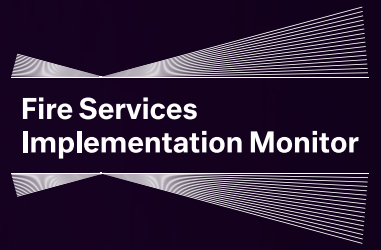


Annual Report 2020/21
Year one: Setting the foundations



**20
/21**

Publication information

The Fire Services Implementation Monitor acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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Glossary

ACFO	Assistant Chief Fire Officer
AFAC	Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council
APS	Alternative Power Systems
BAIC	Building Codes, Audits, Inspections and Compliance Services
BCPA	Baseline Capability Profiling Application
BOSP	Brigade Operational Skills Profiles
CAoV	The Country Area of Victoria
CBP	Connected Brigade Project
CEO	CFA Chief Executive Officer
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CO	CFA Chief Officer
Co-located stations	For the purposes of this report, co-located stations refer to those stations which were formerly CFA career and integrated stations
COVID-19	Coronavirus
CMS	Content Management System internet and intranet refresh
CRM	Customer Relationship Management System
DCO	Deputy Chief Officer
District ACFO	District Assistant Chief Fire Officer
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety. DJCS is nominated as the lead agency for actions within the Year One Plan
EA	Enterprise Agreement
EMC	Emergency Management Commissioner
EMV	Emergency Management Victoria, a statutory entity of the DJCS. EMV is the representative for DJCS regarding the Year One Plan actions
ESTA	Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority
FDRP	Fire District Review Panel
FRB	Firefighters Registration Board
FR Commissioner	Fire Rescue Commissioner
FRV	Fire Rescue Victoria
FRV District	FRV response area
FSIM	Fire Services Implementation Monitor
FSOC	Fire Services Operational Committee
FSR Steering Committee	Fire Services Reform Steering Committee
FSR Taskforce	Fire Services Reform Taskforce

FWC	Fair Work Commission
FY	Financial year
GARS	Greater Alarm Response System
HAZMAT	Hazardous materials
IGEM	Inspector-General for Emergency Management
IPs	Interoperability procedures
ICT	Information communications technology
IT	Information technology
JoA	Joint Operational Activities
LVFR	Low voltage fuse removal
MFB	Metropolitan Fire Brigade
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OH&S	Occupational health and safety
OOSA	Overarching Operational Services Agreement
PAD	Practice Areas for Drills
PPC	Personal protective clothing
PTA	Professional, technical and administrative
SLDA	Service Level Deeds of Agreement
SWH	Safe working at heights
Tenancy Agreement	The Lease and Licensing Agreement for the 33 co-located stations
The CFA Act	The Country Fire Authority Act 1958
The FRV Act	The Fire Rescue Victoria Act 1958
The Implementation Plan	Fire Services Implementation Plan(s) under the FRV Act
The Minister	The Minister for Emergency Services
The P350 program	The 350 Firefighter Program
The Statement	The 2017 Fire Services Statement
UFU Victoria	United Firefighters Union of Australia – Victoria Branch
VFBV	Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria
VSP	Volunteer Support Program
WRP	Wildfire respiratory protection
Year One Plan	Year One Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan (2020 to 2021)
Year Two to Five Plan	Year Two to Five Implementation Plan

Foreword

My first annual report as the Fire Services Implementation Monitor assesses the initial eight months of fire services reforms in Victoria. These first eight months have been spent understanding the structure of the reforms and the significant and varied work agencies have undertaken. This report provides a snapshot of key progress, issues and opportunities across the Fire Services Reform Year One Implementation Plan activities in the period 15 October 2020 to 30 June 2021 and identifies further areas for action or review.

Impacts of 2020-21

Implementing the Fire Services reform in 2020 was always going to be a challenge. COVID-19 restrictions, the demands of back-to-back and concurrent emergencies, and various inquiries and Royal Commissions have placed substantial demands on Country Fire Authority (CFA), and Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV). It is a testament to Victoria's career and volunteer firefighters and support staff that effective fire services were maintained across Victoria while implementing the new model.

Progress

It is clear that the transition to the new model is well underway, and I commend CFA, FRV and Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) for the work to date. Many Year One Plan actions have taken longer to deliver than expected due to their breadth and complexity, resourcing challenges and competing CFA and FRV priorities. Despite this, CFA and FRV continue to work together to deliver their important reform work.

There is more work to do

Over the coming year I hope to see CFA and FRV finalise their outstanding foundational agreements, complete their planned reviews and transition from interim arrangements to firmly established business processes. This will allow staff and volunteers to feel more confident in their roles and functions and set the foundations for successful, modernised fire services across Victoria.

My three focus areas

Capacity and capability

To reduce the risk of systemic operational issues, CFA, FRV and EMV need to embed effective project planning, agreed consultation processes and finalise outstanding agreements. They need to fill vacancies that impact service delivery, clarify roles and duties, and resolve delegation issues. Developing and communicating a robust governance framework with a clear issues resolution process will aid progress on these issues.

Collaboration

CFA and FRV need to agree on and communicate the complementary fire services operational approach to service delivery. I am pleased to see the leadership of both organisations collaborating well and, over the next year, I will look at how this commitment to collaboration has extended to different levels of both organisations.

Culture and workplace safety

Workplace culture and a lack of diversity are critical challenges faced by CFA and FRV and a safe workplace is crucial to reform success. Both organisations are committed to culture change, gender, and diversity and have updated how they manage complaints. CFA and FRV are actively working to improve their data on organisational workforce diversity and inclusion as part of their progress in this area.

And finally...

My thanks to CFA, FRV and EMV for their commitment to working through the complex issues and collaboration in driving reform. Thanks also to key stakeholders whose communications, responsiveness and workshops have helped me and my team better understand the achievements and challenges of our first year. I particularly want to acknowledge the skills and dedication of the career and volunteer firefighters whose outstanding level of service delivery continues to save lives and communities.



Hon. Niall Blair

**Fire Services
Implementation Monitor**

Executive summary

This inaugural annual report provides the Fire Services Implementation Monitor (FSIM)'s assessment of the first eight months of the implementation progress of Victoria's fire services reforms. The report covers the period 15 October 2020 to 30 June 2021.

The report focuses on delivery against actions in [The Year One Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan](#) (the Year One Plan), released by the then Minister for Police and Emergency Services on 15 October 2020. The Year One Plan outlines the foundational arrangements required to establish the new fire services model.

This report does not capture the full first year of progress defined in the Year One Plan (October 2020–October 2021). FSIM recognises that substantial activity will have been undertaken since the end of the reporting period, however a summary of activity to 30 June 2021 provides government and the community with a progress snapshot and outlines early issues and opportunities.

As outlined in the Year One Plan, on 1 July 2020 Victoria's new fire services arrangements commenced with CFA re-established as a volunteer firefighting agency. The *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* (the CFA Act) recognises CFA as a fully volunteer firefighting service under the command and control of the CFA Chief Officer (CO), enshrining the critical role of volunteers in CFA.

The [Fire Rescue Victoria Act 1958](#) (the FRV Act) commenced on 1 July 2020, establishing FRV as a new organisation. FRV brings together all former Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) career firefighters and staff

with former CFA career firefighters and support staff. FRV serves metropolitan and greater Melbourne and major regional centres and supports volunteer response where required.

The FRV Act also established three independent bodies to provide oversight of the reform including the Fire District Review Panel (FDRP), FSIM, and Firefighter Registration Board (FRB).

To support the implementation of the reform, the Victorian Government committed \$246.2 million over five financial years (FY 2020–21 to FY 2024–25). This included \$126 million for CFA and volunteers for new training programs, personal protective clothing, new appliances and stations, and brigade supports.

The Year One Plan set out the transactional requirements to operationalise the legislated amendments and provided a pathway for the transfer of relevant CFA's assets, liabilities, and employees from CFA to FRV.

FSIM's year one assessment focused on the foundational and transactional actions required to embed and operationalise the vision for modern, complementary, and sustainable fire services that keep Victorians safe. The assessment is based on three themes: agency capacity and capability under the new model, collaboration, and workplace culture and diversity.

FSIM assessed the progress and effectiveness of Year One Plan actions and provided advice, where relevant, on the extent to which the actions are delivering on the reform objectives.

In preparing the report, FSIM engaged with CFA, FRV, EMV, and FDRP to obtain a detailed understanding of progress made against Year One Plan actions. FSIM met with stakeholders across the emergency services and monitoring agencies to better understand the landscape of the fire services reform implementation.

The appointment of FSIM and the supporting office midway through the 2020-21 financial year, and the constraints on engagement activities due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, have limited the scope of FSIM's review for this first report.

Monitoring Year One Plan actions

The Year One Plan set out 54 actions to be acquitted by October 2021. The status of the Year One Plan's 54 actions¹ reported to the Minister for Emergency Services (the Minister), via Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) as at 31 May 2021, is:

- 6 are complete
- 22 are progressing and on track
- 16 are progressing and experiencing minor delays
- 8 are progressing and experiencing significant delays
- 2 have not yet commenced.

FSIM will continue to monitor and report on the remaining ongoing actions as the Year One Plan comes to its conclusion and is replaced with the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan (Year Two to Five Plan).

¹ Refer to Tables 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 for the 54 implementation actions' status.

Reform progress

The Victorian Government's plan to implement transitional and transactional activities was ambitious and the pace of reform implementation rapid. As at 30 June 2021, CFA and FRV had achieved significant milestones, with the transition to the new model well underway. CFA, FRV and DJCS, represented by EMV, have shown strong commitment to the reform, managing several strategic and operational challenges to set the foundations for success.

Significant and challenging programs of work remain to embed the new fire services model however, it is a testament to the commitment of CFA and FRV personnel across Victoria that when emergencies occur, they continue to respond to protect all Victorians.

Agency capacity and capability under the new model

CFA and FRV demonstrated responsiveness and dedication to implement the reform by establishing agreements and supporting instruments at the outset to support operational and administrative service delivery.

CFA and FRV faced complex implementation challenges to finalise agreements to oversee the transfer of people, assets, liabilities, and services. In many instances, these challenges led to CFA and FRV developing 'work arounds' via interim arrangements to maintain service capability and capacity. While these interim arrangements allowed service delivery to continue, they affected organisational efficiency, and at times reduced morale.

These inefficiencies were compounded by the lack of an agreed framework outlining the responsibilities and status of arrangements, and ambiguity on processes to finalise the service delivery model.

It is important that CFA and FRV finalise the outstanding agreements, complete planned reviews, and transition from interim arrangements to settled and embedded 'business as usual' processes in year two. Finalised arrangements will provide staff and volunteers with confidence in their roles and functions and are fundamental to a modern, complementary fire services model. Effective project planning, an overarching governance framework that provides a pathway for issue escalation and resolution, agreed consultation approaches, and communication of feedback processes are needed to finalise the service delivery model. Addressing these issues will lessen the risk of embedding long-term systemic operational ineffectiveness.

