

"WATER OFF"

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



November 2020 Vol 24 No 4
Inc/No: A16839F

New Secretary For RFA

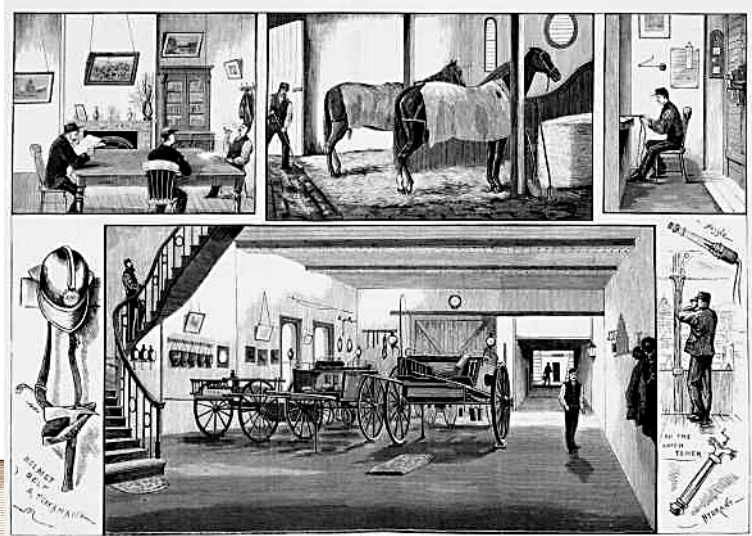
Allan Roberts is retiring due to ill health and Phil Cleary is stepping in!
Allan was elected to the position at the 2014 AGM and has carried out the role of
Secretary/Treasurer with distinction over the six years since, but his health is
forcing him to retire.

We thank Allan for all the work he has done for the RFA and now we must give
him space to concentrate on fighting his way back to good health.

See Secretary's Report page 3



Phil Cleary



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“ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING CANCELLED”

NEW MEMBERS 2020.

BILL CRITCHLEY.
CHRIS BAHEN (CFA VOL)
(CLIFTON) WAYNE
EDWARDS
GERARD WOODLOCK.
DONALD SUTHERLAND.
CRAIG LAPSLEY.
KEN DRYSDALE.
STEPHEN WILLIAMS.
MAL COTTERILL

Allan Roberts
SECRETARY/TREASURER
Address all correspondence to:
The Secretary
50 Cameron Parade
Bundoora Vic 3083
Phone:- 0433 007 720
email: rfavic1@gmail.com

Non financial Members

Members be advised if your newsletter has an expiry date of 2/1/2016 that means you have not paid your subs since 2015 therefore if no remuneration is received by the 2/1/18 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
Sec./Treasurer: Allan Roberts

General Committee:

Arthur (Sam) Capes
Mike McCumisky
Ian Geddes
Kevin Hede

Auditor:

Mike Enticott

“Water Off” Editorial Staff

Colin Harris
John Laverick
Barbara McCumisky

Diary Dates 2020

Wed. 18th November; Annual General Meeting to be arranged

Firefighter’s Annual Christmas Luncheon Cancelled

Note: If you know of any member who may be ill please notify a committee member.

Valē

Trevor Bristow
Wayne Brown
Don Densley
Ian Fowler
Jim Gibson
Ivan Haynes
Charlie Hugo
Jack Judd

Ron Riley
Stephen Short
Jack Thompson
Bruce Thornton
Peter Watson
Ron Williamson

We offer our condolences to the families of these members who have gone on to a higher duty.

SICK LIST (* In Nursing Home)

John Brown*
Bob Brunning
Bob Cameron
Stan Cameron
Harold Connell
Tom Driscoll
Jack Etherton*
Eddie Gilbertson
John Hancock*
John Hansford
Ken Heddle
Noel (Dutchy) Holland
Bob Horgan
John Lake

Archie McLachlan
Harry Mitchell
Michael Phelan
Dick Prendergast
Trevor Reed
Allan Roberts
Gary Spicer
John Schintler
Graeme Taylor
Laurie Trewin
Robert Weitering
Ray Wellard
John Williams
Tom Williamson*

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



This time of the year we should be looking forward to spring, summer and Christmas, but for a lot of us in some areas we are in lock down and limited to 5km travel and personally I can't see it changing a lot in the near future. We as a country still have a lot going for us and as Victorians we still have a lot to be thankful for

but it is still a worry.

During the year we have lost family friend's and workmates to this terrible virus and we haven't been able to send them off properly and give each other comfort in our losses and it weighs heavily. To all families and friends and members of the Retired Firefighters

Association who have lost someone, my sincere best wishes and thoughts go out to you.

At this time of the year, we should be looking forward to our Annual General Meeting however, this year we won't be able to have one, so it looks like it will carry over to our first meeting in 2021. So now, I would like to pass on our thanks to our Secretary/Treasurer Allan Roberts for all his hard work in keeping the RFA up and running and the continued promotion to all members and others, especially when Allan himself has been very sick. We lost Ian Fowler our Almoner and we will miss him. To Colin and John our "Water Off" editors, thanks for your great work in keeping us amused and entertained. Last but not least thanks to our Committee Members who have represented you during the year.

I wish all Members and their Families and Friends Good Health and Good Luck for the rest of the year, have a Safe and Happy Christmas and remember to keep on laughing and keep on Loving your Families and Friends. Roll on 2021!

I thank you all.

Alex Shepherd

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 18th NOVEMBER 2020

"Please Stay Safe and Look After Each Other"

Please give your family and friends details on contacting the RFA so we may be able to help you or your family members with support if required.

Thanks to Colin Harris, Kristina Starnawski and Mark Carter for helping out with **Gone But Not Forgotten.**

As the CORONAVIRUS IS WITH US, FRV HAVE KINDLY HAD THE PRINTERS FOLD WATER OFF FOR US.

COULD YOU PLEASE HELP OTHER MEMBERS OR RING TO SEE IF THEY ARE OK!

PLEASE NOTE: WHEN PAYING BY CHEQUE MAKE OUT TO "RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION"

As I have had my Cancer return and in the Bladder and Bowel with some spots on the lung I have asked for someone to take over Secretary/Treasurer position.

Phil Cleary has put his hand up this will take a couple of months to get done.

As this is our AGM, I suggest that all positions stay the same until we can have a face to face meeting also that

Phil Cleary will take over as Secretary as soon as I can get the equipment /paperwork etc to him. ******NOTE: DUE TO COVID RESTRICTIONS THIS MEETING MAY NOT OCCUR!**

Phil will put out notices with all his details as soon as he has taken over.

