

RFA General Meeting
Burnley Complex
Wednesday, 18th February
at 10:30am

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Officer Promotions at Abbotsford Training College Circa 1980's

“GENERAL MEETING”

**Burnley Complex, Burnley
Wednesday 18th February, 2026 at 10:30 am**

Volunteers Required
The Fire Services Museum needs past fire service members to assist on an occasional basis at the Museum
Please contact
Bryan Robertson
0418 129 252

All Correspondence to:
Colin Harris
2 Gowar Ave
Camberwell
Phone 0432 302 414
or email at: cdh2739@gmail.com

Non Financial Members

Members be advised if your newsletter has an expiry date of 2/1/2024 that means you have not paid your subs since 2023 therefore if no remuneration is received by the 2/1/26 your name will be automatically removed from the mailing list. If for whatever reason any member is unable to meet this request please do not hesitate to call the secretary (confidentiality is assured).

OFFICE BEARERS

President: Alex Shepherd
Vice President: Sam Capes
Secretary: Colin Harris
Treasurer: Phil Cleary

General Committee:
Len Manning
Mike Mc Cumisky
Ian Geddes
Matt Nardella

Guest Speaker

Retired.S.O
Rod Egglestone
Discussing post traumatic stress disorder.

Diary Dates

“GENERAL MEETING”

Burnley Complex, Burnley
Wed 18th Feb 2026 at
10:30 am.

Sick List

Gary Spicer
John Williams
Ian Hookey
Frank Souter

Vale

Robert Chiron
Stan Cameron
Mark McMenamen
Henry Cooper
Keith Gardiner

“Water Off” is edited by Colin Harris , 2 Gowar Avenue, Camberwell 3124. Phone 0432 302 414. Email:cdh2739@gmail.com
All articles accepted for publication by the editor are done so in good faith and no responsibility is accepted for any inaccuracies that may occur.
Signed; Colin D. Harris (The views expressed by the editor of this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Victorian branch of the RFA and Fire Rescue.

Presidents Report

18th February 2026

Hello all,

The second month of the year already. I hope you all had a great Christmas and New Year with Family and Friends and remembering people who have passed from our lives.

A lot has happened since the last newsletter; some good and some bad.

The media loves the bad and washes over the good. Anyhow, it is great to live in a great country. This time of the year I think about our brave fire fighters, who are again on the front lines, again and again protecting us and the rest of the community from fires and other crises that comes their way. Best Wishes to them all. I hope all's well with you and your family and if they are a little off, I hope they get better soon.

I hope to see you at our next meeting, Wednesday, February 18th with our Guest Speaker, Rod Egglestone, retired fire officer Fire Rescue Victoria and enjoy a BBQ (at no cost to you), a chat/catch-up with old mates and FRV staff.

Cheers,

Alex Shepherd

Secretary's Report

Hello to you all out there in RFA land and others,

It's been a hot summer this year, and probably will be the hottest on record. In parts of S.A. the temperature topped 50C. How did we cope before air conditioners? Keep the water up to your plants and bird baths and ponds. I'm feeding 2 Magpies and 2 Currawongs (Mum & baby). Our birds need us humans to keep them watered on these hot summer days. We've lost a few of our members since the last Water Off was issued in November. I along with our president Alex Shepherd, went along to the UFU Retired Firefighters Luncheon in early December. It was a grand affair with plenty of food and drink. The raffle of a brass helmet was won by some lucky person. I reckon that helmet was probably worth a couple of thousand dollars. There were so many old faces at the luncheon, it was hard catching up with so many people we all worked with. The bell tolled for the firefighters and others who had passed away over the past 12 months. There were too many! As we age, we must remember to keep up the exercise, keep reading and completing puzzles. We have to keep our minds and bodies active to stave off dementia and other afflictions that invariably come our way. Recently, I had an interview with Jeff Godfredson, who resides by the seaside. Jeff is in his mid-seventies and keeps his mind constantly busy with new innovations together with many speaking duties around fire safety issues and improvements to fire services around the world. We are never too old to keep learning! A few of us retired firefighters volunteer our services to the FRV Fire Safety Department, to give talks to Probus Groups, Senior Citizens and retirement villages. It keeps our minds on the job and a way of giving back to community. PS Check your SMOKE ALARMS.