CFA's power and authority to delegate some critical service delivery functions to FRV continues to impact capability and capacity in CFA and FRV. The ability to delegate some powers is impacted by legislative and regulatory restrictions, and liabilities associated with actions undertaken by a person exercising a delegated power. Where constraints have impacted CFA's ability to delegate its powers and functions, administrative and operational inefficiencies were evident. CFA must continue to explore opportunities to finalise delegations to FRV to ensure CFA and FRV personnel have clear, agreed roles and responsibilities and staff and volunteers are suitably authorised to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.

CFA Commander rank vacancies in Victoria have been a long-standing issue. Post 1 July 2020, CFA advises these issues continued with the agencies experiencing significant challenges in managing Commander relief arrangements in addition to substantive vacancies. Many substantive roles in the country areas of Victoria (CAoV) remain unfilled, and FRV endeavoured to manage this by providing short-term acting arrangements over the reporting period. However, these vacancies and short-term secondments had operational implications, in some areas impacting CFA's ability to complete preparedness activities and documentation, and capacity to attend and/or meaningfully contribute at partner and stakeholder meetings. Some volunteers experienced high leadership turnover and seconded command staff took on additional workload to cover vacant roles. CFA and FRV leadership collaborated to manage these issues and mitigate operational impacts on CFA, but at 30 June 2021 vacancies remain and relief arrangements remain unresolved. If not resolved, ongoing vacancy and relief issues will continue to impact CFA preparedness activities.

FSIM observes that staff and volunteer engagement and morale across CFA and FRV has been affected by the reform, particularly through vacancies, secondment arrangements, and interim agreements. These impacts have potential implications for sector level service delivery capability and capacity. For example, CFA's volunteers reported feeling underutilised and undervalued. CFA acknowledges these issues and is undertaking a range of activities to improve volunteers' experience to retain its volunteer base.

FRV reported impacts on staff morale where there are interim arrangements that require CFA to oversee FRV services delivered on CFA's behalf in order to discharge its statutory obligations. FSIM will continue to observe this issue in year two of the reform, given the potential implications of low morale on agencies' workforce capability and capacity.

CFA faces additional capacity and capability challenges unique to a dedicated volunteer workforce. Volunteers are an essential part of CFA's capability and capacity in responding to fire and other emergencies. CFA recognises that its ageing volunteer workforce profile is a long-term risk to the organisation if there are no appropriate recruitment and retention mechanisms to maintain a viable volunteer workforce. CFA is preparing long-term volunteer workforce strategies to address risks associated with its ageing volunteer workforce and Victoria's changing population.

The Victorian Government allocated \$126 million over five years to support CFA capability initiatives. CFA is progressing the delivery of its volunteer support and training programs, the procurement of new appliances, and implementing station upgrades. CFA and FRV have systems in place for training and accreditation in critical skills. There is an opportunity for CFA and FRV to leverage joint-training exercises to support sector-wide resilience and capability building.

The establishment of the new complementary service delivery model has clearly impacted service delivery efficiency, organisational resourcing, and staff and volunteer morale. FSIM will return to issues highlighted above in year two to assess their effectiveness and any resulting service delivery impacts more closely.

Collaboration

CFA and FRV had a Year One Plan action to review state-wide service delivery approaches and capability plans to best service the Victorian community. As at 30 June 2021, CFA and FRV were both at an initial, planning stage for this action. Agreement on the operational requirements of a complementary fire services model would provide clarity on the skills, resources, and equipment needed at an agency level. CFA and FRV should also enhance community engagement to strengthen their links with the community and ensure service provision reflects community risks.

FSIM notes there are some potential risks to future collaboration. For example, FSIM observed there was a lack of a clear and agreed consultation process, and ineffective information sharing between agencies involved in signing the Lease and Licencing Agreement (Tenancy Agreement) for the 33 CFA former career and integrated stations transferred to FRV.

The success of a collaborative approach relies on CFA and FRV reaching agreement on a suite of operational and administrative matters arising from the reform. Effective project planning approaches for future work will provide a clear line of sight to project completion, avoid re-visiting issues, and provide stakeholders with clarity on their role in delivery. As part of this planning process, the agencies should nominate a decision-making forum for outstanding agreements. This forum should confirm a process to finalise agreements (including consultation) and ensure the process has been followed and completed prior to both parties signing an agreement. It is important that all relevant parties to an agreement are provided with clear and timely updates on feedback and that they agree on any proposed amendments.

There is clear evidence that CFA and FRV leadership worked together to establish structures, processes, and principles to underpin joint decision making and address operational issues. CFA and FRV collaborated to develop service delivery agreements and supporting interim instruments to facilitate service transition and delivery and continued to jointly respond to fire and other emergencies and deliver administrative functions. FSIM will seek evidence on the extent of collaboration across all levels of CFA and FRV in its year two program of work.

CFA and FRV initiated the Fire Services Operations Committee (FSOC)², which provided strategic oversight and a decision-making forum for interoperability issues. Through FSOC, CFA and FRV worked collaboratively to identify and address key joint operational issues.

This forum supports accountability for operational delivery and enables CFA and FRV to jointly assess reform progress. It also provides a communication channel between CFA and FRV. FSOC will continue to be critical to collaboration. The ongoing effectiveness of FSOC is contingent on a broader, overarching governance framework that supports accountability and provides a pathway for issue escalation and resolution. FSIM will monitor FSOC and other governance arrangements in supporting interoperability and collaboration between CFA and FRV in year two.

² FSOC was established by CFA and FRV with the aim to identify and promote opportunities for collaboration and joint interoperability, to provide a complementary fire service delivery to the community and continued strength in working relations between the agencies.

Workplace culture and diversity

In response to several Victorian Government reviews that identified workplace culture issues and a lack of diversity in the fire services, the 2017 *Fire Services Statement* (the Statement) committed CFA and FRV to the establishment of modern and inclusive workplaces.

Cultural change takes time. CFA and FRV, in collaboration with EMV, have committed to embedding a culture of diversity and inclusion into their organisations. This commitment is evident from their participation in sector-wide diversity and inclusion strategic working groups, development of diversity and inclusion organisational strategies, the expansion of existing agency programs, and establishment of new programs.

The government-mandated gender diversity targets set out in the Statement³ are unlikely to be met by CFA and FRV in the near term. However, CFA and FRV have started recruitment campaigns targeted at women and have established programs to support women's participation in the fire services. This has the potential to improve female firefighter recruitment numbers and female leadership representation in the long term.

There are opportunities for CFA and FRV to collaborate on organisational workforce diversity, collate community diversity inclusion data and develop analytics capabilities, which will help them to understand community diversity profile trends, consider localised recruitment strategies, and invest in targeted diversity programs. Improvements in embedding monitoring and evaluation approaches of agency diversity and inclusion programs will clarify whether programs are meeting intended reform outcomes.

CFA and FRV have taken steps to update their complaints management approaches, noting that inclusive and respectful workplace conduct is important for cultural change. CFA has decentralised and allocated additional human resources capability to the regions, leading to a reduction in the number of cumulative complaint cases. FRV has improved staff education relating to its complaints management processes, which FRV attributes to an increase in complaints and conduct inquiries.

FSIM will continue to seek evidence on how CFA and FRV are fostering cultural change to support a safe workplace and appropriately address issues and complaints in future reporting. A safe workplace is particularly important given the serious sexual harassment and bullying allegations reported by some Victorian firefighters.

Looking ahead

Effective governance is required to enable robust and transparent decision-making and instil confidence in the operationalisation of the new fire services model. A governance framework was established to provide oversight of the Year One Plan at a ministerial and inter-departmental level. EMV is well placed to maintain and coordinate ongoing governance for future Implementation Plan(s) and has initiated a review of the existing governance arrangements. FSIM is supportive of a governance framework that clearly articulates CFA, FRV and EMV individual and joint roles. This framework should also empower an overarching governance body with the necessary authority to address and resolve major challenges to the successful delivery of Implementation Plan actions.

The FRV Act requires that the Implementation Plan sets out the government's proposed actions regarding the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV, including ensuring that volunteer brigades are not adversely affected by the fire services reforms. FSIM has a legislated requirement to review and assess the impact of fire services reforms on the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV. FSIM will seek evidence of the cost mapping analysis project, led by EMV, in year two of the reform and will consider the impacts that reform implementation is having on the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV.

³ The 2017 *Fire Services Statement* established the following diversity targets:

- i. increase the number of women career firefighters in FRV to 400 over four years
- ii. increase the number of women in CFA brigade leadership roles to 15 per cent from 265 to 909 over the same period.

FSIM understands the Year Two to Five Plan will have a focus on embedding and strengthening CFA and FRV capabilities following the establishment of the new model. In developing the Year Two to Five Plan, there is an opportunity to further support monitoring processes by agreeing and confirming end dates (or review dates), objectives, end-products or states, and key dependencies. There is a further opportunity to establish clear approval and issue resolution pathways for joint actions and clarify and confirm the role of approving bodies.

Implementing the reform has proven to be a complex and challenging task for the agencies, staff, and volunteers. The commitment, goodwill, and collaboration of CFA and FRV in progressing the key elements of the reform so far is evident. The success of the reform going forward will ultimately rest on a respectful, supportive, and collaborative culture both within and between CFA and FRV with a focus on how a complementary fire service can best serve the Victorian community.

Key findings

Theme	Key finding
Agency capacity and capability under the new model	CFA, FRV and EMV have collaborated to implement the intent of the reform and address a range of administrative, operational, and human resource challenges in the first 12 months.
	To embed the reform, CFA and FRV must finalise and communicate the service delivery models and put in place project management and oversight processes to do this.
	Finalisation of SLDA variations and CFA delegations is critical to confirm roles and responsibilities in the new service delivery model. CFA and FRV must agree on the finalisation, authorisation and endorsement environment on issues requiring joint action.
	CFA must identify powers and authority that are appropriate to be delegated and progress these delegations to enable FRV to provide services as per the SLDA, otherwise consideration should be given to amending the SLDA to accurately reflect responsibilities.
	CFA and FRV must address operational inefficiencies resulting from administrative arrangements in Year Two to maintain effective service delivery.
	CFA and FRV must agree on roles and responsibilities for structural fire investigation, which will enable these services to be efficiently resourced.
	CFA and FRV should consider formalising and communicating a strategic and integrated approach to capability development to enhance interoperability.
	CFA and FRV must finalise a model that provides for sufficient vacancy management and Commander relief to ensure effective and efficient operational management, maintain staff safety and wellbeing, and avoid further Commander annual leave accrual. This may require comprehensive modelling of Commander relief requirements.
Given the impact that ongoing vacancies, unrelieved positions and revolving leadership can have on volunteer and staff confidence, morale and engagement in district led and district informed decision making, FSIM will continue to observe this issue for the remainder of Year One implementation and into Year Two.	