I have enjoyed being Secretary/Treasurer during this time and am very disappointed that I must pass it on for health reasons.

I will still attend meetings and help-out if and when I can.

EVERYONE PLEASE KEEP SAFE!

Secretary of the Retired Firefighters Association, Allan Roberts, **on behalf of all members express our thanks and gratitude for the support that MFB Burnley staff collectively provided to the RFA members for their BBQ's following all our Meetings.**

Allan Roberts, Secretary.

TRESURERS REPORT.

Closing Balance: 2nd October 2020

Running account S1 = \$3,980.88.

Fix Term 6 Months L1 Account: = \$7,000.

Matures on 2nd March 2021.

Allan Roberts Treasurer.

Incoming RFA Secretary

Hello I'm Phil Cleary.

I Joined the MFB in 1973 and was then stationed at No. 1, 18, 22 and relieving in Eastern District. Unfortunately I was only in the Brigade for 10 years, as I had to move from Croydon to a dryer climate for one of my daughters sake and going back to my trade as

a butcher.

I moved my family to the Shepparton area in where I

have been for 37 years, however, I still missed the job until I joined the RFA and being able to go to functions and catching up with old work mates. This has been great for me, being able to be involved in Fire Brigade once again.

Since I have been a member with the RFA, I have built and run the Website which I must say is going very well with over 150 hits a month, Now I have put my hand up for Alan Robert's job as Secretary. As we all know he is not well so, if I can help my old mate and the RFA as the new Secretary I will.

Thankyou,

Phil Cleary

**RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
VICTORIAN BRANCH
Reg.No. A I6839F**

Statement of Income and Expenditure for year ended 30 June 2020

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
<u>Income</u>		
Opening Balance Credit Union 1 July 2019	10,181.63	12,060.47
Members' subscriptions	3,765.00	3,105.00
Sale of promotional items	390.00	921.00
Fundraising	4,335.05	1,558.40
Joining fees	90.00	80.00
Donations	20.00	0.00
Government grant		
Refunds	140.00	
Sundries	15.00	
Interest	141.04	157.28
	<u>19,077.72</u>	<u>17,882.15</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>		
Postages	1,699.20	1,407.29
Catering	1764.15	892.22
Office Supplies	499.48	263.21
Computer upgrades & software & internet	685.89	1464.00
Government grant expenditure		
Merchandise (Rings etc)	670.78	1,440.00
Telephone & Storage	200.00	1076.00
Donations	2500.00	1100.00
Sundries	0.00	0.00
Government & Credit co-op fees & charges	59.20	57.80
	<u>8,078.70</u>	<u>7,700.52</u>
Closing Balance Credit Union 30 June 2020	10,999.02	10,181.63
	<u>19,077.72</u>	<u>17,882.15</u>
<u>Bank Reconciliation</u>		
<u>Bank balance as at 30 June 2020</u>		
Main account	3,603.31	2,924.31
Less Outstanding Cheques	0.00	0.00
	<u>3,603.31</u>	<u>2,924.31</u>
Term deposit	7,395.71	7,257.32
	<u>10,999.02</u>	<u>10,181.63</u>

Independent Person's Certification:

I have examined the accounting records, including receipts, of the Retired Firefighters Association of Australia Victorian Division for the period 01 July 2019 till 30th June 2020. In my opinion the Statement of Performance above is correct.


Michael Enticott

Honorary Auditor 24th July 2020

Editorial: Melbourne & Victoria will in the end be Victorious!

Melbourne especially has been suffering for months now as we all go through this pandemic. Coronavirus is nothing like we have seen before since those before us, as in the 1920's when the Flu Pandemic swept the world and 50 million people died?? It just goes to show that even in a modern world, a tiny virus can cause havoc and kill millions of people.

At this time, millions haven't died, however, millions are infected and in parts of Europe and the USA. Sweden decided on herd immunity and some say it was successful? At the end of this pandemic, we will know which countries performed better than others.

Victoria, specifically Melbourne were heading in the right direction and the hard lockdown was working. Then came along slack security in hotels, no specific plan or procedures in nursing homes, lack of training and PPE and the system fails. Eight hundred deaths in Victoria and counting is the result of careless attitudes, selfish people and lack of self-discipline spread this virus. Some family gatherings highlighted lack of information or was it blatant disregard of government advice where people were not abiding by the law decided to do what they selfishly wanted to do.

"I'm alright Jack" attitude has helped spread this virus. Premier Dan Andrews has done his utmost best and has fronted the media with daily briefings. He's suffering and his overworked team are fatigued from being overworked – the strain is showing. Yes, mistakes have been made, however and not to lessen the sad deaths of relations, friends, partners and families bereft, compared to many countries, are on track to contain and limit this virus if we all just play the game and do what's required.

We are all in this together and we all must play our part. Lockdowns are hurting the economy, people are frustrated and furious. People have lost their jobs and children can't attend school. Social distancing and restrictions on family gatherings in place, means that Grandparents can't see the grandchildren and so it goes on.

State borders initially closed and now starting to re-open. The curfew which was enforced saw Melbourne and the suburbs into ghostly towns with only the sound of a distant trams or trains (usually empty) rattling along the steel tracks. Sanitizing at supermarkets, tram stops, children's playgrounds employed many. Social media went berserk for better or worse. The incidents and statistics of family violence took an upward trend. The military and police became involved in security. Manufacturing of face masks became an urgent requirement for some of our local industries.

Our frontline workers in hospitals and nursing homes are heroes working long tiring shifts keeping patients alive and well in most cases. The elderly have been vulnerable to this rabid virus. They are scared, some don't know what's going on. Most cannot see the families and loved ones. A heart wrenching scene on ABC TV is the woman who just says "I want to see my Mum", gets me every time – so sad!

Thankfully, with technology, Zoom meeting and Facetime etc have helped thousands of people connect with others. That certainly didn't happen in the 1920's. Children learning from home with the use of technology hasn't been perfect, however for most part it has kept them occupied and still learning. People have been keeping fit in the parks, the many walking tracks are often busy with masked participants walking their dogs, talking in muffled voices. There are no planes flying overhead, except for the odd overseas traveler and the mail which sometimes gets through. Books are being read and the garden is now looking good.

To all our Retired Firefighter readers, keep well, keep fit and don't give up! We'll beat this damned virus! We're on track and hopefully by Christmas things may be back to normal?

