

"WATER OFF"

NEWSLETTER OF THE
RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS'
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
(VICTORIAN BRANCH) INC.



May 2026

RFA General Meeting
Burnley Complex
Wednesday, 20th May
at 10:30am

INDEX

3. Presidents Report
4. Minutes of last meeting
5. Editorial
6. Dr. Jeff Godfredson - AFSM
11. CSI Club Queensland
12. Cricketing story
13. Elyse Villani
15. Fire Station Bicycle
16. R.F.A. MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATION FORM



**Peer support is available to Retired Firefighters and
Associated Members**

FRV

Employee Assistance Coordinator
Irina Tchernitskaia – PH: 0407 665 174
Email: irina.tchernitskaia@frv.vic.gov.au
Peer Coordinators
Chloe Henderson PH: 0417 538 289
Scott Darcy PH: 0429 771 849
Email: sdarcy@frv.vic.gov.au

Retirees

John Howe PH: 9729 0984 — MO: 0417 112 993
Tony Branchflower Retired SSO MO: 0400 695 622

Peer Coordinator Trent Egan
PH: 0448 071 299
Email: Careerpeercoordinator@frv.vic.gov.au

“GENERAL MEETING”

**Burnley Complex, Burnley
Wednesday 20th May, 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

**Greg Fenech Act S.O.
FIRE INVESTIGATION**

Diary Dates

“GENERAL MEETING”

Burnley Complex, Burnley
Wed 20th May 2026
10:30 am.

Sick List

Gary Spicer
John Williams

Ian Hookey
Frank Souter
Dick Cleary
Vale

Keith Gardner
Harry Purcell
Eddie Vincent
Barry Williamson

“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.

President's Report

Hello All, I'm glad I live in Australia! We are far from what's going on in the world at this time. I'm shaking my head at what is happening. We have people who think they can take over other countries with no justification other than their own egos and they think that we as a nation should also go along with them. I hope we never follow Mr Thump (have I got his name right?) and his insanity. Does he even think about the consequences of his actions or is he just a madman. We are now going down the road that COVID took us and our leaders are just as confused. I think they hope it will go away soon and they will not have to do any real thinking and make some hard decisions about our future direction. I love Australia but the people who we vote for seem hell bent in changing our past so they can change our future. Mr Thump is changing his country. I'm no doctor but he's crazy!! I hope I didn't bore anyone I just think some leaders are taking the wrong direction.

It's getting on; we are now in autumn the weather is still great but in some areas it's a little crazy (I wonder if Mr Thump has anything to do with it?). I was looking forward to the footy season however my team hasn't won a game yet however I hope yours has. We have lost some great people these past months, I and the Committee wish family, friends all the best and our thoughts go out to you. We hope you are all in good health and have some good things going on in your lives.
Be happy and look after yourselves.

Alex Shepherd

Secretary's Report

Out cycling today, as I do each weekend. The sun come out after the rain and my mate and I cycled for 40 kilometres. A coffee in between and all was good. Cycling home we stopped after the bike track ran out at an intersection. There was a bloke in a vehicle with his son. The vehicle was a lovely posh Range Rover, white, new and looked very stylish, unlike the driver. We were about to cross the road, when he suddenly turned in front of us. We gestured to him to put his indicator on. He stopped the vehicle and called out "what's your problem". I said, "What happened to your indicator". He said, "It's Sunday" in a large and aggressive bullying tone. We shook our heads as he drove off in his lovely vehicle. There were 2 witnesses to come to our aid, had this angry well-built d#@khead got out of his vehicle to add more fuel to the fire. I thought later, what a great example he was to his young son at his side.

Another four members have passed away since our last meeting at Burnley. Another passed away last year I was reminded of. That person was Nina McPherson, who was our librarian in charge at the Abbotsford Training College. Nina was a professional. She would find study material, a book, magazine, photocopy information for those wanting information. A message from Jo Todd informed me of her passing December, 2025. R.I.P. Nina! You will be missed.

Colin Harris.

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

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

10:30 hours.

Present: 16 Members

Apologies: 3 Members

President, Alex Shepherd welcomed members and opened meeting.

**One minute's silence to think of members who have passed away
Minutes of the November meeting were read out. Moved: J. Berry Seconded J. Howe
Treasurer's Report read by the Secretary - Moved: A. Shepherd, Seconded Matt
Nardella.**

General Business:

Sam Capes mentioned that Lew Shilling was in aged care in Rainbow, Victoria.