Fire Rescue Victoria recommends all occupied bedrooms have a working smoke alarm.

Minutes of RFA General Meeting, 18th February 2026 at Burnley

Minutes of RFA General Meeting, 18th February 2026 at Burnley
Meeting started at 10:30 hours - Present: 17 Members
Apologies: Alex Shepherd, John Berry.

*Phil Cleary stepped in as Acting President for Alex Shepherd for the meeting. Col Harris (Secretary) opened the meeting. One minutes silence for deceased members. "Water Off" newsletter was published late, however was available at the meeting. Colin's son who puts the newsletter together was unavailable. Colin apologised for this situation occurring.

New committee member is Matt Nardella, as Kevin Hede has stood down from the committee due to illness.

Financial Report (Phil Cleary) – Annual Membership fees have been increased to \$20.00 per year due to increased printing and postage costs. Moved John Howe and seconded by Len Manning – all in favour.

Phil Cleary mentioned that FRV may no longer contribute annually \$2000 towards the RFA.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

A motion was proposed by Ian Geddes and seconded by John Howe, that Phil Cleary be nominated for Life Membership of the RFA. All in favour – approved.

Col Harris donated & will donate a bottle of wine at each RFA meeting to a lucky winner as a door prize for attending our meetings. Sheila Sha picked the winner which was Phil Cleary.

Col & Susan Harris visited Clem Seaton at Bolton Clarke care facility in Lynbrook recently. Clem has dementia. Other firey mates has visited Clem over recent time, those being, Rob Dean, Ian Geddes, and Ray and Joan. Bolton Clarke (Ph: 89033200) visitors welcome to visit Clem.

Geoff & Maree Hughes commented that holders of a Seniors Card can get discounted postage. This will be followed up by the RFA Treasurer.

Guest Speaker:

Our Guest Speaker today was Jo Crowe from Dementia Australia. Jo is a sister to Mark Crowe from FRV. Jo is a Team Leader and worked at a diagnostic clinic for 15 years and has now been with Dementia Australia for the past 3 years. A brilliant talk with lots of questions from the audience. Statistics showed that Dementia is certainly out the in the community and the statistics show that almost a million Australians will have dementia within the next 20 years. Jo told the audience beneficial methods of how to related to people with dementia.

Meeting closed at 12:15pm. A fabulous lunch was provided by FRV support staff. After, members were invited to the yard to view a ladder platform and another aerial appliance.

Editorial

It's been a busy fire season for firefighters from all 3 fire agencies including firefighters from Canada arriving on our shores most recently. I wonder how many of these fires were deliberately lit? Properties lost, stock killed, one person died and wildlife dead and injured. CFA, FRV, & DELWP F/f's have worked tirelessly to bring these fires under control, yet some are still out of control. My wife, son and his girlfriend just missed the Otways fire by 4-6 hours after leaving Mt. Gambier and travelling back to Melbourne around the 10th of January. The Victorian Fire Emergency App was most informative and told us what we needed to know. After leaving Colac, the fire was close behind. The Princes Highway had smoke wafting eastwards and has passed Colac. As I type, that fire is still not under control in early February.

Post-Traumatic Stress is a condition which often faces emergency workers, hospital staff, doctors, and many others in the community. A close family friend was a forensic scientist in Mexico. Two years ago, she came to Australia to get away from the work she did with the Mexican Police Department. Alex told me she saw over 1200 bodies in her short working career. She ended up working as a forensic photographer. The drug cartels were killing many people, including families. Young children were also victims of their heinous crimes. Alex came to Australia to get away from all the horrible scenes she encountered during her short career. She has been in Australia for 2 years now, and her visa will run out in 12 months' time. About 9 months ago, after enjoying working and studying here in Melbourne, she was suddenly stuck down with PTSD. It all came back to her. She was depressed, had anxiety and was off work for a few weeks. After consulting doctors, she was diagnosed with a PTSD condition. After rest and medication, Alex has come through and is functioning again, yet some of those shocking memories will probably be with her to the very end of her life.