Funeral Notices

Recently I had a zoom meeting with Dave Bruce, Members of the ELT (Executive Leadership Team), Manager of the Media and Communication Department.

The reason for this meeting was to sort out the problem of the Brigade no longer placing tributes in the paper for retired members.

There has been several reasons for this, however the first problem is one that we can all manage.

The Brigade or Union cannot place a tribute in the paper, unless the family or undertaker advertises funeral or death.

On many occasions the family decides not to place a tribute. (Especially in these times of Covid) Families may tell us that it's live streamed, but the papers have clear protocols.

The other thing that has changed is MFB to FRV.

This change now has also had to include Ex CFA members in there thinking.

As you all may be aware since the start of FRV we have lost 14 retired members plus 1 serving member, in just 2 months.

The outcome of the meeting is that the Brigade will post possibly a combined tribute for those recent passing's and work on other strategies to post tributes.

We have the full support of Mr Ken Block and Dave Bruce on this matter. In short, I ask you to have this conversation with your family and friends.

Simply put, if our family or the funeral director doesn't place a tribute. The FRV or Union cannot.

Take Care.

Regards,

Russell J P Hawthorn.

RMD Committee Member.

rjph@aapt.net.au / 0397026249 / 0409187945.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

“Young gunner who loved the sea”

Russell Malcolm Watson was 17 when in 1942, he ran away from his parents' home in Elwood and joined the Navy. By the time his mother had tracked him down, demanding he was sent home, he was away at sea, a gunner aboard the royal Australian Navy's Q Class destroyer, HMAS Quiberon.

His would be an adventurous war – The Quiberon came under air attack in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, destroyed a German submarine with depth charges, helped destroy an Italian fleet, patrolled the African coast and the Indian Ocean and saw significant action against the Japanese. Young Watson – who also served on the corvette/ minesweeper Kiama and the destroyer Arunta – was the youngest on board, and got the nickname “Twinkle”. Ships and the sea remained with him: only a few weeks ago, he was still using his binoculars to study ships in Port Phillip Bay from his room at the Elanora Aged care Home on Brighton Beach.

Mr. Watson was never known by his given names. A sister dubbed him “Peter” when he was a baby. It stuck. His best mate from childhood called him “Watto”. Mr. Watson could have lived a life of ease. His father Malcolm inherited a great wealth from gold mines established in Bendigo by John Boyd Watson, and never worked. His son Russell (Peter) was made of different stuff.

Having fought his war he signed up aged 28, as a fireman with the MFB. He fought fires for the next 30 years. And like the enduring friendship with the boy who called him Watto and the shipboard mates he made during the war, he



retained tight friendships from the fire brigade for the rest of his life. In 1955, he married a young woman named Jean Holthouse. In 1960, the couple and their children Trevor aged 5 and Pam 2, moved to a large block of land in Sandringham. There Mr. Watson set about establishing a sustainable life for his family. He kept bees for honey and mead, grew fruit and vegetables and raised chickens. He swam in the sea each day and devoted to voluntary service, quietly cleaned up rubbish along the local foreshore.

The family loved camping. Jean's sister married at Cape Bridgewater in south-west Victoria and settled on a farm, making the area the family's favoured camping spot. Mr. Watson never lost his love of a garden. In his 70's he cleared a block close to his home and turned it into a native garden for the community. He spent 25 years caring for it and his daughter Pam was married there. His son Trevor, also a firefighter died of mesothelioma in 2007.

Aged 93, still living among his fruit trees and vegetable garden, with one elderly chook left on the block, Mr. Watson agreed to enter the aged care facility where his wife Jean lived with dementia. Jean died on October 10 last year. Mr. Watson's delight remained his family: five grandchildren and five great grandchildren. When lockdown came, he used his binoculars to watch the children waving to him from the beach and kept in touch via Skype. However, this self-sufficient man couldn't survive COVID-19. After fighting it for three weeks, Russell (Peter) Watson, born on August 22, 1925, died on September 4, 2020.

Source; Sunday Age, by Tony Wright

Image; Russell Hawthorn.



Trevor Bristow

Known as the man with the constant smile, Trevor joined the Brigade on the 21/1/1966 and after recruits was stationed at Eastern Hill for over a decade.

In 1974 he was promoted to Station

Officer and rostered to Southern District. Trevor was somewhat of a reliever, being stationed at FS20, FS25, FS31, FS29 (old 29) and finally at FS22 from where he retired in 2003. Trevor also spent time in Fire Safety on two separate occasions. He enjoyed the interaction with the public. He was also a movie star, featuring on an episode of Fire Vision titled 'Out Inspecting with SO Trevor Bristow and FS22B'.

Trevor has been described as a real gentleman, who never had a bad word about anyone. He was extremely well liked with over 150 attending his retirement in 2003. There are many stories about his generosity and kindness and his constant smile. He nurtured and cared for all of us.

Trevor served the community and Brigade for over 37 years.

R.I.P Trevor.

Ian "Chook" Fowler

Ian was born in Seddon and grew up in Yarraville. Before joining the MFB he was a butcher.

He caught the eye of MFB Supt. Jack Mc Kimm, who convinced him to join the Brigade. Jack wanted him for the MFB Band. Joining the Brigade on the 21/1/1966, Ian completed his training at Eastern Hill. He was then stationed at FS02 and FS47 before going to FS45, where he would spend most of his career. A talented musician, he had his own band, but was able to travel with several other bands overseas.

His friendly nature and love of music made him a perfect fit for the MFB's Once-A-Year Club which visited the Children's and other city hospitals on Christmas Day. He was the first firefighter to receive recognition for 50 years dedicated service to the OAYC and for charitable work on Good Friday.

There are many stories to be told about Ian and his love of the sun. It always sent him to sleep, even if he was the driver of an appliance on top of the Westgate Bridge, or just cleaning the car out the back of the station.

Ian was well respected by all that worked with him, and most have a story to tell. He loved to travel, having taken more than 30 cruises. He also loved his garden and his cats.

Ian retired in 1993, after serving the community and Brigade for over 27 years.

R.I.P Ian (Chook)



THE CHIEFS' DRIVER.

By Barbara McCumisky.

Over the years there were many drivers for the MFB's fire chiefs, but Sid Jackson held the position for nearly all his 34 years in 'the Job'. He is the only one, up until his retirement in 1977, who could boast that he had driven for six of the only nine MFB Chiefs to that date.