Theme	Key finding
<h2>Collaboration</h2>	<p>CFA, FRV and EMV have, in this first year of reform, established principles, structures, and processes with the aim to support a collaborative culture going forward and collaboration is demonstrated, encouraged, and led at executive level.</p> <hr/> <p>CFA and FRV should further engage and consult to inform the community of the revised serviced delivery approach and determine whether the approach aligns with community expectations.</p> <hr/> <p>Following completion of the transitional arrangements to operationalise the reforms, CFA and FRV should consider agreeing on and communicating the final operational requirements to deliver complementary fire services. This would provide clarity on the skills, resources, and equipment needed at an agency level to align with community expectations and provide operational efficiency.</p> <hr/> <p>FSOC will continue to be critical to the strategic collaboration between CFA and FRV. The effectiveness of a joint strategic collaborative forum between CFA and FRV relies on clear accountability for delivery, CFA and FRV jointly assessing reform progress and impact, and effective communication channels between CFA and FRV.</p>
<h2>Workplace culture and diversity</h2>	<p>FRV must further investigate why there was such a significant escalation in complaint and conduct enquiries over the reporting period as the relationship between improved awareness and the increase in complaints is unclear.</p> <hr/> <p>CFA should advocate to broaden the definition of leadership roles to include other operational and non-operational leadership roles such as brigade 5th - 10th Lieutenant, Secretary and Treasurer roles. FSIM supports this approach, noting that leadership can take many forms.</p> <hr/> <p>FSIM notes that a safe workplace is fundamentally important to the success of the reform. FSIM will seek further information on how CFA and FRV are fostering culture change to support a safe workplace and appropriately address issues and complaints in future reporting.</p>

1

Introduction



Section 1

Introduction

The FSIM's 2020-21 annual report assesses the first eight months of Victoria's fire services reforms (15 October 2020 to 30 June 2021). The report will be tabled in Parliament as per section 142(4) of the FRV Act.

The Hon. Niall Blair was appointed the FSIM on 15 December 2020. This independent role was established in legislation⁴ to assure the community and government that fire services reforms were progressing in line with government expectations.

Released on 15 October 2020, the Victorian Government's Year One Plan is the basis for FSIM's assessment. This annual report details significant progress towards the government's fire services vision since the Year One Plan's release. It also notes the key challenges faced by CFA and FRV in the first eight months of reform.

The Year One Plan focused on the foundational arrangements needed to establish the new fire services model. While most actions are well underway, the reform generated important and significant changes that will take time to be embedded so Victoria's fire services can meet the emergency management sector and community needs intended in the Statement.

In this first year, FSIM focused on assessing foundational and transactional actions by CFA, FRV and DJCS (through EMV) to embed and operationalise the vision for modern, complementary and sustainable fire services⁵. For the purposes of this annual report, EMV is identified as the representative of DJCS with regard to reform activity.

FSIM's analysis focuses on 36 of the 54 implementation actions in the Year One Plan, across three foundational themes:

1. agency capacity and capability under the new model
2. collaboration
3. workplace culture and diversity.

The report's legislated timing requirements (30 June 2021) mean it does not reflect the full year's progress (October 2020–October 2021) against the Year One Plan. This is significant as some actions are reported as 'progressing and experiencing minor delays', 'progressing and experiencing significant delays' or 'not commenced' at the end of the reporting period. However, there is clear evidence CFA, FRV and EMV are working toward implementing them.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the Victorian Government and CFA's and FRV's delivery and progress of actions, as well as FSIM's assessment activities – for example, site visits. The significant 2019-20 fire season, resulting in an Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) Inquiry⁶ and a Royal Commission⁷, and the cumulative impacts and demands of back-to-back and concurrent emergencies have also placed substantial demands on the fire services agencies.

With these challenges in mind, this first report seeks to accurately assess reform activity and progress, with commentary on foundational actions supporting long-term reform.

⁴ *Fire Rescue Victoria Act 1958* s122

⁵ The vision of 'a modern fire service for a safer Victoria' is articulated in the 2017 *Fire Services Statement*.

⁶ [Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian Fire Season](#)

⁷ [Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements](#)

2

Context

-
- 2.1 Fire services reform

 - 2.2 Fire services reform outcomes

 - 2.3 Legislative amendments

 - 2.4 Implementation Plan

 - 2.5 Fire Services Implementation Monitor's role

Section 2

Context

2.1 Fire services reform

Victoria has a proud firefighting history. The skills and dedication of career and volunteer firefighters continue to save lives and keep Victorians safe.

However, population growth in cities and urban corridors, and more extreme weather events, have increased demands on the state's fire services. Figure 1 outlines the various Victorian Government reviews into Victoria's fire services. Each review, including the [2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission](#), emphasised the importance of modernising the state's services.

The Victorian Government's significant 10-year reform agenda aims to modernise fire services to meet demand. The Statement outlines its vision for modern, sustainable and complementary fire services that keep all Victorians safe, regardless of where they live.

Figure 1: Fire services reform – Progress since 2017⁸



⁸ The timeline excludes various Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) reports on governments activities. While several IGEM reports consider aspects of fire services operations, IGEM's role is broader – providing assurance to government and the community about Victoria's broader emergency management arrangements. <https://www.igem.vic.gov.au/> has more detail on the IGEM's role and function.

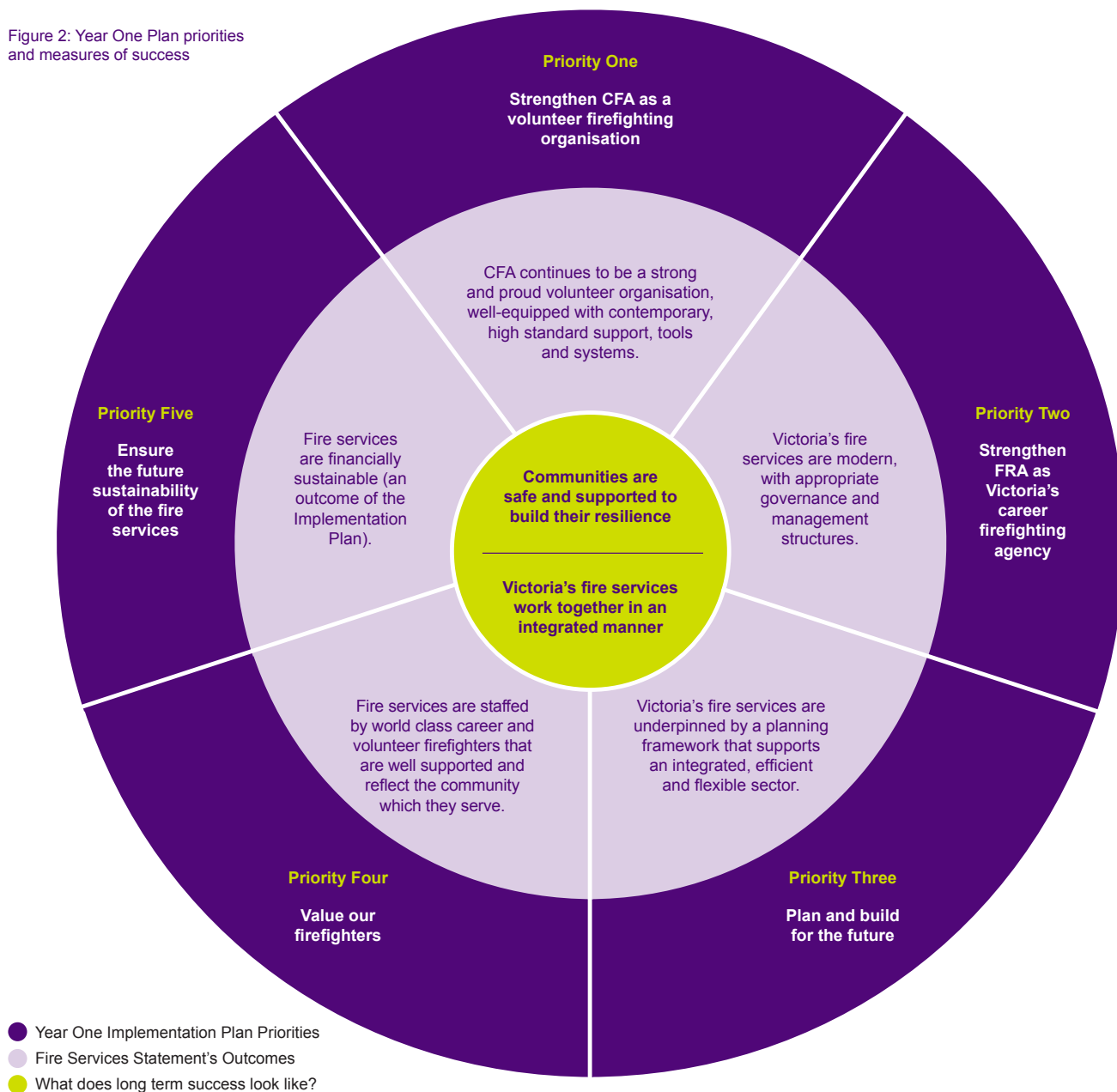
2.2 Fire services reform outcomes

The Statement's clearly outlined outcomes for reformed fire services informed legislative amendments and Year One reform priorities.

CFA's and FRV's own Outcomes Frameworks broadly align with the Statement's outcomes. FSIM intends to use these frameworks to inform observations on whether CFA and FRV are moving towards the intended outcomes and to focus monitoring and evaluation on high-risk issues.

Figure 2 outlines Year One Plan's priorities, success measures, and the Statement's outcomes.

Figure 2: Year One Plan priorities and measures of success



2.3 Legislative amendments

The Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Act 2019 gives career and volunteer firefighters presumptive rights to cancer compensation and made amendments to the *Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1958*. These amendments established the FRV Act and established the objectives relating to interaction between CFA and FRV.

Further, provisions in the FRV Act and amendments to the CFA Act provide for these structural changes:

- restoring CFA to being community-based, locally responsive and volunteer driven
- establishing FRV⁹
- creating the FRV Fire District to service metropolitan and outer urban Melbourne, and major regional centres
- bringing together FRV (previously MFB) career firefighters and staff and CFA career firefighters and support staff
- establishing oversight independent bodies into reform aspects, including the –
 - Fire District Review Panel (FDRP)
 - Fire Services Implementation Monitor (FSIM)
 - Firefighter Registration Board (FRB).

The CFA Act and FRV Act enshrine in legislation volunteers' important role by placing obligations on both agencies. CFA is responsible for supporting the effective and sustainable recruitment, development and retention of its volunteer officers and members to provide capability in delivering CFA's services¹⁰. FRV is responsible for providing operational and management support to CFA, including support to maintain, strengthen and encourage the capability of volunteers¹¹.

The FRV Act created the FRV Fire District comprising the former MFB Metropolitan District and the outer urban and major regional centres. The FRV response area (FRV District) was expanded to cover 37 of CFA's former career and integrated stations and the Craigieburn training centre, bringing the state's career firefighters into one organisation. Associated boundary changes aim to address the increasing demand, complexity and risk profile from population growth and the changing use of land and industry in outer urban Melbourne.

When announcing the reforms in May 2019, the Victorian Government was clear the transition to the new model would start mid-2020 to allow CFA and FRV to focus on the 2019-20 fire season and develop their Year One Plan actions.

In FY 2020–21, the Victorian Government committed \$246.2 million five year fire services reform funding, included \$126 million for CFA and volunteers for new training programs, personal protective clothing, new appliances and stations, and brigade supports.