John Howe suggested that Arthur Mears be presented with Life Membership of the R.F.A. and that he would be turning 100 years of age in April this year. Moved John Howe – Seconded Alex Shepherd.

It was mentioned that Peter Coulson has been moved into care in Maryborough, Vic. Peter Rees, former D.O./Inspector has undergone surgery & living in Bairnsdale, Vic.

John Berry talked about how and when the R.F.A. started and who were some of the people involved in getting this important organisation happening for members who have retired. People like Peter Holton, John Berry, Ernie Tammy and Don Brennan.

Guest Speaker: Our Guest Speaker was Rod Egglestone, retired S.O. who spoke about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Rod was and still is a Peer Support person who was in this role with the MFB and FRV before he retired. Rod spoke about early intervention after emergency workers are involved in horrific scenes at various incidents. Recognising signs where affected workers are displaying unusual characteristics, mood swings, being angry and often not communicating their feelings to people around them and their family members. The talk was well received by members. Alex Shepherd thanked Rod for his presentation and presented Rod with a small gift.

Meeting closed at 12:00.

Members and staff enjoyed a lovely BBQ lunch. We thank FRV, Fire Safety staff and others for putting on a delicious spread which is always appreciated by our members.

R.F.A. Membership Application form is at the back of this newsletter

Editorial

The world has gone crazy! The price of fuel is rocketing up at the end of March 2026.

People are dying, people are crying. Babies, children, young & old people – starving!

Bombs flying over the Middle East, drones and rockets blowing up Ukraine! (Insane)!

I remember John Lennon & Yoko. Their peaceful, insightful word songs to the world.

No one was listening! The hopeful Nobel Peace prize recipient has just started a war.

Our children's children will be living in unknown/uncertain and difficult future times.

I had the pleasure to interview an “old” MFB Chief Fire Officer over 6.5 hours and writing his story. You will find it in this newsletter. A fascinating person, who has achieved so much. I was embarrassed about what little I achieved in my 40+ MFB years.

We have had some former colleagues pass away since our last meeting. One in particular who flew under the radar, was S/FF Eddie Vincent. I had the pleasure of knowing Eddie when he was stationed at Footscray and lived at Spotswood fire station. Eddie eventually ended up working at the Abbotsford Training College in various capacities. He always had a clean vehicle, a happy smile and went the extra mile if you needed something or anything. Eddie passed away on the 25th March this year and he will be always remembered as having a kindly nature and a pleasant happy face.

R.I.P. Eddie Vincent

At our May General Meeting, we will have a staff member from FRV Fire Investigation team attend and talk about developments in fire investigation from when it all began to today. As we all know, Lithium-ion batteries, the illegal tobacco wars (shop fires) are causing the authorities big headaches. There are still homes today in the suburbs where people die in house fires due to lack of smoke alarms, no smoke alarms or not testing their smoke alarms. As we come into the winter months, please ensure your smoke alarms are working. FRV recommend that all occupied bedrooms have a working smoke alarm. Fire statistics show that domestic fires usually start in the kitchen and bedrooms.

Some of our older members may remember the name, “Stewie” Villani. Stuart was a senior firefighter at the old Carlton Fire Station, Swanston Street back in the day. It turns out that Stuart has a grandson in F.R.V. and a granddaughter Elyse Villani, who happens to be a famous Tasmanian cricketer. Elyse has also represented Victoria and Australia over many years of playing this sport. Her story is in this edition of “Water Off”.

Last February meeting, we had retired S.O. Rod Egglestone talk about PTSD. If anyone reading this newsletter has any issues relating to PTSD, please contact Peer Support. There are many avenues of support for all of our RFA and RMD members to access.

Colin Harris – Ed

Dr. Jeff Godfredson - AFSM

It was with some trepidation that I was to meet up with my former CFO. We met at his home and after two hours, I was bewildered by what he has achieved in his lifetime so far. Jeff Godfredson was and still is on a mission. He didn't like time wasters, so I knew I had to get his story and yet, the two hours were not enough to gain the information I needed to make a readable, enjoyable and historical story of the man I didn't know. The only times I saw our chief, was at UFU meetings, the odd brigade meeting, when EMR was to be introduced and the times when I was SSO at No.1 and he would, 'brief case in hand' walk up the stairs to the lift from the outside yard. Occasionally, we would greet each other and that was it. He didn't know me and I didn't know him. Was he aloof, shy or just a chief on a mission?