Sidney Arthur Jackson was born in Camberwell on May 14, 1917. His early school days were spent at Box Hill State and later he attended Swinburne Tech where he qualified as a motor mechanic. He had always been interested in motors, so after leaving school he invested in a bus company which ran a service from Box Hill to Richmond. At the time he was a P.P. (partially paid) firefighter at FS20 Box Hill, along with his two brothers Vernon and Clive.

Vernon eventually became a full-time firefighter and was stationed at FS38 South Melbourne and FS39 Port Melbourne. He retired in August 1976. His son, Robin, followed his father and joined the Brigade in 1970 and was stationed at FS02 West Melbourne.

It wasn't long before Sid realised the MFB had given Vernon a good career, so on August 14, 1943 he also became a permanent firefighter. He did six weeks training at FS01 Eastern Hill in between turning out to fire calls.

In 1944 Mr. James Kemp was Chief Officer and his regular drivers were Archie Hill and Alan Cole. On one occasion Alan was off sick and Sid took over as driver. He didn't know it then, but that was the start of a whole new way of life. Later in 1944 he was transferred to FS22 Ringwood for four months, and then it was back to FS01.

Sid never again left FS01. He became Mr. Kemp's permanent driver, until the Chief retired in 1946. On occasions he also drove for the Deputy Chief. He saw some disastrous fires during those years, the biggest being a conflagration which destroyed 68 houses in Beaumaris in 1944. The largest city fire he saw was at the Regent Theatre in Collins Street in 1945.

The next Chief Officer was Mr. Whitehead and Sid continued as his driver. It was during Mr. Whitehead's reign that Sid had a narrow escape from death. He had picked the CO and another officer up from Essendon Airport and had driven them to an address in St Kilda Road, near High Street. They went inside and Sid went to get the luggage from the boot of the car. Suddenly another car appeared out of the darkness and hit him, knocking him unconscious and throwing him onto the

plantation. He was rushed by ambulance to the nearby Alfred Hospital, where he was admitted with a broken collar bone.

While in hospital, Sid recalled the nurses on duty that night had a delightfully busy time tending to injured firefighters. A short time before his accident, FS37's (St Kilda) hose carriage was turning out for a call and collided with a car in Brighton Road. The crew were all conveyed to hospital, but fortunately there were no serious injuries.

In 1958, Mr. Aldridge took over as CO and Sid automatically became his driver. It was also during 1958 he attended another huge fire. This time it was the Naval Stores in Port Melbourne. The blaze caused over £1.5 million and the premises were almost completely destroyed.

Mr. Paterson became Chief in 1963 after the unfortunate death of Mr. Aldridge. This was Sid's lucky year, as two significant events occurred. In February he won a Ford Consul car in a Cricket Test Score competition run by the Sun newspaper. Later in the year he married Edna and they took up residence in East Malvern.

Sid was one of the few firefighters who had close associations with so many chiefs. When asked to comment on the various CO's, he gave a brief summary of each. He was very quick to point out they all had one thing in common – they were dedicated to the MFB.

CO Kemp was very restricted by World War 2, so he could not make many improvements. CO Whitehead was an excellent firefighter. CO Aldridge re-equipped the Brigade with new appliances including the Magirus turntable ladder. He also instigated the replacement of appliances after so many miles in service. CO Paterson was the most fearless. He never let his firefighters take a risk unless he was prepared to take it himself. CFO Tueno played a major role in the re-organisation of the Communications Centre at FS01.

In November 1970 Mr. Tueno took command and also became the first Chief Fire Officer when major changes occurred in the Brigade. Mr. Van Every was appointed CFO in 1974. However, by this time Sid's driving days were numbered.

Within a few months he was transferred into the Control Centre at FS01, where he remained until his retirement. After his retirement in 1977, Sid and Edna moved to the more tranquil setting of Ocean Grove. After 23 years of retirement he sadly passed away in 2000.

Note: This is an updated and modified version of the article that I wrote for the MFB News Review magazine back in 1977 when Sid retired.



Mayfair Flats fire Marne Street South Yarra 1961. L-R Third Officer Frank Tueno, CO Bill Aldridge in car and Sid Jackson.

Photo: B.McCumisky.

Note to 'Water Off' readers.

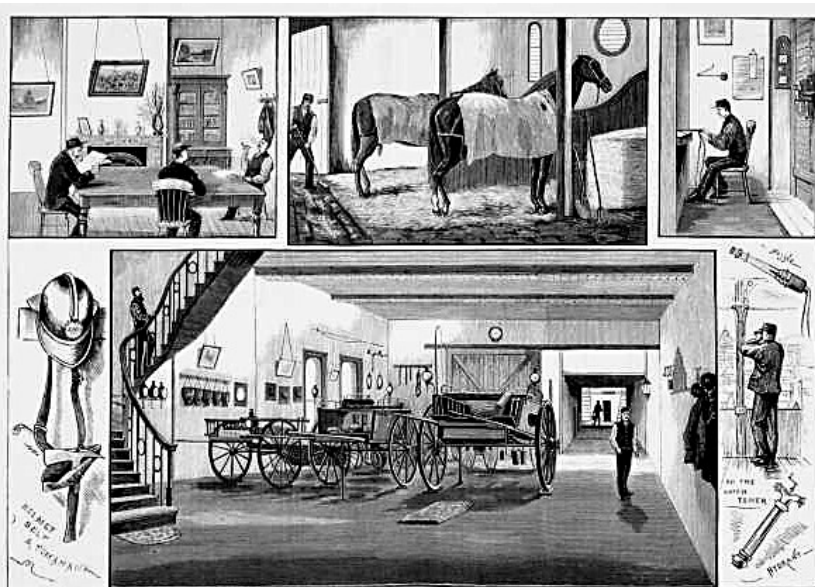
In our last edition of 'Water Off' in the article 'Farewell MFB..Welcome FRV' I said we were planning to run a continuing series telling the MFB story with photos and illustrations.

In this issue we were going to go back to the very beginning and look at what led to the formation of the MFB. Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond our control, we are unable to access the material for this series, but we will continue to look back on the MFB's significant people, events, big fires etc.