⁹ The establishment of FRV replaced the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, also known as the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board. It was abolished in 2020 and its stations and firefighters absorbed into the new FRV

¹⁰ *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*, s6B

¹¹ *Fire Rescue Victoria Act 1958* s7

2.4 Implementation Plan

Under section 130 of the FRV Act, the Minister is required to prepare an Implementation Plan within 60 days of the commencing day of the Act. The Implementation Plan must include actions relating to:

- the adoption of procedures by CFA and FRV to enable them to have regard to the priorities set out in the Statement in carrying out their functions
- the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV, including in relation to ensuring that volunteer brigades are not adversely affected by the fire services reforms
- improvements in the ability of fire and other emergency agencies to work effectively across organisational boundaries
- the provision of operational and management support by FRV to CFA
- improvements in staff training in relation to CFA and FRV
- development of an initial and a long-term funding plan to determine the financial requirements of CFA and FRV.

In October 2020, the then Minister for Police and Emergency Services released the Year One Plan which set out the actions to be acquitted by October 2021 to embed and operationalise the fire services reform vision. The Year One Plan outlined the transactional requirements to operationalise the new fire services structures and provided a pathway to transfer relevant CFA's assets, liabilities, prospective liabilities, and professional and technical staff from CFA to FRV.

2.5 Fire Services Implementation Monitor's role

Established under section 122 of the FRV Act, FSIM provides the Victorian Government and community with an independent assessment of reform implementation progress.

The Office of the FSIM was established in the 2020-21 financial year with support from DJCS, to aid the FSIM's functions and duties under the FRV Act.

FSIM and the supporting office operate in accordance with the [Victorian Public Sector Values](#), which underpin the FSIM's monitoring and evaluation.

FSIM plays a key role in determining if actions in the Implementation Plan(s) are on track to meet Statement outcomes by:

- assessing the progress, effectiveness and efficacy of CFA, FRV and EMV in delivering actions in the Implementation Plan(s) to give effect to the reforms
- providing assurance to government and the community with respect to progress made towards a modern fire service
- fostering collaboration and improvement in fire services management.

FSIM's annual report assesses:

- the effectiveness of delivery against relevant fire services Implementation Plan(s)
- the impact of reforms on the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV
- improvements to collaboration between CFA and FRV.

3

Year one assessment approach and methodology

-
- 3.1 Year one monitoring and evaluation approach

 - 3.2 Monitoring

 - 3.3 Evaluation

 - 3.4 Assurance principles

 - 3.5 Stakeholder engagement

 - 3.6 Limitations in year one assessment

 - 3.7 Future monitoring and evaluation methodology and approach
-

Section 3

Year one assessment approach and methodology

3.1 Year one monitoring and evaluation approach

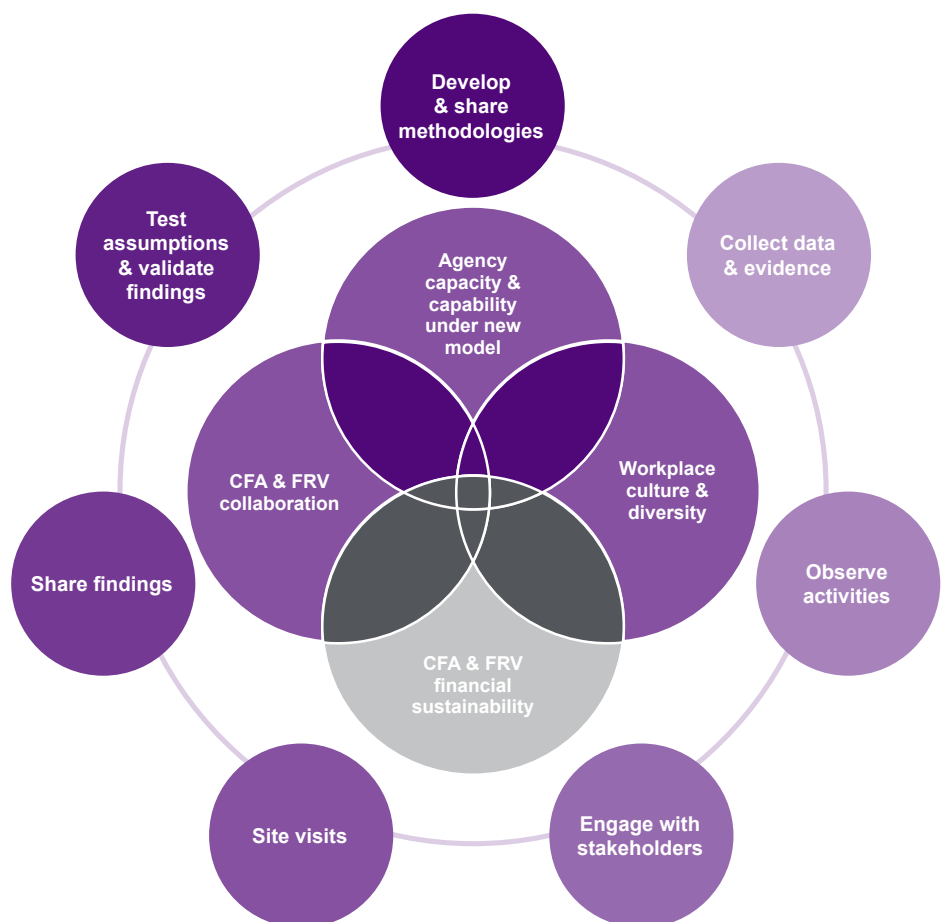
FSIM assessed progress based on evidence provided by CFA, FRV and EMV and through publicly available information.

FSIM's approach used evidence collected through:

- stakeholders' scoping workshops and meetings
- review of agencies' reports, relevant meeting minutes, and strategic planning documentation
- desktop analysis of relevant legislation, guidelines and policies
- publicly available information, such as past reviews of Victorian fire services and third-party literature reviews.

This information was assessed and validated with stakeholders to prepare this annual report. FSIM requested and used evidence in accordance with the use and disclosure of information requirements as per section 138 of the FRV Act, outlined in Figure 3.

Figure 3: FSIM year one implementation monitoring and evaluation approach¹²



¹² Site visits are a key part of FSIM's methodology but could not be conducted for this first report as outlined in section 3.6. Instead, FSIM held meetings and interviews with senior leaders of relevant fire services.

3.2 Monitoring

The Year One Plan contains 54 actions against five priorities with lead agencies either individually or jointly responsible for implementation. FSIM has confirmed the status of each action with the relevant agency and provided a high-level status assessment. Tables 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, in Section 4, provide a status update on the 54 Implementation Plan actions reported to the Minister, via DJCS as at 31 May 2021.

It is important to note when reviewing the status of these actions, that significant work to progress these actions is ongoing.

3.3 Evaluation

Reform is still in its early stages and the monitoring and evaluation approach is limited to the first eight months. In evaluating progress, FSIM identified 36 Implementation Plan actions that, if not implemented successfully, may impact the reform's long-term effectiveness, and embed systemic problems. FSIM categorised these actions into three key themes, allowing FSIM to:

- demonstrate what actions are critical to the reform's success
- focus on analysing evidence behind FSIM's prioritised 36 actions

- reduce the administrative burden on the agencies wherever possible.

These themes are outlined in Table 1 below and include the following implementation action topic areas:

Table 1: FSIM's year one monitoring and evaluation – themes and rationale

Theme	Focus	Implementation action topic areas
Agency capacity and capability under the new model	Looking at the establishment and effectiveness of CFA and FRV, operating under the new model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruitment, retention, and training of volunteers • transfer of relevant CFA's assets, liabilities, prospective liabilities, rights, and financial resources to FRV • development and finalisation of Enterprise Agreements (EAs), Service Level Deeds of Agreement (SLDAs), Corporate Services Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Secondment arrangements • communication and engagement with volunteers and communities • replacement of appliances and safety equipment, and upgrade of stations • ICT infrastructure upgrades.
Collaboration	Looking at the effectiveness of CFA and FRV interoperability arrangements and efforts to align service delivery to meet community expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • harmonisation of operational procedures and specialist response arrangements • review of service delivery approaches to ensure they align with community expectations • new opportunities to recognise career and volunteer firefighters.
Workplace culture and diversity	Looking at efforts to encourage diversity in the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote cultural change and workplace diversity • targeted increase in women firefighters and women firefighters in leadership roles • communicating with, and engaging firefighters on, reform changes and impacts.

3.4 Assurance principles

In 2019, IGEM published a refreshed [Assurance Framework for Emergency Management](#). The Assurance Framework supports continuous improvement and promotes a coordinated sector-wide approach to assurance.

FSIM adapted the principles outlined in the Assurance Framework to incorporate two additional principles of independence and transparency that reflect FSIM’s functions. These principles will guide FSIM’s approach in delivering a consistent and coordinated assessment of CFA’s, FRV’s and EMV’s capacity, capability, and performance in implementing reform.

At each stage, FSIM will assess the progress and effectiveness of actions in the context of the reform outcomes and advise on the extent that actions are delivering against these outcomes.

Table 2 provides an overview of the assurance principles FSIM applied in preparing this report.

Table 2: Assurance principles

Principles	FSIM application
Continuous improvement	Appreciating the complexity of the fire services in a rapidly changing context. Valuing CFA and FRV in continuing to work together to deliver modern and sustainable fire services and keep Victorians safe.
Collaboration and interpretational	Working together and organising assurance activities to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
Adding value	Maximising the potential benefits of assurance activities, including being proactive, risk-based, and reporting on the results of assurance activities in a way that is timely and can be easily understood by decision makers.
Reducing burden	Respecting and minimising the amount of time and resources that agencies need to devote to assurance activities.
Independence	Conducting independent reviews to assess the evidence provided by CFA and FRV.
Transparency	Supporting transparent reporting to government and the community on the progress and effectiveness of delivery against the outcomes of the fire services reform.

3.5 Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement is a vital part of FSIM's assurance approach. The systematic approach to stakeholder engagement and communication will ensure:

- stakeholders understand FSIM's role
- FSIM understands stakeholders' expectations
- FSIM's functions are carried out fairly and transparently
- stakeholder input is accurately represented.

Effective assurance requires:

- key stakeholder information and input to inform the development of any findings or observations
- stakeholders to understand FSIM's engagement approach and how conclusions have been reached
- a clear pathway for stakeholders to raise reform related issues, opportunities and concerns resulting from the reform in addition to communicating reform progress and impact.

In FY 2020-21, FSIM undertook a preliminary stakeholder analysis to identify key stakeholders critical to the delivery of actions in the Year One Plan.

FSIM met with the then Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Emergency Management Commissioner (EMC) and key representatives from CFA, FRV, EMV, and FDRP to obtain a detailed understanding of the context and progress made against Year One Plan actions.

FSIM also met with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), IGEM, Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA), Victorian Auditor-General's Office and Land Use Victoria to better understand the settings, context and landscape of the fire services reform implementation. While FSIM was unable to meet with the United Firefighters Union of Australia – Victoria Branch (UFU Victoria) in the first reporting period, FSIM had approached FRV to arrange discussions with UFU Victoria. This engagement may be included as part of the year two assessment approach.

The approach to stakeholder engagement and communication will continue to mature as the reform progresses.

3.6 Limitations in year one assessment

The scope of this first review has been limited due to:

- appointing FSIM in December 2020
- establishing the Office of the FSIM late in the 2020–21 financial year
- the constraints of COVID-19 on engagement activities.