As firefighters, we've all come across suicides, dead bodies, hanging bodies, young and old bodies, car accidents etc during our working life. Some people can hold it together and not let these deathly scenes bother us. For others, it's a different story. It's a bit like the WW1 soldiers coming home from war in 1918. Shell shocked, scarred from bullets, bombs, and seeing their fellow soldiers and mates blown to bits after a German bombing raid. In WW2 where 4000 Aussie soldiers died building the Thai-Burma railway, our own Jimmy Kerr was a survivor who came back and joined the MFB. Weary Dunlop was a doctor who saved many lives in that war against the Japanese. You heard stories of men who did come back, having nightmares, screaming in the middle of the night, going crazy and committing suicide, Wife bashing and bouts of heavy drinking was common & was some of the consequences of post-traumatic stress.

At our February General Meeting, we will have a guest speaker talking about post- traumatic stress. Members are encouraged to come along and listen and engage with the speaker about their experiences. Retired Fire Officer Rod Egglestone was a Peer Support Officer for many years and will share his experience and advice with our audience. By the way, counselling is available to all retired firefighters and their family. Contact FRV Peer Support or the UFU. Sadly, in the brigade over time, there has been suicides by brigade personnel for various reasons. Some of those reasons have been put down to PTSD. Come along and have a listen, have a conversation, catch up with old work colleagues, have lunch and good conversations.

Colin Harris - Editor



Dick and Phil Cleary with two of Dick's grandsons on his 80th Birthday.

“A Tough Life for a Tough Kid”

An interview with Trevor Warburton ex- D.O. MFB

By: Colin Harris

A tough life it was for a young and brave kid. Trevor Warburton was put in state care when he was 10 years old from a household where “Mum” couldn’t care for four children on her own. Sadly Trev’s father died when he, Trevor was 2 years old. He lost contact with his sister and brothers when placed in state care. When he was fifteen, he was given an opportunity to work on a dairy farm in Orange, NSW. It was here that he was bullied by the son on the farm where Trevor had all the “shitty” jobs to do. Up at 5.00am, milking cows and all the other unpleasant work which is required to be done on a dairy farm. At age 17, he absconded to a relative’s home and worked there picking fruit and doing manual work until the age of 18. “Ahhhh! I don’t have to be this for the rest of my life, he says to himself. I want to join the army!” And, so he did. He took himself, confident and all and signed up and became an infantry man in the Australian Regular Army.

I must digress for a minute! I first met Trevor (I think I called him “Sir”), about 40 years ago at the big station (Eastern Hill), back in the day. Trevor didn’t smile! He was serious! He always looked good in uniform, and I think the girls loved him? He knew his job and he did it well. I think the early army disciplined life made him a great choice to become a firefighter/officer.

Back to the story! Trevor was born in Orange in 1943 and in time, went to the local primary school. After his father died, his mother married another man, whereupon another 3 children were born. Trevor remembers his step-father being pretty irresponsible and not financially supporting the family. That’s when the state took young Trevor and 3 siblings away.

Trevor now 18 y.o. and in the Australian Army, thrives on being in a military family. After a few years of army life where not much was happening, suddenly war started in Vietnam with the wonderful USA (“All the way with LBJ”). Well, Australia had to be involved – didn’t it? Anyhow, politics aside, Trevor did two x one year stints of fighting the Viet Cong.

Trevor showed me a book (“The Battle of Coral”) where he was highlighted in a few sentences. These read as follows – “The scout, nicknamed “Roo-Dog”, because of his physical build, was unsure of the identity of a couple of faces peering through the scrub and grass ahead. Warburton, cigarette in mouth, said, “That’s a nog”, snapped his rifle up, aimed and fired, hitting one of the Vietnamese. RPG rockets flashed overhead and the Australians began manoeuvring.” (Another sentence reads...”His right-hand sections were relatively quiet, but the left-most one, near the rubber trees, began to engage enemy in there. Soon they were calling for ammunition, and Sergeant Trevor Warburton took up what there was, then went to company HQ for more.” Trevor mentioned that he was wounded by a grenade but not seriously. When he returned home he did in fact have PTSD, which was not really identified in returned defence force personnel until during and after the Iraqi and Afghanistan wars later years. Trevor rose to the rank of Platoon Sergeant after nine years in the army. It was now time to change careers. MFB it was.

