFA members were supported to recover at their own pace.
 - Support services and programs were targeted and meet the needs of the affected brigades.
 - CFA members experience the opportunity to participate in and provide feedback on the recovery and reconstruction of their community.

¹ Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings & Response – Final Report by Neil Comrie AO, APM. December 2011.

2.3.7 The desired outcomes of the Flood Recovery Plan were:

- Timely, accurate and relevant information was communicated to affected CFA members and communities.
- CFA Members and communities were consulted and worked together to plan their recovery.
- There were opportunities for social, sporting and recreational participation, to rebuild social networks.
- Provision of adequate resources to allow the CFA to coordinate the use of volunteers, deployed from both within and from without the flood affected areas, to support recovery activities.
- Ensuring that CFA was adequately resourced to fulfil its obligations in relation to managing its own recovery.

2.3.8 The inputs to the Flood Recovery Plan were:

- Support at Relief and Recovery Centres.
- Peers.
- Community meetings.
- Flood information line.
- Fact Sheets.
- Information packs

2.3.9 The success of the Flood Recovery Plan was measured in the following ways:

- Services in relief and recovery centres meeting demand.
- Community participating in public meetings and information sessions held.
- Enquiries received and referrals made to appropriate services.
- Flood packs and fact sheets developed and distributed.
- Number of community events held and people attending.

2.3.10 **Annexure 9** “*Managing Now-Planning Ahead*” is an example of a community gathering developed and delivered through a partnership between Shires, relevant government agencies and other stakeholders. The success of these events reinforced the importance of a partnership approach to disaster response.

3 RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE INQUIRIES – WHAT THE COMMITTEE IS EXAMINING

3.1 The barriers to those suffering trauma from accessing available assistance services.

3.1.1 CFA intends to conduct research with its members in relation to their attitude to the services provided by CFA. As part of this component of the research we will be asking members to identify why they may choose not to utilise the services provided.

3.1.2 While this will be the first time CFA has conducted formal research with members on their attitudes to the services provided by CFA, anecdotally we identify the following barriers or perceived barriers:

- a. Concerns regarding the privacy and confidentiality of the service;
- b. Lack of awareness of the services available;
- c. Concern that accessing service will be detrimental to career progression;
and
- d. Concern that being identified as having a mental health problem will impact on operational status.

3.1.3 The barriers to accessing mental health services are societal as much as they are organisational. Broader social barriers to accessing services include:

- a. Lack of available services in rural and regional Australia;
- b. Genuine privacy concerns in rural and regional locations;
- c. Perceived and actual prejudice towards individuals with mental illness; and
- d. Persistence of myths relating to mental illness.

3.2 The measures to mitigate any health impacts from trauma to those State Government workers and volunteers who respond to a declared disaster.

3.2.1 In addition to the measures outlined above, CFA provides Workers Compensation services to both paid and volunteer members when they are injured in the line of duty. This includes psychological injury.

3.2.2 Paid members are provided with compensation and rehabilitation services in line with the Victorian WorkCover legislation.

3.2.3 Volunteer members are provided with Compensation services via the Volunteer Compensation Scheme. The Scheme is self-insured and is similar to the WorkCover scheme.

- 3.2.4 Although the rate of psychological injury related to the February 2009 fires was elevated compared to historical claims rates, claims rates were not as high as might be expected given the research findings in relation to exposure of emergency services workers to disaster.

4 RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE INQUIRIES – GATHERING EVIDENCE

4.1 What pre-planning and training activities organisations undertake with their staff and volunteers to deal with trauma before a disaster.

- 4.1.1 As part of its member wellbeing approach, trained CFA Peers and Chaplains deliver the *Member Welfare Awareness Package (the Package)* to brigades and workgroups.

- 4.1.2 The learning outcomes of the Package are identified. At the conclusion of the session, participants will have an understanding of:

How stress affects them including:

- Stress and its role in life;
- The connection between stress and the emergency services role;
- The signs of stress in themselves and others.

Resilience:

- What they can do for themselves to strengthen their resilience;
- What they can do for others to help them strengthen their resilience.