Despite this, FSIM collected substantial establishment and oversight information and evidence to support its monitoring and assessment of the implementation actions towards achieving the reform's objectives.

3.7 Future monitoring and evaluation methodology and approach

This approach is the first iteration of a methodology which will develop and mature as reform actions are completed and transition from implementation to an operational environment.

The methodology adopted in this report will continue to be improved in future reports, aiming to:

- support continuous improvement for the reform
- inform decision-making and future investment
- make investments more transparent and accountable
- help CFA and FRV communicate the reform's achievements.

FSIM's methodology will mature with evolving monitoring and evaluation needs as reform progresses.

4

Monitoring Year One Implementation Plan actions

4.1 Year one action status

Section 4

Monitoring Year One Implementation Plan actions

The Year One Plan set out 54 actions to be acquitted by October 2021. Progress has been substantial, despite many actions being complex, long-term initiatives to embed and operationalise the priorities and new fire services model set out by the FRV Act. Six actions were completed over the eight-month period, covering 15 October 2020 to 30 June 2021 and included:

- restoring CFA to a fully volunteer firefighter organisation
- establishing FRV
- appointing two new independent entities, FRDP and FSIM.

Many Year One Plan actions have taken longer to deliver than anticipated because of:

- the breadth and complexity of the actions
- resourcing challenges
- CFA's and FRV's competing priorities due to COVID-19.

Despite this, CFA and FRV have made significant progress, while still keeping Victorians safe. CFA, FRV and other agencies must implement sustainable reform while meeting their operational obligations.

As the Year One Plan concludes and is replaced with new priorities, FSIM will continue to monitor and report on remaining actions. EMV is coordinating the development of the Year Two to Five Plan. As at 30 June 2021, the actions of the Year Two to Five Plan were not settled. Outstanding Year One Plan actions and further Implementation Plan(s) will inform assessment of future reports.

4.1 Year one action status

Tables 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 show the status of the 54 actions in the Year One Plan. Table 3 lists definitions for each status. The status progress assessment is based on progress updates from CFA, FRV and DJCS as at 31 May 2021, as reported to the Minister, via DJCS.

The status of the 54 actions¹³ from the Year One Plan is as follows:

- 6 are complete
- 23 are progressing and on track
- 15 are progressing and experiencing minor delays
- 8 are progressing and experiencing significant delays
- 2 have not yet commenced.

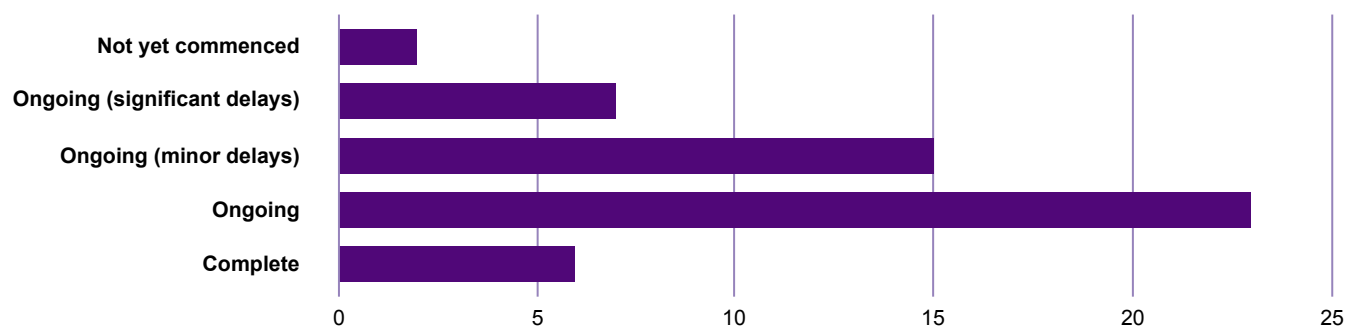
As outlined in Section 3.3, FSIM identified 36 priority actions critical to the reform's success divided into three themes:

1. agency capacity and capability under the new model
2. collaboration
3. workplace culture and diversity.

These 36 actions are shaded for identification in Tables 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Appendix 1 outlines FSIM's detailed analysis and assessment of the impacts and effectiveness of CFA, FRV and EMV's approach in delivering against these actions.

Figure 4: Progress summary of implementation actions



¹³ Refer to Tables 4,5,6,7 and 8 for the implementation action's status.

Table 3: Implementation status

Status	Progress assessment
Complete	Action was implemented within the planned timelines and met the objectives of the Implementation Plan.
Progressing and on track	Action is in progress and on track to meet the planned implementation timelines. FSIM will continue to monitor and report on the progress and effectiveness of the action against the implementation objectives in future reports.
Progressing and experiencing minor delays	Action is in progress with minor delays to the planned implementation timelines. FSIM will continue to monitor and report on the progress and effectiveness of the action against the implementation objectives in future reports.
Progressing and experiencing significant delays	Action is in progress with significant delays to the planned implementation timelines. FSIM will continue to monitor and report on the progress and effectiveness of the action against the implementation objectives in future reports.
Not commenced	Work against action has not yet commenced.

Tables 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 provide the progress status of the 54 actions, as at 31 May 2021.

Table 4: as at 31 May 2021

Implementation actions completed			
Priority	Ref	Action Implementation	Lead
1	1.13	Actively support and participate in the Operational Assurance Group.	CFA
	1.14	Provide assurance prior to commencement of the summer season (via the Operational Assurance Group) that all the necessary capability and capacity is in place to support state, regional and incident operational arrangements.	CFA
2	2.14	Actively support and participate in the Operational Assurance Group.	FRV
	2.15	Provide assurance prior to commencement of the summer season (via the Operational Assurance Group) that all the necessary capability and capacity is in place to support state, regional and incident operational arrangements.	FRV
3	3.1	Appoint the Fire Services Implementation Monitor (FSIM).	DJCS
	3.3	Appoint the Fire District Review Panel (FDRP).	DJCS

Table 5: as at 31 May 2021

Implementation actions progressing and on track*			
Priority	Ref	Action Implementation	Lead
1	1.1	Continue to consult with volunteers and consider any required improvements to consultative processes and escalation pathways, between volunteers and the CFA to build a stronger volunteer-based fire service in accordance with the commitment and principles set out in the <i>Volunteer Charter</i> .	CFA
	1.2	Continue to deliver targeted improvements to volunteer recruitment and retention to ensure CFA maintains capacity to respond to critical incidents.	CFA
	1.4	Commence delivery of \$3.3 million in crew leader training, (part of announced \$126 million CFA capability initiatives), including consultation with volunteers.	CFA
	1.6	Commence delivery of \$7.65 million to deliver and assess training of new volunteers, (part of announced \$126 million CFA capability initiatives), including consultation with volunteers.	CFA
	1.7	Participate in and support the new emergency management planning arrangements at the state, regional and incident municipal level, including in the development of a new state emergency management plan under Priority 1.2 of the Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan 2019-22.	CFA
	1.17	Provide quarterly updates to the Fire Services Implementation Monitor on the performance measures set out in the Year One Outcomes Framework.	CFA
2	2.2	Participate in and support the new emergency management planning arrangements at the state, regional and incident municipal level, including in the development of a new state emergency management plan under Priority 1.2 of the Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan 2019-2022.	FRV
	2.6	Provide operational support to the CFA through the secondment model, to ensure CFA can continue to meet its statutory obligations.	FRV
	2.7	Identify new opportunities to recognise and value the contribution made by both volunteer and career firefighters to delivering fire services (e.g. communications and collaboration).	FRV
	2.11	Continue the operational communications roll out so that turn out systems are consistent across all FRV stations and maintain ability to dispatch CFA volunteers from co-located stations.	FRV
	2.16	Preparation and provision of quarterly updates to the Fire Services Implementation Monitor on the performance measures set out in the Outcomes Framework.	FRV
	2.17	Publish a Year Two Outcomes Framework that establishes a full suite of outcome indicators and measures aligned to specified outcomes and underpinned by enhanced reporting capability.	FRV
	2.18	Commence a review of service delivery approaches to ensure these inform and align with community expectations and provide operational efficiency.	FRV

*FSIM's 36 priority actions are shaded yellow

Table 5: as at 31 May 2021

Implementation actions progressing and on track (continued)*			
Priority	Ref	Action Implementation	Lead
3	3.2	Establish monitoring and reporting processes for the Fire Services Implementation Monitor.	FSIM
	3.4	Establish the Fire District Review Panel (FDRP) processes and procedures required to conduct reviews (such as a consultation framework) and development of an evidence-based methodology to assess changes to fire risk.	FDRP
	3.5	Develop the next iteration of the Fire Services Implementation Plan.	DJCS
	3.6	Deliver on existing Statement joint initiatives that promote positive cultural change and diversity.	CFA, FRV
	3.7	Work together to understand current diversity in the fire services and consider options to improve diversity in the future.	DJCS, CFA, FRV
	3.9	Support diversity and inclusion in CFA and make progress towards delivering on the commitment to increasing the number of women in brigade leadership roles to 15 per cent from 265 to 909 by mid-2022.	CFA
4	4.4	Commence delivery of \$48.2 million in new CFA fleet and stations (part of announced \$126 million CFA capability initiatives), including consultation with volunteers.	CFA
5	5.1	<p>Conduct a financial sustainability assessment of CFA and FRV. To establish a cost and performance baseline through building and providing an evidence for base spending and how spending relates to outputs (service delivery) and outcomes (performance).</p> <p>The Program will also develop an agreed upon understanding of costs and a shared view amongst key stakeholders as to what constitutes financial sustainability and how that may be best achieved for CFA and FRV.</p>	DJCS
	5.2	<p>Develop a Funding Plan that determines the financial requirements of CFA and FRV and identifies and addresses the impact of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transfers of functions, resources and assets between CFA and FRV the change to the FRV fire district upon the fire services property levy revenue base after the commencing day any changes to the differential rates of the fire services property levy after the commencing day. 	DJCS