Trevor learned a lot by being in the army. When he became an officer in the MFB, he remembered some words of wisdom he learnt. “Be Fair – Be Firm – Be Friendly”

NOTE: 60,000 Australian Defence Force personnel fought in Vietnam over 10 years. 500 died and there were 3,129 wounded. This included Army, Navy and Air Force personnel.

Trevor retired (well, resigned or was it “fell on his sword”) in 1998 (as did Norm Thomas) after 10 years as a D.O. and later Inspector. This was due to the board wanting to reduce the number of Inspectors. Note: The rank changed names and later, changed again to Commander.

Trevor remembers a few people from the good ‘ol days. Frank Tuono was the Chief when he joined in 1971. He remembers people like John Richer, Merv McGuinness and Dick Dykstra.

He also remembers the station uniform, when we looked like “navies” in our blue coats, the ill-fitting shoes and top boots, the belt-axe and key and the flat cap which looked very French! Polishing those brass buttons and the couplings and braches, the standpipe and chimney pump.

These days, Trevor lives with his wife Jackie in Heathmont, Victoria. He is a member of the Knox Club, which he frequents quite often. Trevor has 2 children from a previous marriage. He loves to go with Jackie to far north Queensland to a little quiet place called Hideaway Bay which is not too far from Airley Beach. He and Jackie have had holidays in Vietnam & Bali.

Thanks, Trevor for serving in the Australian Defence Force and serving the community as a fire officer, saving life and property. Thank you for your time -(Ed)

Lithium-Ion Batteries

Victoria's fire services have reissued warnings over lithium-ion battery products after yet another fire was suspected to have been sparked by a lithium battery on the weekend.

Fire services say they are now frequently dealing with fires started by lithium-ion powered products – such as e-scooters, e-bikes, power tools, power banks and mobile phones – as they have become more common in households in recent years.

On Sunday night a man was taken to hospital with burns to his face after a fire ripped through a family home in Caroline Springs in Melbourne's west.

Fire Rescue Victoria said a battery charging in the garage was likely to blame.

As fire services we are seeing an increase year-on-year of responding to lithium-ion battery fires as a result of those products flooding the market at the moment," Country Fire Authority deputy chief officer Trevor Owen said on Monday.

Five people evacuated the home in Caroline Springs before the roof collapsed. (ABC News). [These fires] can become very volatile and very dangerous very quickly. Authorities have repeatedly warned the products are vulnerable to "thermal runaway" – when battery cells burst, overheat and let off toxic and flammable gases.

In early 2024 state fire departments said lithium-ion batteries had caused more than 1,000 fires in the past year. The waste and recycling industry says the products are causing more than 10,000 fires a year in waste management trucks and facilities.

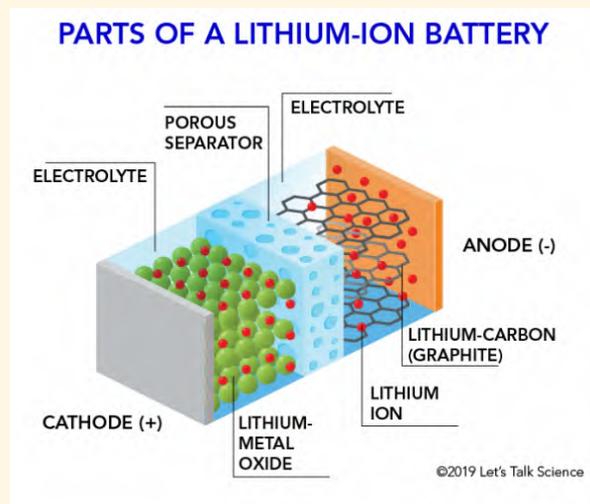
Victorian fire authorities have said they are responding to almost one lithium-ion battery fire every day. (ABC News)

Fire authorities issued their warning on Monday morning ahead of the Christmas period, urging people to buy products from reputable manufacturers and to always buy compatible batteries and chargers rather than using generic replacements.

"Make sure you're looking for products that have the regulatory compliance mark on them so you know they meet Australian safety standards," Mr Owen said.

"And stay away from cheap products from overseas that you don't know the origin of."