The services available:

- Why the services exist;
- What the services are for; and
- How to access the services.

- 4.1.3 CFA promotes a Psychological First Aid (**PFA**) approach following exposure to a potentially traumatic event.

- 4.1.4 PFA is a model of intervention recommended by the Australian Psychological Society. The essential components of PFA are:

- 4.1.5 Protect – create safety, comfort and privacy for the individual, obtain emergency medical attention if required and provide repeated, simple, accurate information about these needs;

4.1.6 Listen, calm, stabilise & normalise the experience of the individual without interpretation;

- Offer practical assistance;
- Connect the individual with their existing social support;
- Future planning – promote the individual's natural resilience and identify support services.

4.1.7 As part of its Member Wellbeing Strategy CFA is progressively implementing a psychological safety approach to the management of potentially traumatic events.

4.2 What annual budget is spent on pre-event activities.

4.2.1 **Annexure 10** provides an Awareness Package Delivery Overview. CFA estimates an average cost of approximately \$800 per session including venue and catering costs, as well as travel expenses incurred by peers delivering the Package.

4.2.2 Note that costs are limited due to the delivery being primarily done by Peers, who volunteer their time.

4.2.3 In addition to the delivery of the Package, welfare awareness is canvassed during pre-summer briefings. These costs cannot be estimated.

4.3 What programs do organisations undertake during a disaster to assist their staff and volunteers deal with trauma.

4.3.1 As outlined above in Section 2 the appropriate organisational response will be to some extent dependent on the nature of the disaster and its impact on members.

4.3.2 Subsequent to the February 2009 Fires, CFA has utilised the Plan framework to develop member welfare responses to major incidents.

4.4 What post event activities organisations undertake with their staff and volunteers to deal with trauma arising from disaster.

4.4.1 The Plan outlines the range of post event activities undertaken by CFA to support members potentially exposed to trauma during the February 2009 Fires.

4.4.2 The Plan recognises a range of responses and coping capacities.

4.4.3 The Plan recognises that most people will recover from exposure to potentially traumatic events by accessing existing social supports without the need for clinical intervention. The Plan recognises the importance of social connection as integral to recovery.

4.4.4 Between March 2009 and February 2010 CFA Regions provided an array of welfare activities to support members, including over 230 functions to enable social reconnection amongst members and over 600 information and education sessions. Approximately 25,000 letters were sent to members directly, informing them of the availability of welfare support. Consulting psychologists have provided over 2000 hours of support to Areas in the development, implementation and ongoing monitoring of Area welfare plans. Chaplains have provided 3,900 hours of pastoral care. Peers have provided approximately 4,500 hours peer support to members and their families.

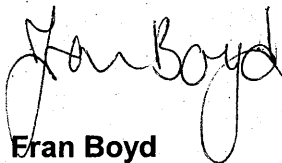
4.5 What annual budget is spent on these post event activities.

4.5.1 The budget allocated to post event activities is dependent on the nature and scale of the disaster.

4.5.2 Between March 2009 and June 2011 CFA spent \$2 ½ million on the implementation of the Plan.

CFA thanks you for the opportunity to meet with the Committee to discuss these important issues. We trust that the information we have provided will be of assistance to you.

Yours Sincerely,



Fran Boyd
Executive Director
People & Culture
Country Fire Authority

ANNEXURES:

- Annexure 1: CFA 2009-2011 Welfare Support & Recovery Plan
- Annexure 2: CFA Welfare & Recovery Useful Contacts for CFA Members
- Annexure 3: CFA Getting Help
- Annexure 4: CFA Training
- Annexure 5: CFA 2010 Review & Evaluation Summary'
- Annexure 6: CFA Prevalence & Predicators Summary
- Annexure 7: CFA NWA Drought Strategy
- Annexure 8: CFA District & Region Boundary Map
- Annexure 9: CFA "Managing Now – Planning Ahead" Flyer
- Annexure 10: CFA Awareness Package Delivery Overview

Annexure 1

CFA 2009-2011 Welfare Support & Recovery Plan