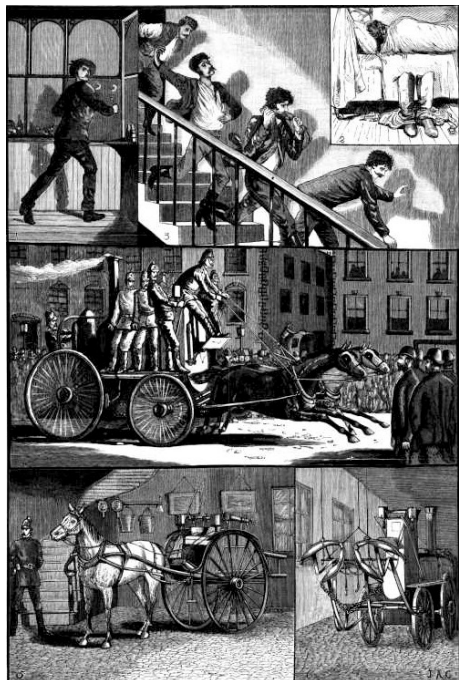
THE MFB'S FIRST HEAD STATION.



Many people believe the Metropolitan Fire Brigade's FS01 in East Melbourne, has always been the headquarters since its formation in 1891, but this was not so. The first MFB headquarters was actually the old head station of the Insurance Companies Brigade, considered the more elite brigade out of all the 55 brigades located in the metropolitan area. The station was located at 447 Little Bourke and was built in 1883. Credit: Illustrated Australian News 24-01-1883 (SLV)

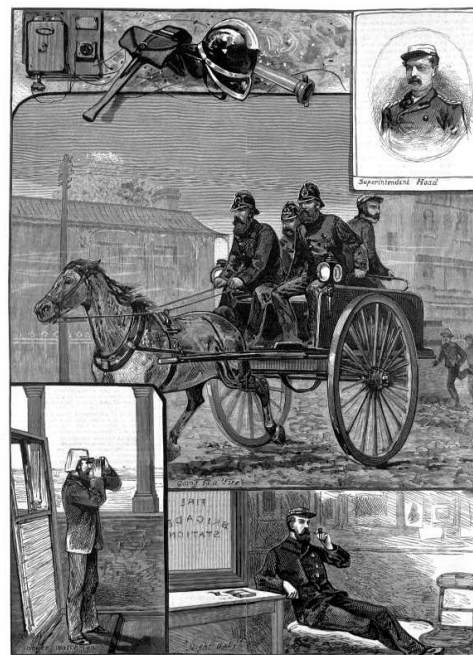


A collage of sketches of interior of the Insurance Companies Brigade headquarters. The building was considered the most up to date for efficiency at the time. Credit: Illustrated Australian News 13-05-1885 (SLV)



Right; Another collage of images showing life at the Little Bourke Street station. Supt. Hoad was the senior officer of the Insurance Companies Brigade in 1881. He was replaced by Supt. David Stein in 1887. In 1891 Mr. Stein was appointed the first Chief Officer of the MFB. Credit: Australasian Sketcher 09-04-1881 (SLV)

Left; Another collage of life at the Little Bourke Street Station. Credit: Australasian Sketcher 16-05-1889 (SLV)



Left; The station in Little Bourke Street showing its location in this panorama of surrounding area. Due to few other tall buildings, the watchtower provided an excellent view of the city. Photo: Fire Services Museum Vic.

Below; The Queens Theatre in Bourke Street with the fire station tower behind. Credit: Lionel Lindsay (SLV)

Below; After Eastern Hill was opened in 1893, the Little Bourke Street station became MFB FS02 until it was replaced in 1919 by a new FS02 located in Williams Street, City West. In the street outside the station are a hose cart, a wheeled escape ladder and a Merryweather Hatfield motorised pump. Photo: Fire Services Museum Vic..



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

“War and Peace”

The Life & Times of Frank Ward-Reg 2347

I had to search the memory bank but here we go says Frank!

Francis William Ward born Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne January, 1945. My first memories are of living on a boat on the Yarra River near Banana Alley until around the age of 6 or 7 then we moved to Harrisfield (Noble Park) and attended the local school. My only real memory is that I was not much good at school.

I attended Noble Park Tech for 3 years where we were taught sheet metal, wood work and street fighting. I left school at 14 and started my first job as a gut runner at the Dandy Bacon factory. This involved unravelling sheep's intestines and emptying the contents - welcome to the workforce!

A few more jobs then landed a 5 year plumbing apprenticeship - a bit like school I didn't like it much. But then a stroke of luck! Digging a trench at Murray Jelliff's house he told me I should join the fire brigade. Knowing nothing about the job I fronted at No. 1 Station and had my chest measured by Sub SO J. Berry who used a very slack tape measure to make sure I made the cut, I weighed in about 68 kilo wet._

Off to the BMO and later met 'friendly' Frank Tueno CFO. I nearly left then, but as newly minted firefighter 2347 I was off to No 10 for a recruit course. Most of the course was taken up with the Sub SO candidates practising their squad, hose drills on us, and learning the two man scaling ladder drill something I reckon I could still do.

First shift was D Shift at Eastern Hill - the best years of my career! Senior guys like Dave Laurence, Billy Hughes and Peter Coulson showed you the ropes and taught you a few bad habits. I learnt to write "I have the honour to be your most obedient servant sir" on reports, and to memorise the brigade motto which was to "discharge your duties properly, promptly and diligently" - I tried that on my wife, but it didn't work there either!

Going to my first fires was slightly confronting but my worst moment didn't come at a fire but during the Vietnam moratorium protest at the Melbourne GPO. While attending fire alarm Jack Thompson (bless his soul) and I got separated from the rest of the crew and caught up in the protesting mob. There were lots of protestors, smoke flares going off and a lot of noise. Jack took umbrage and from the bottom of the GPO steps staring up at the protestors he called out "come down here youse f&@**g pricks and we'll fix you up" - thankfully they didn't!

We worked terrible 8 hour shifts. Day, afternoon and night shifts. Little sleeping of course and we all worked on our days off, mostly to support those bad habits. After D Shift I started moving around between various stations, and too many stations to remember over the 21 plus years of my career.

On the personal front I got married around this time and started a family eventually having a couple of kids - oddly

they still talk to me.

After my first six years, and assisted by people like Basil Smith, I scraped through the Station Officer exams. After SO2 promotion my first station was C Shift at No 1 with Reg Carey as the District Officer a good choice. *Remember, he always jingled the keys! I kept moving around during this time swapping stations, and how Ray Wellard kept track of it all is beyond me.

One thing that was consistent was the firefighter's love of water fights. I particularly remember one that involved the station in North Melbourne (48), which progressed one hot Sunday afternoon to a 65 mm hose line run from a pillar ball in the courtyard of the station flats replied to by a stand pipe shipped in Curzon Street - pity about the people driving by! (Free car wash anyone).