Jeff was born in 1948 in Melbourne, starting his early life living in quarters at Carlton Fire station, where his father, Ray was a Station Officer. The family later moved to Ormond. He attended the local primary and secondary schools. At the end of Year 11 he left school to work full time with a land surveying company. Later he found a job working at Myer in a cadetship role, where later he would learn all about retailing and the business of working in one of the largest stores in Melbourne. In the 1960's the Vietnam War was in full swing against Communist North Vietnam. The Australian Government was coerced to join in and stop the communist forces entering South Vietnam. Along with other young men, Jeff received a letter from the Government, telling him his services were required. Conscription into the National Service was by birth date ballot and his number came up. Training for National Service was scheduled to take place at Puckapunyal, which is located about 100 kilometres northeast of Melbourne. As a result, his position at Myer was suspended for two years. Jeff was soon to be known as a "Nasho".

The day before his group were to be paraded (last day of the army training course), Jeff broke his leg in two places in a training accident. He eventually recovered and passed out in the next group of Nashos. He was off to Vietnam not long after in a support role, yet saw some activity. In Vietnam, he was based in Nui Dat and Vung Tau. Jeff mentioned that it was a good experience for him. Leadership was one of the positive experiences he valued. He believes that his experience in the Army and in a War Zone made a significant impact on the man he became.

A year in Vietnam saw him being honourably discharged and back to his day job at Myer after 2 years in the army. Back at Myer, Jeff realised he had been usurped by a younger and less experienced chap. Jeff was not happy and told his supervisor so. One weekend, he was talking to his father and Bill Leonard (ex-Third Officer MFB), about how unhappy he was and what he should do next about another job. Bill Leonard and his father, Ray, convinced Jeff to join "the job." In 1970 Jeff signed up to the MFB and began as a recruit at No. 10 Station in Richmond. A few of his fellow recruits were, Chris Badrock, Alex Shepherd and John Richer. After 12-14 weeks of training, the recruits were sent to Eastern Hill and placed on duty. One of the recruits' jobs was being in the "dog box". This was sitting in a small cubicle and answering the phone and being front of house for the public who would often come into the station and ask questions. When rostered to the "dog box," you were allowed out for 1.5 hours each day shift for morning and afternoon tea and lunch. Time went by very slowly!

After a year or so, the future chief was transferred to 35 Station - Windsor, where he was taken under the wing of S/FF Brian Wilmot and others who became willing and helpful mentors. Jeff was savvy enough to realise that sitting around the mess table smoking and playing cards, or billiards all shift whilst waiting for fire calls was not how he wanted to spend his downtime on long shifts at work for the rest of his career. Someone mentioned the words Institute of Fire Engineers (I.F.E.) in his ear and suddenly, he was into wanting to learn more about firefighting and associated aspects of the fire service. (The I.F.E. is based in the U.K. and today is still recognised as a valuable international qualification for promotion in the fire service). Jeff was on it! As it happens, he is currently serving on the Board of IFE(Aust).

During his 5 years at Windsor, Jeff turned-out to many structure fires in nursing homes, backpacker hostels, and boarding homes together with factory and shop fires in the many premises along Chapel Street and surrounding streets. There were of course the often vehicle accidents and rescues along Dandenong Road. Station 35 was a young firefighter's dream station for learning "the ropes" and experiencing the adrenaline rush.

As the years quickly slipped away, this youngish 'fireman' took every opportunity. This was to be a career in the fire service, not just a job. Why work part-time when you can study, learn by studying hard the theory stuff of firefighting and fire prevention ie. fire safety!

Promotion came early. After a number of years in the service, Jeff was on the Station Officer's course at the earliest opportunity and he passed with flying colours. Rostered to Eastern Hill as a newly promoted officer, he attended many fires in the CBD. After some time, he was approached by Assistant Chief Tom Williamson to apply for a position in the Fire Safety Department - Fire Protection. Jeff needed more practical experience as a junior officer and said so but the decision was made for him and Fire Safety became his next challenge. Time marched on and two years later, Jeff decided to have a go at the SSO's He was once again successful. At this point, some would say he hadn't had enough practical experience as a firefighting officer and learning the ropes of working on station as the officer in charge. Jeff was on a learning curve, ambitious and wasn't distracted by what others were saying. Still working in fire safety, Jeff completed another two years as SSO and decided to try for promotion to District Officer where he was successful again. He was appointed to the rank of Superintendent and worked as the Control Superintendent at HQ.