Safety authorities say Australians should check battery products for this Regulatory Compliance Mark (RCM). (Supplied: Electrical Equipment Safety System)



Firies say charging risks can be minimised

Fire services said there were some basic things lithium-ion battery owners could do to reduce the risk of fires.

These include:

- ☒ Keeping an eye on devices when they are being charged and turning devices off when no-one is home
 - ☒ Checking products for damage, swelling, frayed cords, smoke and that no moisture has seeped into the battery
 - ☒ Unplugging devices once they reach 100 per cent charge
 - ☒ Charging the device in an area with a smoke detector
 - ☒ Using the charging cord provided on purchase of the device and getting it replaced by the manufacturer if it is broken
 - ☒ Ensuring the charging device is compatible for the battery
- Energy Safe Victoria has also issued advice on how to charge lithium-ion batteries safely.

A Carlton apartment was badly damaged by fire after a mobile phone power bank exploded last year. (ABC News)

Fire Rescue Victoria deputy commissioner Joshua Fisher encouraged people to charge devices away from main living areas if possible.

“Seriously consider not charging the device in your home if you can,” he said.

“So if you have a garage or you can charge it outside ... away from flammable materials such as bed sheets, couches, carpets – anything that may be flammable, move it outside.”

Explosion of lithium-ion battery fires

The waste and recycling industry says it’s fighting up to 12,000 fires a year caused by discarded lithium-ion batteries.

He also encouraged the installation of smoke alarms throughout households and in garages to give early indications of a fire.

“We want people to be safe this Christmas. Make sure you follow the manufacturer’s recommendations for charging and for use,” he said.

“If you see any of those factors where the battery may be starting to fail, through the swelling, smells, the noises that you may hear, immediately stop using it.

“If it’s safe to do so, take it outside to a safe area and call Triple Zero.”



Jokes and other Stuff

(Sent in by members of the R.F.A. audience!)

- My wife wants me to wear a bracelet that belonged to her grandfather. It says, “DO NOT RESUSCITATE”
 - Even rarer than a doctor who can’t stand the sight of blood, is the lawyer who can’t stand the sight of money!
 - My wife and I decided to never go to bed angry. We’ve been awake since Tuesday last week!
 - Being old is when you don’t care where your wife goes, just as long as you don’t have to go too!
 - I now know how it will end for me. One of my children will unplug my life support machine, to charge their phone!
 - At a wedding reception, someone yelled. “All married people, please stand next to the one person that has made your life worth living.” The bartender was almost crushed to death!
 - The 3 hardest things to say are: I was wrong, I need help, and Worcestershire Sauce.
 - I’ve been sober now for 43 days. Not in a row – just in total.
 - My wife asked me why I spoke so softly in the house. I said, I was afraid Mark Zuckerberg was listening! She laughed. I laughed and so did Alexa and Siri.
 - A young protester holding a placard – “Stop killing ducks just to make duck tape”
 - Two old men speaking: Reggie says, “At our age, what would you rather have. Parkinson’s or Dementia?” Freddie says “Dementia, mate! Better to spill half an ounce of whisky than to forget where you put the bottle.”
 - JOBS – Jim has a Bachelor’s Degree in philosophy. He has a 100k student debt. He can’t find a philosophers job. He believes that people without a degree are stupid. Joe has done a 4 year electrical apprenticeship. He has no student debt. Earns 90k per year. He had to disconnect Jim’s power for non-payment of a bill! (Thankyou R.F.A. audience for your contribution! – Ed.).
-

ONE NEVER STOPS LEARNING

There is that old saying one never stops learning, you better believe it. This I hope will reinforce said quote. In this case it is about an experience that happen to me a couple of weeks ago.

One of my brother-in- laws invited me to attend a competition that he was competing in. Sunday 18/01/2026 at the NEXUS Gymnasium, Nicholson Street Brunswick. I must say I was a bit surprised he is a Retired Army WO1, in his 80ies competing in a Weight-lifting competition, to me it was a no brainer if I did not go.