I settled as an SO 1 at B Platoon No. 3 for a few years then got sucked into the training college by my mate Ken Copeland, who now lives in the Netherlands and who I still see.

First day at the college and first look at the recruits. I had no idea what to do but Graham Edwards said 'just look stern we will handle them!' and, we did. Around 1987 I was still working at the training college with the recruits, and I chipped a recruit about his running performance, he replied "I don't see you out there sir". He was right so with the help of people like Graham Simpson and Steve Pike I took up running, and it paid off, but more about that later.

By 1988, I was becoming restless when a 'suit' from the State Electricity Commission Latrobe Valley (SECV) came to the college. He had a vacancy for a training manager with the SECV Fire Service - three stations about thirty firefighters. Joe Griffin who I had worked with at the college and who had educated a lot of firefighters helped me write a resume, I got the job and left the Brigade in 1988.

I packed up the unhappy wife and the children (I don't know if they were happy) and headed off to the Latrobe Valley. I asked my daughter recently what she thought when we moved to "the valley". She told me that as a seven year old, she thought I worked in a cooling tower - they were that big to her. Everything about the power station was big but when you are burning high grade peat it has to be. As it turned out the SECV was restructuring, it had a huge workforce and many were old and unmotivated. I soldiered on for a few years and then Mr Kennett sold the SECV. I thought oops - my career move might not have been the best one! But Deanmac a private emergency service who were based in the Valley, picked up all of the SECV fire service including me, security, and a few more bits and pieces.

Deanmac was supplying training, emergency personnel and fire equipment to mining, heavy industries and military bases throughout Australia and the Solomon Islands and it involved a lot of travel. So now I was working for private enterprise, professionally a big shift - I survived but my marriage did not.

At a personal level running kept me sane. I had joined the



Image; Frank Ward collection.

Traralgon Harriers and was in fair shape and this helped me through the next year or so.

In 2001 a running race at King Island beckoned with some Harriers friends. It was a handicap race and there was money involved so I went out hard, had a shit race and blew up badly. But I also met my new wife to be Pam – I told you the running would pay off! I continued working full time but had started the transition to casual so was able to move from the Valley to St Kilda to start a new life. When I finally finished with Deanmac I had done 15 years, but another big change was coming.

In 2003 Pam and I married. She said where to for the honeymoon? Me with no passport said “I’d like to go bike riding in France” – Pam said I have some contacts.

The contacts, American friends were trustees of a large property about a 90km west of Paris in a little village called St Georges Motel (no there is no motel).

After our honeymoon visit to France we went back every year making the village our second home and a base for exploring France and other nearby countries. When the old

French couple who had been caretaking the property decided to retire – we jokingly told our friends that we would take over, and they took us up on it!

Suddenly we were the caretakers - no pay but great conditions – applied for a long stay visa and voila we were living in France – c’est la vie!

Note: I remember Frank as my hard arsed officer. Firey red hair (and starting to lose it). When at fire calls, he was on the ball, strict, no messing around and fulfilled his role as an officer to perfection. He was disciplined and we were all following suit. You didn’t mess around with fiery Frank at a fire call. He was a great leader of men (in those days). It was a shame and a loss to the MFB when he left and disappeared to the La Trobe Valley. When he was at the old training college in Abbotsford, he was a fine instructor and taught us all many excellent firefighting skills. On Friday nights and after a long week, he did “let his hair down”, have a beer, have a good laugh and debrief the previous 5 days at the MFB Training College, in Victoria Street, Abbotsford.

(Col Harris)

Wellbeing & Security

Dr. Mosley’s Immunity Challenge

Could you fight COVID-19? Dr. Michael Mosley says staying healthy against viruses is easier if you have a good immune system. Famous for creating the 5:2 intermittent fasting diet, the 63 –year-old British science journalist has written a book about stopping the spread of coronavirus. Dr. Mosley began penning *COVID 19: What you need to know about the Coronavirus* in February as the pandemic began to take hold. Both his sons have contracted the illness. His son Dan came down with the infection but was better in a day or so. He was good at self-isolating, but my wife and I have wondered if we caught the virus as we were in close contact with Dan in the 48 hours before he came down with it. Dr. Mosley partly credits his strong immune system for keeping him well against the infection. “The lesson we learnt from the 1918 outbreak of Spanish flu was that the first wave was bad, the second wave was horrendous.” He said until a vaccine is available, it is vital to do what you can to support your immune system so it’s in good shape when it has to battle a virus. One of the reasons why older people are dying in such large numbers is because our immune system tends to become less efficient as we age. It fails to react when it should, then over-reacts causing extensive collateral damage. Dr. Mosley said an aging and inefficient immune system wasn’t inevitable and lifestyle changes could help to keep it in good shape even as we get older. One of the most critical things is to lower your weight. If you are overweight it doubles your risk of being in intensive care and dying. Type 2 diabetes doubles it again. He said obesity also reduces lung function and affects the effectiveness of the immune system. Dr. Mosley said intermittent fasting diets could rapidly reduce weight and bring down blood sugar. Sleep is also hugely important for the immune system. If you’re sleeping less than six hours per night, you’re four times more likely of getting the common cold. According to Dr. Mosley, physical activity, managing stress and eating a Mediterranean style diet also boosts the immune system.

Gum Disease risk increases with age

Bad Breath? It could be a sign of gum disease. Figures from the Australian Dental Association’s Oral Health tracker 2020 show older people are more likely to have gum disease, known as periodontitis. In a study of 15,000 people, more than 30 percent of those aged 55-74 had the disease

and almost 40 percent of those people over the age of 75 years. Around four in every ten Australian adults over 75 has periodontitis, which affects the vital structures that support the teeth including the bone, ligament and gums said Fleur Creeper, a periodontist with the association’s Oral Health committee. “Untreated, it can lead to loss of bone surrounding and supporting the teeth, and the teeth can become loose and fall out.” Gum disease happens when persistent bacteria in the mouth upsets the body’s immune system, causing inflammation, and the body starts to reabsorb the ligament and bone in the mouth that supports the teeth, effectively taking the bone away. “Periodontitis shares many risk factors with diseases that affect general health including tobacco use and a diet high in sugar,” Dr. Creeper said. Signs include bad breath, bleeding or receding gums and the gaps between the teeth increasing, leading to food packing between the teeth. However, sometimes no obvious symptoms are present, and this is where regular dental check-ups are essential. The effects of periodontal disease can’t be reversed, however, it can be stopped and managed. “Halting the disease in its tracks happens when there is collaboration between the treating dental professional and the patient,” Dr. Creeper said. “Good home care by the patient, in combination with treatment by the dentist, will help significantly in preventing and managing the disease.” Dr. Creeper recommended brushing twice per day with a fluoridated toothpaste and cleaning between the teeth once per day. “Don’t be scared to clean near the gums with a soft toothbrush too – all the way down to where the tooth comes out of the gum.”