On Jeff's career journey, he was appointed CFO of the Northern Territory Fire Service on a two-year appointment where he was managing a diverse workforce of career, part-paid auxiliaries and volunteers across a vast region. One fire station was over 2000 kms from headquarters. In 1988 Jeff left Darwin and returned to the MFB where he was promoted to Assistant Chief Fire Officer and headed up the Fire Safety Division. He was of the opinion that success in Fire Safety with changed legislation would save many lives and keep firefighters safer.

The fire safety department was becoming big business during the eighties and nineties, due to the rapid expansion of Melbourne. Fire safety for Melbourne's high-rise buildings was important and Jeff was outspoken and at the forefront of making buildings safer for all occupants in Melbourne and the suburbs.

On the day he was promoted he was in the Chief's Office feeling pleased with himself when he looked out the window to the city skyline. It then dawned on him that all of those people out there were relying on him to keep them safe from fire. He never forgot that moment.

After he was promoted to Chief, he kept that passion for fire safety alive. He raised the Head of Fire Safety to Director level the same position as the Head of Operations.

There was CityLink, a new building for The Royal Children's Hospital and other construction sites requiring fire protection plans being scrutinised and passed by the MFB fire protection department. He now had the team and power to deliver the required fire protection for the various buildings which were inadequately protected at this time.

In his first year as Chief on Christmas Eve 1991 he attended a fire at Athol Lodge, an Aged Care Facility in St. Kilda resulted in the deaths of 6 incapacitated and able-bodied people and rescue of some 30 people. Police were first to arrive on scene, where Constable Trevore McDonald and his partner assisted with searching in trying conditions of heat and heavy thick smoke. They helped many residents escape, as did civilians on scene, prior to the arrival of the brigade. A Constable McDonald was awarded the bronze medal for bravery by the Royal Humane Society. Structure fires as per this example, would never have happened had these premises been sprinklered. This was what Jeff Godfredson was striving for, that all nursing homes and places of special accommodation be sprinklered. For example, all new nursing homes be fully sprinklered. Older nursing homes were required to be retrofitted with sprinklers. It was 15 years later that NSW enacted similar legislation for existing nursing homes to be retrofitted with sprinklers following a fire that killed 14 people in that State.

Some may remember that as chief, Jeff in collaboration with the Victorian Government introduced a law, that all homes in Victoria be fitted with smoke alarms. Smoke alarms and smoke alarm systems were installed in the 80's, 90's and beyond. They have saved hundreds of lives and property throughout Australia.

During this period, there was another Jeff on the scene. That was Jeff Kennett, the Premier of Victoria. Victoria was booming in the 1980's – 1990's. The MFB Fire Safety Department, had plans for CityLink and other construction sites as mentioned previously. CityLink management/builders were planning to put in an inadequate escape system in the event of a major fire in the Burnley and Domain tunnels. Jeff Godfredson and his team demanded that the escape areas to be up to a required standard and adequate fire suppression systems in place before agreeing to these plans to build. The same was for the Royal Children's Hospital, where the builders and management only wanted a smoke detection system in place. Jeff and his team demanded and achieved that the building be fully sprinklered. Jeff reminded me of a large fire in Collins St, Melbourne where the only building in the block that remained standing, was fully sprinklered. That fire was in 1890.

During Jeff's time as chief (1988-1998), he introduced the following initiatives:

- Corporate support for Fire Prevention Programs (used to fund overseas Firefighter Scholarships)
 - MFB won the Australian Customer Service Award
 - Won the IAFC Award for Excellence
- Created an opportunity for Australian firefighters to attend the US Fire Academy
 - Introduced external multiple disciplinary training at AFP – Manly
- Encouraged tertiary qualifications – a requirement for promotion to senior ranks
 - Introduced the first modular transport (pod) system
 - Introduced the first females in the MFB
 - Created International Firefighter Exchange Program
 - Initiated Fire Officer at Sea program on coastal trading ships
- Achieved retrofit of fire sprinklers for Government House (Melbourne)
- Introduced Emergency Medical Response (EMR) program over 30 years ago
- Created FireVision, connecting all fire stations to our TV studio allowing two-way interaction with each station or group of stations
 - Completed Strategic location plan for fire stations ahead of time and under budget (as part of a team)
 - Had a result of achieving response time target of 7.7 minutes 90% of the time
- Introduced Urban Search & Rescue to MFB. (Note: Stuart Diver was rescued in a landslide at Thredbo, NSW. The MFB USAR team ably assisted in the rescue where 18 lives were lost. It was Australia's deadliest landslide – July 30th, 1997. He also made that point that these outcomes were achieved by a team of people who shared a common vision. You could not have achieved these outcomes as an individual.