I have never been to one where some of the competitors are in their 80ies, and as in this case a range of different ages and sex. Each competitor is required to do 3 different lifts. Squat, Bench-press & Dead Lift. I hope the following photo that I took of one of the lifts (Squat) will give you a better idea of what I am writing about. You will notice in the picture 3 blokes located very close to the competitor whilst doing his lift? they are there to take the weight if the person is unable to raise from the squat position. In this case it was not required.

I guess I should not be surprised about the Brother-in-law; his nick name was Pictures. I imagine you would not need me to explain the reason for the nick name, yes, he has been involved in several military engagements during his career starting with the Vietnam conflict, interestingly both his wife and him have visited there since for holidays. They both speak highly of the people and country; it was also around the time they needed to start exploring where they were going to live in retirement. They could have, picked say the

suburbs or country no it was the big smoke for them and their children good old Melbourne Town, and they love it. It was obvious they were not the types to be sitting around all day watching the TV. They were out and involve example; with his type of career, he became invited by one of the Universities to be a study project (Army Life) for members of the community undertaking Postgraduate courses.

Now the weightlifting all started from the Governments (Exercise Program) support for Veterans, during their workouts one of the staff noticed just how well he was handling the program and suggested he should try out their NEXUS weightlifting program, Result: he now competes in their events. (See attach picture) During said discussions with me regarding the exercise program he suggested I become involved with it, went something like this (All right Ant off the arse & become involved at your local Gym). Yes, I did as I was told and for the last couple of weeks, I have become involved at the local Pro Active Health program for Veterans. I must mention the last time I visited a gym; it was the old MFB in Victoria Street. The gear they have today is way above my knowledge, but I am lucky the instructors can see I am just a little old man and they look after me. (I imagine it would not be very often they would get a bloke almost 91). Many of the other participants both female & male are built like brick out-houses what I want to know where all the little old people like me are.

Enjoy Ant.

Thoughts On Ageing

To get back to my youth I would do anything in the world, except exercise, get up early, or be respectable.

- Oscar Wilde

The older we get, the fewer things seem worth waiting in line for.

- Will Rogers

We must recognize that, as we grow older, we become like old cars – more and more repairs and replacements are necessary.

- C.S. Lewis

Old age is like a plane flying through a storm. Once you are aboard there is nothing you can do about it.

- Golda Meir

I'm so old that my blood type is discontinued.

- Bill Dana

The older I get, the more clearly I remember things that never happened.

- Mark Twain

Wisdom doesn't necessarily come with age. Sometimes, age just shows up all by itself.

- Tom Wilson.

Always be nice to your children because they are the ones who will choose your retirement home.

- Phyllis Diller

I'm at that age where my back goes out more than I do.

- Phyllis Diller

Nice to be here? At my age, it's nice to be anywhere.

- George Burns

Don't let aging get you down. It's too hard to get back up.

- John Wagner

First you forget names, then you forget faces, then you forget to pull your zipper up, then you forget to pull your zipper down.

- Leo Rosenberg

“Aging seems to be the only available way to live a long life.”

- Kitty O'Neill Collins

R.F.A. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

The Secretary/Treasurer
Retired Firefighters Association of Australia
Victorian Branch Incorporated

The aims of the Association, which was formed in June 1988, cover the following:

- (1) To act as a medium for the promotion of communication between fellow firefighters, spouses and kindred members;
- (2) To provide a regular newsletter
- (3) To encourage dialogue between relevant community groups which are of assistance to members and dependants;
- (4) To give support and fellowship to each other and stimulate participation in activities which assist members development;
- (5) To foster social participation among its members;

NOTE: The association is non-political and membership is open to all retired/ex-firefighters, volunteer/career and support staff.

NAME:.....

Partners Name:.....

Service: FRV (MFB), CFA, other. Please indicate which service Starting/Ending dates
...../.....

Reg No: (if applicable)..... Home address.....

Phone No:..... Mobile:.....

Email:.....

Payment each year of \$20.00 to be made on application, which includes a joining fee of \$5.00 and \$15.00 for one year's subscription. \$20.00 Payable December each year.

Please pay directly (electronically) into Goulburn Murray Credit Union.

BSB 803 078 – Account 37460 – Retired Firefighters Association, Vic.

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OFFICE USE ONLY: Date Received:.....Date Approved:.....

Approved By:.....Entry Computer Date.....

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