Protecting Yourself from Cons and Scammers

Scams came in lots of different shapes and sizes. They range from “phishing” scams designed to steal your information to people impersonating authorities and demanding money they claim is owed. Here are a few ways you can protect yourself: **Stop and think:** Be wary of offers that seem to be too good to be true. Scammers often try to create a sense of urgency. Don’t rush! Consider whether it is real. **Don’t open or click:** Don’t open attachments or click on links in unexpected texts, social media messages, pop-up windows or emails, even if it appears to come from a trusted source. **Find & verify:** If you’re unsure, contact the person, business or agency using contact details you have found independently, for example from a phone book, past bill or online search. If you think you have been scammed, call the police and your bank immediately.

The Angels in the blue shirts

For many years now, I have wanted to write about the Paramedic who attended to me at an incident where I had been covered in petrol. This included my eyes being burned by the flammable liquid (petrol). I always wanted to thank him for extending his hand in a time of need. We don't appreciate our bodily parts until we have an experience that prohibits us using them.

It was a Saturday in the middle of summer. I was on day shift at Eastern Hill Fire Station. I was the station officer on No1's Road Accident Rescue Unit (RARU).

We hadn't been in the new station very long, a much improved station and amenities. I am having trouble remembering some of the issues that were going on that day but I do remember sitting in the officer's lounge watching the test cricket by myself. The alarms kept on sounding and appliances were being dispatched all over the place. I eventually had a call from the control officer saying that things were starting to escalate and the RARU was the only vehicle available in the whole of the Brigade.

In those days the Communications Centre was run out of Eastern Hill. It wasn't until the alarms went off requiring No1's Rescue Unit to go on to an incident, Pier Street Altona, following a request from Ambulance Victoria for assistance. Didn't realize how bad things were going out in the field until I turned on to VKN8.

On turning out I requested that the Control Centre on the West Gate Bridge be notified of our approach to open the Emergency Gates. They requested for me to switch to channel 2. It was indicated that they were trying to get a backup appliance for us. It appears that every station was out throughout the whole turn out areas. The weather (wind) this day was extreme.

The day started off as one of those days where you could taste trouble brewing. Over the years I witnessed many such days that ended up having bushfires start and continue to burn for several days or weeks.

We turned into Pier Street from the Princess Highway and it looked like WW3 had started. Bus shelters, trees you name it were all over the street. I recall saying to the driver to take it easy as it was important we get there in one piece. He said we are leading a convoy of Ambo's, Police and tow trucks. They were attending the same call as us.

We finally got to the end of the street where I noticed a huge tree over the top of several cars on the verge of the street. On alighting from the cabin there were a large continuant of loud mouthed, let's call them nuffers shouting and whistling from the verandah of the shops. I actually had a photo of them and me asking them nicely to be quiet. (Photo was taken by the local newspaper).

I met with a young policewoman who indicated that the father had double parked his car to get an ice-cream for his children and wife in one of the shops.

The storm hit the area bringing down trees etc., the biggest one landed on the top of his car while he was watching, trapping his family inside. The police constable indicated that it didn't look too good for the occupants.

How the hell are we going to lift this tree? Yes, we had the Jaws of Life, Vetter Lifting Airbags and a pair of scissors in the first aid box. On talking with the police, I suggested that we try and get a heavy-duty crane on scene

to lift it up.

Police dispatched a car to the Princess Highway to see what was around and this is where local knowledge is handy. The Policeman was from Altona Station and he intercepted a mobile crane on the highway.

In between time we tried to get into the cabin of the car however the tree had so many branches it was impossible to get anywhere near any openings on the car. Oh yes, the other thing was, petrol was escaping from the vehicle and the fumes were very strong. This prevented using any motor driven machinery as we would have blown every one up in the vicinity. It had to be a lifting device that had the capability to lift such a tree. (There are somethings that I can't remember). I am not sure if there was any screaming or noise coming from the car. The geeks started appearing causing confusion in the area.

Eventfully the mobile crane arrived. We all met and planned out our attack. Some of the issues that were highlighted were; the crane driver felt that the tree was too heavy for his unit. We indicated that we could not use a chain saw because of an ignition source. It was decided that we would lift it up enough to get into the vehicle to get the people out. The crane driver was not sure that he could operate the crane looking down on the bodies, (understandable!). We assured him he was our only hope of removing the trapped persons. With a lot of coaching and a police constable next to him he decided he would give it a go. At this stage we were not sure of the condition of the trapped people be them alive or deceased.

Following a debrief it was time to put our plan into operation. I remember talking with our crew. I had confidence in my crew, however, was not sure of the pumper crew who turned up. It turned out that there were two off duty firefighters studying at Port Melbourne Fire Station for their exams on Monday. A spare pumper was at the station and it was dispatched as our back up. Our plan was a charged line from the pumper and I would crawl from the gutter and try to get into the vehicle. The crane had raised the tree enough for me to get into the back of the car. There lying in the lap of her mother was a little baby. I remember lifting the baby out and handing it to one of my crew and he had trouble accepting the deceased body. The young policewoman could see what was happening and slipped in and took the baby. I went back to try and get to the others trapped and was hit by a tree branch which contained leaves covered in petrol. I tried to get out and made it worse. My face and eyes were burning from the petrol. I was blinded however; I remember seeing a **blue shirt** and somebody saying ... **we will look after you old timer**. It was said with confidence that was reassuring. I was so ever grateful of that Ambo.

They took me away and sat me in the gutter and proceeded to treat me. I had my eyes bandaged up and didn't see the people who helped me. I was taken to an ambulance and never to see the bloke again (I thought). I was taken to hospital and received treatment.

It so happened that the Chief Fire Officer, Laurie Lavelle was leaving work and heading home. The CFO lived around the corner from my home and I was delivered to my front door. I had several days off and returned to No.1 on my next day shift.