Jeff Godfredson's Education/Professional Qualifications

During his career, Jeff constantly upgraded increased his education and professional qualifications in Australia and overseas. Some examples are below:

- Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
- Master of Public Policy and Management (MPPM)
- Graduate Diploma Organisation Behaviour(Grad.Dip.Org.Beh.)
- Graduate Executive Fire Officer Program – National Fire Academy, Emmitsburg, USA
- Member (Distinction), Institute of Fire Engineers, UK
- Also attended a number of programs at Harvard University.

Since 1998, Jeff Godfredson has worked and consulted in fire safety worldwide. Some of the appointments include:

- Honorary Adjunct Professor, Strategic Partnerships – Deakin University
 - Managing Director Global Safety Solutions Pty Ltd
 - Director International Relations, FLAIM System
- Consulting at senior level to various international and national clients on emergency management and standards issues.
 - Management Consultant, NAFFCO, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- Director, Asia Pacific and Middle East, NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) Quincy Ma., USA. (7 years)
 - Three years posting to Hong Kong
 - Chief Fire Officer, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Melbourne, Australia (10 years).
 - Elected President of the Metro Chiefs by his international peers.
 - Introduced external multiple disciplinary training at AFP – Manly
- Encouraged tertiary qualifications – a requirement for promotion to senior ranks
 - Introduced the first modular transport (pod) system
 - Introduced the first females in the MFB
 - Created International Firefighter Exchange Program
 - Initiated Fire Officer at Sea program on coastal trading ships
 - Achieved retrofit of fire sprinklers for Government House (Melbourne)
- Introduced Emergency Medical Response (EMR) program over 30 years ago
- Created FireVision, connecting all fire stations to our TV studio allowing two-way interaction with each station or group of stations
 - Completed Strategic location plan for fire stations ahead of time and under budget (as part of a team)
 - Had a result of achieving response time target of 7.7 minutes 90% of the time
- Introduced Urban Search & Rescue to MFB. (Note: Stuart Diver was rescued in a landslide at Thredbo, NSW. The MFB USAR team ably assisted in the rescue where 18 lives were lost. It was Australia's deadliest landslide – July 30th, 1997.

He also made thar point that these outcomes were achieved by a team of people who shared a common vision. You could not have achieved these outcomes as an individual.

Jeff Godfredson's Education/Professional Qualifications

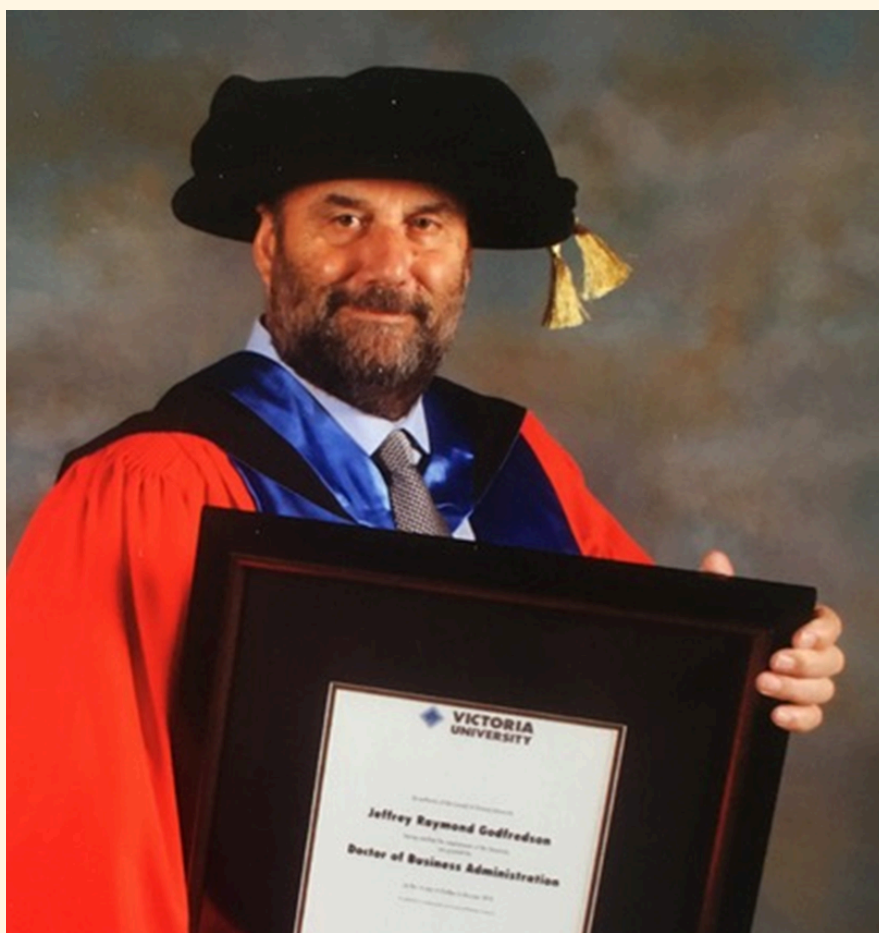
During his career, Jeff constantly upgraded increased his education and professional qualifications in Australia and overseas. Some examples are below:

- Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
- Master of Public Policy and Management (MPPM)
- Graduate Diploma Organisation Behaviour(Grad.Dip.Org.Beh.)
- Graduate Executive Fire Officer Program – National Fire Academy, Emmitsburg, USA
- Member (Distinction), Institute of Fire Engineers, UK
- Also attended a number of programs at Harvard University.

Since 1998, Jeff Godfredson has worked and consulted in fire safety worldwide. Some of the appointments include:

- Honorary Adjunct Professor, Strategic Partnerships – Deakin University
- Managing Director Global Safety Solutions Pty Ltd
- Director International Relations, FLAIM System
- Consulting at senior level to various international and national clients on emergency management and standards issues.
- Management Consultant, NAFFCO, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- Director, Asia Pacific and Middle East, NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) Quincy Ma., USA. (7 years)
 - Three years posting to Hong Kong
- Chief Fire Officer, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Melbourne, Australia (10 years).
 - Elected President of the Metro Chiefs by his international peers.

C.F.O. Jeff Godfredson was not re-appointed as Chief of MFB (CEO) at the end of 1998 Was he too smart, too progressive, too futuristic for his board, developers and Government? I wonder if the old MFB Board as it was, would have regrets today of their decision-making back in 1998? The MFB, (now FRV), has lost its premier position as one of the best fire services in the world.



Southport, Qld “Firey Reunion”

30th July 2026

**CSI Club Southport
154 Scarborough Street, Southport
(Clubs Ph: 07 55329944**

Please arrive between 10.00 – 11.00am

Meet up with “old mates” retired or still working

**Please email Gail Fagernes your name & details if you are attending,
so you can be added to the list and to ensure you get a seat. This also helps the CSI Club with organising seating and food
requirements.**

Include name of partner etc.

Ian & Gail Fagernes contact details:

Home: 07 55224321

Gail’s Mob: 0431 485141

Ian’s Mob: 0417 382935

Or send an email to: fagernes@bigpond.com

“Looking forward to catching up with you all”



An Intertwining Brigade/Cricketing Story

By: Allan Thompson & Colin Harris

In 1976, I, (Allan Thompson) was successful in filling a vacancy on "A" Platoon at Carlton No 3. The shift at the time included SSO Ivan Nunn, SO Rod Ashton, SF/F's Keith White, Dave Berthet, Alby Hall, Alun Williams, and F/F Greg Owens and apart from the officers the undisputed leader of the pack was SF/F Stuart (Stewie) Villani Reg No 749.

Stewie's knowledge and understanding of firefighting was quickly handed down to the younger firefighters and you couldn't drive the Hose Carriage or catch the Salvage Van until Stewie gave the nod to the officers that you knew the gear, knew the area and could drive safely under lights and sirens. Stewie was a well-respected senior firefighter.

I am proud to say that he was my very early mentor and after mouthing off about something regarding the officers I was not happy about, he looked me in the eye and said, "If you don't like it why don't you go for the officers' exam". I think he then watched and encouraged my career even after his retirement.

Stewie also understood the need for peer support and you could guarantee that he would be standing by the engine room doors when the Salvage Van (Rescue vehicle – No.3, Carlton) came back from a road accident rescue or a nasty fire to make a pot of tea and debrief the crew. He often recalled an incident with Kevin Smith and Fred Marshall (The Senior Firefighter edition 15, 2021) and used it as an awareness for all the younger guys on the dangers of unknowns in small workshops and home garages. One story goes that a crew were at a shed fire in Elsternwick. Water from a charged fire hose hit the fire, which happened to be a motor bike engine fire. The engine was magnesium. A large explosion occurred with injuries to Kevin Smith and Fred Marshall. A quick thinking Stuart Villani hailed down a passing motorist and placed the two injured firemen in the back of the vehicle and directed the driver to the Alfred Hospital, honking the horn all the way to the hospital. Kevin Smith always said he owed fireman Villani a huge debt for his quick thinking, and lifesaving response on that awful day.