*FSIM's 36 priority actions are shaded yellow

Table 6: as at 31 May 2021

Implementation actions progressing and experiencing minor delays*			
Priority	Ref	Action Implementation	Lead
1	1.3	Commence delivery of \$22.7 million in volunteer support officers, peer support, counselling programs and brigade administration support, (part of announced \$126 million CFA capability initiatives), including consultation with volunteers.	CFA
	1.8	Commence harmonisation of operational procedures across CFA and FRV where practicable and appropriate.	CFA
	1.10	Finalise service level agreements between CFA and FRV and any related party and ensure that the agreements support effective operations.	CFA
	1.12	Finalise CFA and the CFA Chief Officer delegations and authorisations to FRV employees.	CFA
	1.15	Ensure that all necessary arrangements are in place for FRV staff who are seconded to the CFA so that they can perform their functions effectively.	CFA
	1.16	Finalise relevant enterprise bargaining agreements, including the CFA Professional, Technical and Administrative Enterprise Agreement.	CFA
	1.18	Publish the Year Two Outcomes Framework that establishes a full suite of outcome indicators and measures aligned to specified outcomes and underpinned by enhanced reporting capability.	CFA
	1.19	Commence a review of service delivery approaches to ensure they inform and align with community expectations and provide operational efficiency.	CFA
	2	2.1	Finalise relevant enterprise bargaining agreements, including the FRV Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement; FRV Professional, Technical and Administrative Staff Agreement; FRV Corporate and Technical Staff Agreement; and FRV Mechanical Engineering Workshops Agreement.
2.3		Commence harmonisation of operational procedures across CFA and FRV where practicable and appropriate.	FRV
2.5		Finalise service level agreements between CFA and FRV and any related party and ensure that the agreements support effective operations.	FRV
2.9		Finalise CFA and the CFA Chief Officer delegations and authorisations to FRV employees.	FRV
2.12		Harmonise specialist response arrangements which have transferred from CFA; e.g. HAZMAT response, fire investigation, high angle rescue.	FRV
2.13		Ensure that all necessary arrangements are in place for FRV staff who are seconded to CFA to ensure that they can perform their functions effectively.	FRV
4	4.3	Commence delivery of \$40.7 million in new CFA volunteers' health and safety initiatives, including training programs for low voltage fuse removal, safe working at heights and alternative power systems; new generation personal protective clothing to active operational volunteers, and the rollout of a respiratory protection pilot, including consultation with volunteers (part of announced \$126 million CFA capability initiatives).	CFA
	4.5	Identify and commence capital works at co-located CFA and FRV stations to assist with co-location, including consultation with career and volunteer firefighters operating from the co-located stations.	CFA, FRV

*FSIM's 36 priority actions are shaded yellow

Table 7: as at 31 May 2021

Implementation actions progressing and experiencing significant delays*			
Priority	Ref	Action Implementation	Lead
1	1.5	Commence delivery of \$3.6 million in critical volunteer facing ICT systems, (part of announced \$126 million CFA capability initiatives), including consultation with volunteers.	CFA
	1.9	Finalise the transfer of any property, assets, liabilities, rights, and obligations from CFA to FRV.	CFA
	1.11	Finalise memorandum of understanding for provision of corporate functions.	CFA
2	2.4	Finalise the transfer of any property, assets, liabilities, rights, and obligations from CFA to FRV.	FRV
	2.8	Finalise memorandum of understanding for provision of corporate functions	FRV
3	3.8	Demonstrate progress towards reaching the government's commitment of 400 women career firefighters in FRV by June 2021.	FRV
4	4.1	Appoint the Firefighters Registration Board (FRB).	DJCS
	4.6	Finalise the transfer of in-flight infrastructure projects from CFA to FRV and deliver high priority station builds as per the documented project schedules.	CFA, FRV

Table 8: as at 31 May 2021

Implementation actions that have not yet commenced			
Priority	Ref	Action Implementation	Lead
2	2.10	Deliver the first review of the Strategic Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference as required under legislation.	DJCS, in consultation with FRV
4	4.2	Commence establishing capability standards, the Firefighters Register, application processes and transparent appeal processes.	FRB

*FSIM's 36 priority actions are shaded yellow

5

Analysis summary

-
- 5.1 Introduction

 - 5.2 Theme one: Agency capacity and capability under the new model

 - 5.3 Theme two: Collaboration

 - 5.4 Theme three: Workplace culture and diversity

 - 5.5 Looking ahead

Section 5

Analysis summary

5.1 Introduction

The Victorian Government undertook fire services reform with the aim to better protect the Victorian community's safety with a modernised, complementary, and sustainable fire services.

Since the Year One Plan was finalised and released, CFA and FRV have achieved significant milestones, with the transition to new arrangements well underway. The Victorian Government's plan to implement transitional and transactional activities in the reform's first year was ambitious, and reform implementation was rapid. CFA, FRV and EMV have shown a strong commitment to the reform, addressing challenges to set the foundations for reform success.

FSIM recognises that the establishment of FRV and CFA's corporate re-structure occurred while maintaining effective fire services to protect the community. This is a significant achievement. CFA and FRV acted quickly with support from EMV to identify and align systems, structures, resources, and capabilities required to provide a complementary fire service for the community.

The following sections summarise activity to 30 June 2021 and observations under the three themes identified for foundational reform success (agency capacity and capability under the new model, collaboration and workplace culture and diversity). Additional detail on the actions relevant to the findings can be found in Appendix 1.

FSIM recognises that CFA and FRV have undertaken significant activity since the end of the reporting period, however a summary of progress to 30 June 2021 provides government and the community with early issues to address and opportunities to consider, as the reform progresses.

5.2 Theme one: Agency capacity and capability under the new model

On 1 July 2020, the reformed fire services model commenced, modernising Victoria's fire services, functions and structures. FRV brought together career firefighters from the MFB and CFA, and CFA refocused as Victoria's volunteer fire fighting service. CFA and FRV made significant progress, aligning capacity and capability to deliver the new model. Embedding capacity and capability under the new model is dependent on clear roles and responsibilities under the principle of interoperability in year two of the reform.

Progress and key achievements

CFA and FRV showed a strong commitment to developing their capacity and capability under the new model while delivering business as usual services. CFA and FRV developed agreements at the outset to support implementation, including the Overarching Operational Services Agreement (OOSA) and two Service Level Deeds of Agreement (SLDAs) detailing each agency's service. After the reform started, CFA and FRV developed supporting instruments to support service delivery such as:

- the Secondment Agreement, enabling FRV to provide CFA with operational support
- Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), including the draft Corporate Services MoU that transitions corporate services between CFA and FRV, and
- interim work instructions to guide service delivery where the SLDAs could not be implemented as intended.

The Victorian Government committed \$126 million over five years to enhance CFA's capacity to protect Victorian lives and properties and keep its volunteers safe. CFA demonstrated a strong commitment to providing its firefighters with the right skills and access to training and is improving volunteer engagement across the organisation. In consultation with volunteers, CFA commenced projects to replace appliances and stations, install critical volunteer facing ICT systems, deliver training, implement health and safety initiatives, procure protective clothing for operational volunteers and rollout a respiratory protection pilot. CFA has also commissioned the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) to perform an independent peer review of training to inform a strategic approach to targeted training for volunteers.

There is an opportunity for CFA and FRV to adopt a strategic and integrated approach to capability development where possible to enhance interoperability. A truly complementary fire service with appropriately trained firefighters and fit for purpose equipment help ensure career and volunteer firefighters are engaged and feel safe and respected.

Improvements to co-located stations have also supported capacity and capability development. CFA and FRV worked collaboratively to deliver capital works at co-located stations. Both reaffirmed the government's commitment to high priority station builds to support the reform objective of firefighters having access to the right resources to do their job and keep them safe.

Risks and opportunities

Agreements and interim arrangements

CFA and FRV jointly developed a suite of overarching agreements that established high-level service delivery model arrangements. CFA and FRV experienced complex implementation challenges requiring them to develop 'work arounds' and interim arrangements to maintain service delivery.

These arrangements, while relatively effective short-term solutions, impacted service delivery efficiency. The most significant impacts were felt internally by areas of CFA and FRV directly responsible for service delivery.

Inefficiencies caused by the complex interim administrative arrangements were evident in the provision of interim building codes, audits, inspection, and compliance services (BAIC), land use planning services and dangerous goods advice services. CFA retained statutory authority for these services while FRV delivered them on CFA's behalf. CFA and FRV had to align systems, processes, and resources to manage this approach and CFA invested resources to undertake quality control of services delivered by FRV on its behalf in order to meet its legislative obligations. FRV had to ensure that it had an appropriately skilled workforce and noted that it did not have sufficient staff numbers to deliver services.

There was a lack of clarity about the administrative framework that supports the service delivery model and the process for finalising it. At the end of the reporting period, several interim work instructions, OOSA schedules and Secondment Agreement supplementary instruments were in place or under development.

There was no comprehensive, shared picture of these arrangements that defined endorsement responsibility and status, nor an overarching joint project plan to finalise the arrangements. At times, CFA and FRV had differing views on the status of negotiations and the process for finalising agreements.

For example, CFA and FRV committed to reviewing the operation and effectiveness of the OOSA after 12 months, but there was a lack of clarity between them about the review timelines and responsibilities. Also, while CFA and FRV undertook significant work to transition 16 corporate services, a lack of transparent acquittal or finalisation processes made it unclear how many of these functions were transitioned successfully and finalised. CFA and FRV must agree on and communicate the finalisation, authorisation and endorsement approach on issues requiring joint action.

It is important that CFA and FRV finalise the outstanding agreements, complete planned reviews, and transition from interim arrangements to settled and embedded 'business as usual' processes in year two. Finalised arrangements will provide staff and volunteers with confidence in their roles and functions and are fundamental to a modern, complementary fire services model. Effective project planning, an overarching governance framework that provides a pathway for issue escalation and resolution, agreed consultation approaches, and communication of feedback processes are needed to finalise the service delivery model. Addressing these issues will lessen the risk of embedding long-term systemic operational inefficiencies.

Case study Land Use Planning

An example of operational inefficiency is the delivery of land use planning services. In the SLDA, CFA, as the referral authority under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, was to provide land use planning services in the CAoV and for FRV where the Bushfire Management Overlay existed in the FRV District. CFA would continue to provide expert advice and assessments if a proposed development or subdivision satisfies the Victorian Planning Provisions objectives. CFA states that following Ministerial Direction, specialist staff delivering this service transferred to FRV as part of the staff transfer arrangements, but there was inadequate consideration of CFA's ongoing service delivery responsibilities. As CFA no longer had capacity, CFA and FRV agreed on interim arrangements for FRV to provide management support in the form of administrative and ancillary services on behalf of CFA. These services are referred to as 'administrative and ancillary' because in essence the service provided by FRV is assisting CFA to meet its statutory requirements and does not meet the 'operational support' definition in the CFA/UFU Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement 2016, nor associated policy documents.

In practice, FRV prepared advice and reports for FRV districts and the CAoV, providing advice and assessments on all proposed development or sub-divisions to satisfy the Victorian Planning Provisions objectives.

As CFA is the referral agency in the CAoV and accountable for service delivery under the Victorian Planning Provisions, CFA approves advice and reports provided by FRV in the CAoV. In these instances, CFA undertook quality assurance of FRV's work in order to meet its statutory obligations. FRV staff morale was impacted, because staff providing land use planning services are largely ex-CFA staff, whose work now requires quality assurance and approval by CFA. In addition, 90 per cent of land use planning applications are in the CAoV and FRV advised that they may not have sufficient resources to respond to application increases, which have increased approximately five per cent annually since 2016.

These operational inefficiencies have affected the communities' service experience and resulted in reductions in legislative compliance. For example, time taken to approve applications has increased. FRV attributes increased time delays to double handling of reports where CFA exercises quality assurance and other factors like systems challenges. FSIM understands that the agencies have not agreed to transfer the function of land use planning services from CFA to FRV or amend the SLDA. Given reductions in legislative compliance, CFA and FRV may wish to undertake analysis to confirm the reasons for these reductions and develop strategies to address them.