One good thing about knowing the CFO and coaching his son football I could do a bit of suggesting (sucking) to the CFO about having a training course for the rescue unit. In those days we would go to the tip and cut up cars with the "Jaws of Life" and that was about it.

How we started the Road Accident Rescue training

Yes, we eventually set up a training course. The CFO and a few other executive officers suggested that I may be interested in running the course from the training college in Abbotsford. How could I refuse? Where do I start? What do I need to know? Bloody heck! After standing to attention for 10 minutes in DO Basil Smith's office how could one refuse? I agreed!

There are many people who need to get recognition for setting up the Rescue Unit section/course. Prior to completing a rescue course, I can recall turning out from Eastern Hill on the open eight pump to motor vehicle accidents (MVA's).

We would put the steel box of hand-held "Porta Power" equipment on the back of the truck and proceed to the MVA. Usually the tow truck operators had started to connect all sorts of equipment; mainly chains and would attempt to pull the vehicles apart.

We had two salvage vans which were equipped for salvage work but also had a disc cutter. They would sometimes be called upon in the early days. These vehicles used to sit low to the ground because they were so overweight.

Firies being firies would make up their own equipment and put it on the units. Can't do that now eh! One person who springs to mind was Station Officer Lionel Rose who initiated getting the "Jaws of Life" imported into Australia by Wormald's Australia.

The (JoL) were placed onto the two salvage vans. Training was conducted at

several tips and panel shops. During these times, a lot of people need to be recognised for what they did and how it affected them mentally (attending the many car and industrial accidents).

Well, back to setting up the training course. What were my needs?

Staff was what was needed, and they needed to have some experience. Some names that helped me out were, Brian Tiedemann, Keith Robbins, Greg Unsworth and Alun Williams. A few others helped out when thing got tough.

I would like to thank Frank Churchill and John Perry from the UFU for the assistance they provided at the time. It was decided that we would run two types of courses. One would be a four-day course and have staff who had some experience. The other course being an eight-day course for the "newbies".

A lot was learnt from each course as all participants had various experience and knowledge which we shared.

While we were setting up the rescue course, Ambulance Victoria were setting up the Mobile Intensive Care Unit. This was very handy for both services as we were often working together at MVA's etc. I would spend a session

or two at the AV facility and they would spend a morning with us.

We used to provide a hot meal for the lecturer from AV. This particular day I went down to the session being conducted to let the Ambo know his meal was ready. Standing around the back of the Ambulance was the course participants listening to an experience the ambo instructor had a few years ago concerning an **old timer** who had been splashed with petrol in his eyes at an incident in Altona. I listened for a while and the penny dropped. This was the bloke who I never officially met. He was the man in the "**Blue Shirt**"! The man I wanted to write about. He got called some names and I said "that was me"! It felt like Christmas when I first met Santa. He said I know and he wanted to do this for some time but the opportunity never came up. There was and I hope there still is that comradery amongst the services.

It has taken me a few years to put pencil to paper and I have finally done it.

My best time I had in the MFB was being on the Rescue Unit at No1. I felt so proud of being able to set up the training course and eventually getting five R.U.'s on the road. The only trouble was that the No1 RU was pensioned out.

Those who travelled upon her were proud warrior's and very passionate about the little Ford F350. (RIP little one).

The second-best time was the naming of the No3 RU J.W. Rodda. I felt so proud and wished that a lot of other names should be on the name plate. I often call in to see the troops and make sure

it's clean and polished. I was so proud to meet a young female firefighter there one night who was driving the rescue unit. It brought tears to my eyes. (Go girl!) can I say that? (Well John, you just did! - Ed)

Thanks again to all those who in one way or another contributed to the cause.

I would like to write another story later on what happens to ambos when venturing into concrete pipes in a quarry and traversing over the sides of cliff faces. I'll keep this for another article on "HART" we set up and why.

It is my opinion that we produced a professional rescue course. We assisted and spent time with the National Safety Council (Victoria) training some of their staff when it was going strong.

Therein lies another article from the past that the MFB had input with.

Many thanks for allowing me to write up this story.

John Rodda (JR)



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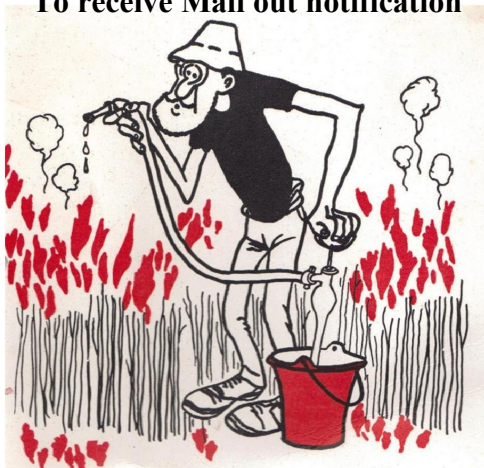
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Peer Coordinators

Chloe Henderson PH: 0417 538 289

Scott Darcy PH: 0429 771 849

Email:- sdarcy@mfb.vic.gov.au

Retirees

John Howe PH: 9729 0984

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Career Peer Coordinator Trent Egan

PH: 0448 071 299

Email:- Careerpeercoordinator@cfa.vic.gov.au

Annual General Meeting-Wednesday 18th November 2020
Nomination For Positions on the Committee

Nominations are called for the following positions on the Committee of the Retired Firefighters Association of Australia, Victorian Branch Inc.:-

- **President**
- **Vice-President**
- **Secretary/Treasurer**
- **Ordinary Member of Committee, Four (4) Positions**

Each position will serve for a term of one (1) year.

Please note that according to the Rules of the Retired Firefighters Association of Australia, Victorian Branch Inc, only financial members may nominate for any of the above positions and any member nominating must have been a member for at least one (1) year.

Nominations must be in writing on the form below, signed by the Proposer and the Secunder and accepted by the Nominee. Completed nomination forms must be returned to the Secretary at the address shown below **no later than 17:00 hours (5.00) on Friday 6th November 2020**

Allan Roberts
Unit 158 Mernda Retirement Village
89 Galloway Drive
Mernda Vic 3754
Telephone: Mob: 0433 007 720 Home: 9216 1658

Retired Firefighters Association of Australia, Victorian Branch, Inc.

We, the undersigned, being financial members of the retired Firefighters Association of Australia, Victorian Branch Inc. hereby nominate:

Nominee's Name

For the position of

Proposed by (signature)

(Print name)

Secunderd by (signature)

(Print name)

Nominee Acceptance;

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