Stewie lived in quarters at Brunswick No 4 with his wife Marie and two sons - Rod and Greg until his retirement.

Stewie was an avid golfer and recreation at Carlton comprised of a billiard table, bat tennis and back yard cricket with a stream of water to produce the sweet spot for the bowlers but of course he excelled at them all, and as he had played cricket for the brigade it was near impossible to bowl him out.

Stewie joined the job in 1951- Reg 749, with some famous "oldies", the likes of Sid Finnegan and John Ronke. Some of this crew were stationed at the old 38 Stn, South Melbourne. Stewie was a regular at No.3 Stn, Carlton on "A" and "D" shifts. He did spend some time at 35 Stn, Winsor, in the 1950's, with shift mates like Arthur Aspel, Mick Adamson, Whopper Lane and Bill Bates. At one stage, Stewie and his family had quarters at Brunswick Fire Station. Stewie was in the Australian Navy before joining the fire brigade. He played with the MFB cricket club. Sadly, Stewie passed away on the 11th January, 1988 before Elyse was born.

Stewie, who sadly passed away at the young age of 63 years, leaving his wife Marie and 2 sons, Greg and Rod. Stewie was in the Australian Navy before joining the fire brigade. He played with the MFB cricket club. Sadly, Stewie passed away on the 11th January, 1988 before Elyse was born.

The Villani story continues with a granddaughter called Elyse. In recent times and watching the Australian Women's Cricket team, the name Elyse Villani peaked my curiosity and after some investigation by chasing down son Rod, I confirmed that Elyse was in fact Stewie's granddaughter and thought it was a good human interest story with a tie into the old Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

With over 90 appearances for Australia to her name and several domestic awards, the Tasmanian Tigers secured arguably the biggest move of the 2021 off season, luring Elyse Villani to the apple isle. Fresh off a blistering WNCL season for Victoria – in which Villani smashed 611 runs at a clip of just over 87, including three centuries, Villani joined the Tasmanian Tigers, assuming the captaincy in the process. The Female Domestic Player of the year for two consecutive seasons has also been recalled into the national discussion after a two year absence, named in the Australia "A" side for the 2022 Women's Ashes. Previously, Villani represented Australia in 34 WODI's and 62 WT20I's, and on current form, is every chance to add more appearances to those already lofty totals.

The Villani family is still represented in the fire service today, with Greg, brother of Elyse in the job at No. 14 Station.

Elyse Villani

Some questions about you & your Cricketing Career!

· What do you remember about your grandfather?

Unfortunately he had already passed away before I was born. I think I was born around 2 years after he passed.

I'm the youngest of four kids and my three older brothers and I all played a lot of sport growing up. As a family our evenings and weekends were either spent in the backyard or with local teams playing cricket, footy, hockey or basketball. My dad played cricket, football and tennis growing up but didn't continue with cricket into his 20's. He tried to pick it up again later in life and joined a VETs team but I don't think it went overly well! Ha, ha!

I'm not sure I ever decided to take up cricket as such, I kind of just fell into it because I wanted to follow my brothers around and play what they played. When I got a little bit older and I started to get a little better at it, I guess I ended up choosing to pursue it properly around the age of 12.

Cricket is really a difficult sport and I love the challenge of it, the tactics of it and the highs and lows of it. The feeling of scoring a match winning knock or taking an important catch or just being out on the field with your team mates all looking to achieve the same thing is pretty cool. The people I've met within the sport have been a huge thing for me as well, the girls I grew up playing with continue to be my best friends and a huge part of my life.

I started playing cricket in the backyard with my brothers ever since I could walk. I joined my first club team when I was 7 years old and played in the under 12's boys team as the only girl in the competition.

Q. Are you a batter or bowler? I'm definitely a batter. I did bowl a little when I was younger but I never loved it enough to really give it a red hot crack and I think you really have to love bowling to put the time in!

My highest score I think, was around the 200 mark and it was a club game against Dandenong when I was playing for Brunswick Park Ladies Cricket Club.

Cricket has given me a passion to pursue for the last 30 odd years, lifelong friendships and life lessons along the way. It's also given me the gift of being a professional athlete for the back half of my career which I never thought would happen within my cricketing career.