Vacancies

CFA Commander rank vacancies in Victoria have been a long-standing issue. Post 1 July 2020, CFA advises these issues continued, with the agencies experiencing significant challenges in managing Commander relief arrangements in addition to substantive vacancies. FRV experienced significant challenges in managing vacancy and relief arrangements for Assistant Chief Fire Officers (ACFO) and Commander roles with many roles unfilled or managed by short-term acting arrangements over the reporting period. Two ACFO and approximately 10 Commander roles had yet to be filled as at 30 June 2021, which FRV endeavoured to backfill throughout the reporting period. CFA reported that 16 per cent of required Commander relief hours were unrelieved from 19 October 2020 to 4 July 2021.

CFA believes that in some areas these vacancies, insufficient relief arrangements, and short-term secondments impacted preparedness activities such as development of preparedness matrices and local response plans, and CFA's capacity to attend and/or add value at meetings with stakeholders and partners¹⁴. These vacancy and relief issues significantly impacted personnel with some volunteers experiencing high degrees of leadership turnover and seconded command staff undertaking additional workload to cover vacant roles and accruing significant leave liabilities. Some of the most significant impacts were seen on ACFO's who assumed several Commander responsibilities in areas where there were vacancies.

CFA and FRV leadership collaborated to manage these issues and mitigate operational impacts on CFA. Given the impact that ongoing vacancies, unrelieved positions, and revolving leadership can have on volunteer

and staff confidence, morale, and engagement in District decision making processes, this is an issue that FSIM will continue to monitor for the remainder of year one implementation and into year two.

Delegations

CFA's power and authority to delegate to FRV staff was an issue. The ability to delegate some powers is impacted by legislative and regulatory restrictions and liabilities associated with actions undertaken in the exercise of a CO or CFA Board delegated power or authority. CFA's ability to provide the required delegations is dependent on whether the power and authority resides with the CO or CFA Board. Where constraints have impacted CFA's ability to delegate its powers and functions, inefficiencies have been evident. CFA must continue to explore opportunities to finalise delegations to FRV to ensure CFA and FRV staff have clear, agreed roles and responsibilities, staff are suitably authorised to do their job, and clear timelines inform finalisation of the administrative framework and service delivery model.

A key issue for CFA and FRV was the operationalisation of the intent of the OOSA and SLDAs. While these agreements outlined each agency's services for the other, implementation risks and mitigation strategies were not clearly identified at the outset. For example, CFA advises that where CFA delegates authority and powers to FRV employees, CFA remains legislatively responsible for all services delivered by FRV within the CAoV, requiring CFA to undertake quality assurance to ensure compliance with its legislative obligations. In addition, the authority and power to deliver some services resides with the CFA Board and cannot be delegated to FRV employees that

are not seconded to CFA. This meant that despite CFA and FRV's strong commitment to the reform, in some instances, the SLDAs could not be implemented as intended.

Role clarity

The lack of role clarity between CFA and FRV impacted delivery in the first eight months of the reform. For example, as at 30 June 2021, agreement had not yet been fully reached between CFA and FRV on the roles and responsibilities each agency will undertake in structural fire investigations. Both CFA and FRV have continued to provide these services, noting there was not a consistent delivery approach between the two agencies. CFA and FRV must agree on roles and responsibilities for fire investigation, enabling these services to be efficiently resourced to support the reform objective of robust operating structures to enable firefighters to succeed at their jobs.

Staff and volunteer impacts

CFA and FRV personnel have been impacted by the secondment arrangements and interim agreements established to deliver the reform. The most significant staff and volunteer impacts relate to the provision of Commander staff under the Secondment Agreement, and instances where FRV delivers a service on behalf of CFA and CFA provides oversight. CFA and FRV have reported reduced staff and volunteer morale, which has potential implications for the reform objective of engaged career and volunteer workforces that feel safe.

FRV reported impacts on staff morale where there are interim arrangements that require CFA to oversee and approve services FRV delivers on CFA's behalf. FRV staff who are supporting CFA to deliver services

¹⁴ For example, involvement with the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee.

are largely ex-CFA staff, transferred to FRV as part of the reform. Since the establishment of these interim arrangements, which are subject to change, completing these tasks took longer because of additional quality assurance and approval processes, and roles lacked clarity due to changing work instructions. This presented FRV with a staff retention risk, which, if realised, will leave FRV with a significant capability gap.

CFA faces additional capacity and capability challenges unique to a dedicated volunteer workforce. Volunteers are an essential part of CFA's capability and capacity in responding to fire and other emergencies, therefore CFA should continue to ensure that volunteers feel valued and safe. CFA needs to maintain knowledge and experience across its volunteer base and attract new volunteers to reflect Victoria's changing community risks and maintain its capacity for major emergencies. However, in the reporting period CFA volunteers reported feeling underutilised and undervalued. CFA's ageing volunteer workforce also poses a long-term risk if recruitment and retention strategies are not in place to maintain a viable volunteer workforce. CFA is preparing long-term volunteer workforce strategies to address risks associated with its ageing volunteer workforce and Victoria's changing population demographics more broadly.

Theme one: Key findings

CFA, FRV and EMV have collaborated to implement the intent of the reform and address a range of administrative, operational, and human resource challenges in the first 12 months.

To embed the reform, CFA and FRV must finalise and communicate the service delivery models and put in place project management and oversight processes to do this.

Finalisation of SLDA variations and CFA delegations is critical to confirm roles and responsibilities in the new service delivery model. CFA and FRV must agree on the finalisation, authorisation and endorsement environment on issues requiring joint action.

CFA must identify powers and authority that are appropriate to be delegated and progress these delegations to enable FRV to provide services as per the SLDA, otherwise consideration should be given to amending the SLDA to accurately reflect responsibilities.

CFA and FRV must address operational inefficiencies resulting from administrative arrangements in year two to maintain effective service delivery.

CFA and FRV must agree on roles and responsibilities for structural fire investigation, which will enable these services to be efficiently resourced.

CFA and FRV should consider formalising and communicating a strategic and integrated approach to capability development to enhance interoperability.

CFA and FRV must finalise a model that provides for sufficient vacancy management and Commander relief to ensure effective and efficient operational management, maintain staff safety and wellbeing, and avoid further Commander annual leave accrual. This may require comprehensive modelling of Commander relief requirements.

Given the impact that ongoing vacancies, unrelieved positions and revolving leadership can have on volunteer and staff confidence, morale and engagement in district led and district informed decision making, FSIM will continue to observe this issue for the remainder of year one implementation and into year two.

5.3 Theme two: Collaboration

The Year One Plan noted the need for ongoing, cross-government collaboration to deliver the shared vision for Victoria's fire services. The challenge to operationalise the reformed fire services model cannot be underestimated. This has been a complex undertaking and CFA, FRV and EMV demonstrated genuine commitment to collaborate and progress implementation.

Progress and achievements

An effective and constructive working relationship is critical for CFA, FRV and EMV to operationalise the reforms. There is considerable evidence that the leadership of CFA and FRV worked together to establish structures, processes, and principles to support joint decision-making and identify operational issues during the reporting period. CFA and FRV shared operational doctrines and continue to refine and harmonise their doctrine as appropriate to ensure interoperability and resolve operational issues.

CFA, FRV and EMV collaborated to develop service delivery agreements and supporting interim instruments to facilitate service transition and delivery. Where CFA and FRV experienced delays in executing formal agreements, they worked together to 'find a way through'. For example, while the draft Corporate Services MoU was unexecuted at the time of reporting, CFA and FRV corporate teams worked together to progress the transfer of corporate functions and identify and address issues resulting from the transfer in functions like payroll and IT. This adaptive approach allowed CFA and FRV to maintain corporate service delivery.

As negotiations continued to finalise formal agreements, CFA and FRV continued to respond to emergencies and deliver administrative functions. For example, on 1 July 2020 – the first day of the reformed fire service arrangements - a fifth alarm factory fire occurred in an Altona North warehouse, fuelled by paper, timber and building waste. CFA and FRV firefighters worked together to bring the incident under control with support from Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Environment Protection Authority Victoria, Victoria State Emergency Services and utility companies.

CFA and FRV also collaborated to establish *Fire Permits Victoria*, a digital fire permits platform to register burn-offs, which streamlined services for the benefit of the Victorian community, wherever they reside.

Governance arrangements were implemented to support collaboration, including the EMV-led Fire Services Reform Steering Committee (FSR Steering Committee) and issue-specific governance groups focused on operational readiness and financial sustainability. CFA and FRV initiated FSOC, which provided strategic operational oversight and made decisions about interoperability issues. The reforms required some CFA specialist response arrangements and services to be located within FRV Districts, and CFA transferred multiple specialist response equipment and personnel to FRV, including fire investigations, complex hazardous materials (HAZMAT) response, technical rescue, high angle rescue and training. FSOC provided FRV and CFA with an avenue to address and resolve key joint operational matters.

FSOC will be critical to supporting CFA and FRV's strategic collaboration on several operational procedures that are still to be reviewed. This joint strategic collaborative forum between CFA and FRV ensures accountability for delivery. It enables CFA and FRV to jointly assess reform progress and impact and provide for effective communication channels between CFA and FRV. The ongoing effectiveness of FSOC is contingent on a broader, overarching governance framework that provides a pathway for issue escalation and resolution. FSIM will monitor FSOC and other governance arrangements in supporting interoperability and collaboration between CFA and FRV in year two.

Risks and opportunities

Finalising agreements

CFA and FRV share a common purpose but have different workplace cultures and operational approaches. Using collaborative channels, CFA, FRV and EMV have made adaptive decisions to develop and implement agreements and solutions. As noted in the previous section, some of these solutions included interim arrangements to support function interoperability, service delivery transfer, and operationalisation of new arrangements in the first year of reform activity.

The adaptive approach, while effective in the short term to enable service delivery, is not sustainable when not supported by comprehensive, collaborative and agreed project plans that outline delivery pathways.

For example, FSIM observed there was a lack of a clear and agreed consultation process, and ineffective information sharing between agencies involved in signing the Tenancy Agreement for the 33¹⁵ CFA former career and integrated stations transferred to FRV.

The success of a collaborative approach relies on CFA and FRV reaching agreement on a suite of operational and administrative matters arising from the reform. Effective project planning approaches for future work will provide a clear line of sight to project completion, avoid re-visiting issues, and provide stakeholders with clarity on their role in delivery.

As part of the planning process, the agencies should nominate a decision-making forum for outstanding agreements. This forum should confirm a process to finalise agreements (including consultation) and ensure the process has been followed and is complete prior to both parties signing an agreement.

It is important that all relevant parties to an agreement are provided with clear and timely updates on feedback and that they agree on any proposed amendments. Furthermore, to support long term reform success, plans must be supported by an agreed escalation pathway to resolve issues where disagreements occur. There must be an appropriate governance framework to finalise these critical arrangements.

CFA and FRV have, at times, experienced challenges in maintaining a collaborative approach, particularly regarding finalising agreements. FSIM will monitor the effectiveness and impact of collaboration efforts between CFA and FRV at a strategic level, and on operational responses and administrative activities in year two.

Finalising service delivery approaches

The establishment of FRV and restoration of CFA to a fully volunteer firefighting service changed how CFA and FRV deliver services to the community. To best service the Victorian community's needs and meet community expectations, CFA and FRV needed to develop their respective service delivery approaches and capability plans.