At the start of my cricket journey I had lots of other jobs like part-time work in a sticker factory, school holiday programs, swim instructor, cricket coach, and part-time teacher in primary schools. But when it became fully professional around 10 years ago for me I was able to just focus on cricket as my job and in the last few years I've dabbled in TV cricket commentary as well which I've really enjoyed.

I was lucky to be a part of the Australian Cricket Team for around 10 years or so which meant I was lucky enough to travel overseas to play quite a bit. I've travelled to England, New Zealand, West Indies, India, Dubai, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Ireland, and Bangladesh

I've visited lots of countries and on top of playing against those nations I've already listed, I've also played against some others because of World Cups I've been a part of. These include; South Africa and Pakistan.

I'm 36 now and I've just retired from the WBBL after winning the first title with the Hobart Hurricanes in December 2025. At the moment I'm still contracting to Tasmania for the 50 over competition and will think about what's next over the next few months.

Andy, my brother is a firefighter with F.R.V., has only just retired from local cricket in the Diamond Valley League in the last year or so and loved playing cricket for so many years. He has two young kids so spends his days off taking them to sport now rather than officially playing it himself.

Q. Do you like beating the Poms? It's always nice to beat the Poms. They can be big talkers of the game so it does feel nice when you win & they suddenly have less to say!

If I'm lucky enough to have children I would encourage them to be active and introduce them to lots of different sports and hopefully they fall in love with one like I did. But if it's not sport then I hope they just find their own passion whatever that may be! My parents were always so supportive of my brothers and I but never pushed us and I'd like to think I'd be a similar parent.



Elyse Villani in action



Hobart Hurricanes skipper Elyse Villani

The Station Bike for testing Street Fire Alarms

Thanks to Eric Daffy and Sammy Capes for giving me information about the old black fire station alarm testing bicycles.

This is a story in the sixties of Eric being stationed at Surrey Hills – Stn 21. Eric had been using the bike for a while when he decided to leave the bike behind and run the circuit in his trusty Dunlop Volleys. He wanted to get fit, so this was the way. Some of the hills in Surrey Hills were quite steep, so you had to push the bike up some of those hills. Running was faster and easier for Eric. Eric mentioned that when you did your rounds in a southerly direction, he could sneak in running around part of the Wattle Park golf course to ramp up his fitness level.

Eric mentioned that he was stationed with Huey Torney, who he didn't really know. Turns out that Huey had been a pretty good footballer having played 168 games for the Essendon Football Club. Huey has a brick on the footpath along with another few hundred bricks outside the ground at Windy Hill.

Eric was stationed at Stn 21 for a couple of years, before he transferred to Eastern Hill as he wanted to study for the S.O.'s exam. He says he was always grateful for the help and encouragement of the officers and men at No.1 and also to get an understanding of what was required to have a successful career in the fire brigade.

Another story about the station bike was an article written 20 years ago in "Water Off". It's about S/FF Alan Sanders who was out testing alarms in his blue shirt, tie and riding the bicycle. Eric Daffy and Ian Kensley were stationed at Footscray and were catching the Mobile Tender. The hose carriage was out at a false alarm at the Tottenham RAAF Base. An exchange call was received in the watch-room at Stn 47 for a structure fire at the William Angliss (abattoir) on Ballarat Rd, Footscray. Upon turning out, the fire was showing up. It was a "red, red, red" and Eric said it was pleasing that when his appliance arrived on scene, he was not alone as Alan Sanders promptly turned up on the station bicycle. Alan had seen the fire/smoke showing up, and decided to show up (that was Alan). He had no equipment, yet in his clean blue shirt, tie, and shiny shoes, he found some installed firefighting equipment (hose & branch) then made his way down one side of the burning building and did some firefighting. Eric says that he and Alan spent a lot of time together over the years involved with the MFB Social Golf Club. Sadly, Alan passed away far too young. "He was the life of a good party!"

A Truth and a few laughs

Mahatma Gandhi said, if there is an idiot in power, it means those who elected him are well represented! (A very wise man in today's world)

My wife said, "That's the 4th time you've gone back for dessert! Aren't you embarrassed?" I said, "No, I keep telling them it's for you."

My wife and I started role-playing in the bedroom. Her favourite is The sexy librarian, where I have to sit there quietly while she reads a book.



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. ~~~ OFFICE USE ONLY: Date Received:.....

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

Phil Cleary, Treasurer – PO Box 93 Numurkah, Vic 3638 Ph: 0419778161 Email:
rfavic1@gmail.com -

Website: www.rfav.com.au