CFA and FRV have an action under the Year One Plan to review state-wide service delivery approaches and capability plans to best serve the Victorian community's needs and expectations in the context of the new model. CFA has commenced a review of its response model to ensure that the most appropriate resources were dispatched during emergencies and conducted its annual attitudinal survey of householders in bushfire prone locations. FRV is reviewing international fire and rescue accreditation models and commissioned work to support the development of an FRV Strategy which will inform its service delivery approach.

After completing the transitional arrangements to operationalise the reforms, CFA and FRV should consider agreeing on and communicating the final operational requirements to deliver complementary fire services. The FSOC work plan outlines how CFA and FRV will work together on a range of interoperability programs to optimise service delivery to communities, however agreement on the operational requirements of a complementary fire services model would provide clarity on the skills, resources, and equipment needed at an agency level.

CFA and FRV have shown positive steps towards building an understanding of community expectations. However, demonstrating how community needs and expectations informs service delivery approaches and communicating any resulting changes to service delivery is critical. It will be important for CFA and FRV to enhance community engagement in year two and strengthen their links with the community. Community engagement activities should then inform the development of service delivery approaches as the reform implementation matures.

Collaborative planning

Effective and productive working relationships supported by robust operating procedures will enable the fire services reform to succeed. However, several of the reform's foundational joint agreements - the Tenancy Agreement, SLDA Schedules, Secondment Agreement's Supplementary Instruments and the Corporate Services MoU - are yet to be executed. Joint finalisation of these foundational agreements will continue to be a priority for FSIM in future reporting periods.

The delayed execution of these agreements is a risk for CFA and FRV as it may result in a lack of role clarity and impact constructive working relationships. CFA and FRV must finalise and clearly communicate how they will collaborate at an operational level through these agreements.

¹⁵ 37 formerly integrated and career-only CFA stations transferred to FRV. Four stations are not included in the schedules to the Tenancy agreement because Eltham, Latrobe West and Lucas are now stand-alone FRV stations, and Hoppers Crossing is now a stand-alone CFA station.

Enhanced collaborative planning will also help to finalise the joint agreements. Many of these agreements were developed quickly in 2020 and there did not appear to be a consistent, transparent and jointly agreed process to develop and finalise arrangements, supported by an agreed escalation pathway to resolve issues where disagreement occurred.

Much of the progress to date has relied on goodwill and staff commitment across CFA and FRV to 'make it work' – the organisations knew the end state they were trying to achieve, but the finalised project plans and guiding documentation were not in place at the time of reporting.

Including effective project planning approaches in future work will provide a clear line of sight to project completion, avoid re-visiting issues, and provide stakeholders with clarity as to their role in delivery. Project planning should also outline and define decision-making approaches, particularly regarding escalation, dispute resolution, and risk management.

Theme two: Key findings

CFA, FRV and EMV have, in this first year of reform, established principles, structures, and processes with the aim to support a collaborative culture going forward and collaboration is demonstrated, encouraged, and led at executive level.

CFA and FRV should further engage and consult to inform the community of the revised serviced delivery approach and determine whether the approach aligns with community expectations.

Following completion of the transitional arrangements to operationalise the reforms, CFA and FRV should consider agreeing on and communicating the final operational requirements to deliver complementary fire services. This would provide clarity on the skills, resources, and equipment needed at an agency level to align with community expectations and provide operational efficiency.

FSOC will continue to be critical to the strategic collaboration between CFA and FRV. The effectiveness of a joint strategic collaborative forum between CFA and FRV relies on clear accountability for delivery, CFA and FRV jointly assessing reform progress and impact, and effective communication channels between CFA and FRV.

5.4 Theme three: Workplace culture and diversity

The long-term success of the reform requires that CFA and FRV are modern, inclusive, and reflect the communities they serve. Several reviews highlighted workplace culture and a lack of diversity as critical challenges for CFA and FRV¹⁶. In response, the Statement committed CFA and FRV to establishing modern and inclusive workplaces, rolling out a Diversity and Culture Change Program and setting targets to increase women career firefighters and women in leadership roles.

While constructive organisational cultures and safe workplaces are critical for effective complementary fire service, establishing and embedding preferred organisational culture takes time. CFA and FRV committed to culture change and are making progress towards workforce gender diversity targets. They have put in place the strategic foundations to increase workforce diversity and have focused on complaints management and volunteer experience as key enablers of culture change in the reporting period. To represent the communities they serve more fully, CFA and FRV will need to expand their diversity focus beyond gender. Organisational culture change and staff's broader experience of workplace culture will be a focus for future reporting.

Progress and achievements

Both CFA and FRV have put in place the strategic foundations to drive workforce diversity changes. As of 30 June 2021, CFA had completed a corporate realignment to reflect their preferred culture, focusing on performance and accountability,

dealing with past cultural challenges, and building on the strong culture of connectivity embedded in communities.

FRV was established and has defined its new identity as an organisation that creates a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace culture where diversity, innovation and integrity is highly valued and the safety of the community and each other is at the centre. To support this identity development, the then Minister for Police and Emergency Services appointed FRV's Strategic Advisory Committee and FRV established a dedicated Diversity and Inclusion team.

CFA and FRV are defined entities under the *Gender Equality Act 2020* and both CFA and FRV have started to develop three-year diversity and inclusion strategies. Through the Emergency Management Inclusion and Diversity Leadership Group chaired by the EMC, the broader emergency management sector developed a shared 2021-22 work plan. This plan addresses sector-wide inclusivity and diversity barriers and uses existing leadership opportunities and initiatives to collectively drive change.

CFA and FRV have shown commitment to recruiting a more diverse workforce and to achieving gender diversity targets. FRV employed Women's Support Coordinators and Multicultural Liaison Officers to support the recruitment and retention of women and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. CFA aimed to expand Women's Reference Groups across the state and developed Women's and Youth Advisory Committees.

CFA provided staff and volunteers with online inclusion training packages, self-care and mental health programs and disability confidence training.

Risks and opportunities

Gender diversity targets

Research has shown that women's access to networks, fewer female role models in leadership positions, family responsibilities, and a perception that women are bypassed for leadership positions are some of the barriers to women joining and progressing in the emergency management sector¹⁷. CFA and FRV are actively working to reduce such barriers. Female firefighter and leadership targets are a critical component of their strategies going forward, noting that CFA and FRV are unlikely to meet the gender diversity targets in the Statement and Year One Plan.

FRV did not reach the target of 400 female career firefighters at the end of FSIM's reporting period. To achieve the target, FRV needed to recruit 259 female firefighters (64.75 per cent of the target) in its first year, noting it engaged 247 firefighters (male and female) through two recruitment intakes in 2021. FRV demonstrated strong capacity to retain female firefighters with a retention rate of 99.4 per cent for the year and actively worked to develop recruitment campaigns targeted at women.

CFA is unlikely to have 909 females in brigade leadership roles by mid-2022. This target is limited to operational leadership roles with the rank of Captain, 1st to 4th Lieutenant. CFA must elect 556 women (61.2 per cent of the total) over the year to achieve this target.

¹⁶ Reviews include the 2009 *Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission*, the 2015 *Fire Services Review*, and the 2011 *Jones Inquiry*.

¹⁷ C Young, R Jones, M Kumnick 2018 *The long road: building effective diversity and inclusion in emergency management organisations*, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, pp. 108, Parkinson, D, Duncan, A, Davie, S, Archer, F, Sutherland, A, O'Malley, S, Jeffrey, J, Pease, B, Wilson, AG, Gough, M 2018, *Victoria's Gender and Disaster Taskforce: a retrospective analysis*, Australian Journal of Emergency Management.

There may not be enough eligible female volunteers who want to nominate for election, nor enough brigade election opportunities to achieve this target. CFA may consider broadening the brigade leadership roles definition to include roles like brigade 5th to 10th Lieutenant, Secretary and Treasurer. FSIM supports CFA to broaden this definition as leadership should include non-operational roles. A strict ranks-based definition may overlook women's broader leadership opportunities across the organisation.

Broadening data collection and use

There is an opportunity for CFA and FRV to strengthen their diversity and inclusion datasets, and to use this data more effectively in decision making. Both CFA and FRV collect data that provides workforce gender diversity profiles, but their broader diversity workforce profiles are at different maturity levels. To inform diversity and inclusion programs, appropriate monitoring and evaluation strategies must also be in place.

CFA's workforce profiles are comprehensive, and data usability improved with the development of new data analytics tools in the reporting period. CFA should consider using this data to address workforce diversity gaps and build workforce profiles to reflect local communities. FRV's priority is to strengthen diversity and inclusion data capabilities. FRV should then consider using this data to inform program planning and identify and address workforce diversity gaps. As CFA and FRV build their understanding of workforce diversity, there is an opportunity to share this data to inform workforce profiles and possible gaps in co-located areas.

Evaluating effectiveness of diversity and inclusion strategies

Evaluating diversity and inclusion programs and initiatives enables organisations to understand if they are effective. CFA and FRV's diversity and inclusion strategies should include clear articulation of the intended outcomes and a requirement to monitor and evaluate programs.

It is encouraging to see that FRV has included monitoring and evaluation of new programs as a priority in their draft roadmap, and CFA should consider how to strengthen monitoring and evaluation approaches for their diversity and inclusion programs to help them to understand if they are effective.

A focus on monitoring and evaluation will also drive improvements to data collection and analysis and may offer opportunities to align and share relevant findings.

Using data to inform culture change

The fire services have several programs and initiatives in place to enable organisational culture change. In year one, CFA and FRV identified their complaint management approaches as an indicator and enabler of culture change. Staff understanding of complaints processes and confidence to raise issues is particularly important, given the allegations of bullying and harassment in the fire services.

CFA decentralised its complaints management process. It allocated additional human resources capability to the regions and increased its capacity to manage complaints cases to closure, reducing the number of cumulative active cases.

FRV improved staff education about its processes, to which FRV attributes a 67 per cent increase in workplace complaints and conduct enquiries.

Organisational culture change will require sustained commitment across all levels of both CFA and FRV and will require CFA and FRV to broaden their focus beyond gender diversity and inclusion strategies. CFA and FRV will need to promote values and positive culture to improve workplace behaviour. There is an opportunity for CFA and FRV to use the data currently collected to inform decisions and programs that address staff culture challenges. For example, data showing the increase in the number of complaints at FRV and the decrease in volunteer satisfaction at CFA should be used to develop and embed culture change strategies and programs.

Theme three: Key findings

FRV must further investigate why there was such a significant escalation in complaint and conduct enquiries over the reporting period as the relationship between improved awareness and the increase in complaints is unclear.

CFA should advocate to broaden the definition of leadership roles to include other operational and non-operational leadership roles such as brigade 5th - 10th Lieutenant, Secretary and Treasurer roles. FSIM supports this approach, noting that leadership can take many forms.

FSIM notes that a safe workplace is fundamentally important to the success of the reform. FSIM will seek further information on how CFA and FRV are fostering culture change to support a safe workplace and appropriately address issues and complaints in future reporting.

5.5 Looking ahead

Reform governance

Under section 130 of the FRV Act, the Minister is responsible for the preparation of the Implementation Plan. The Victorian Government established a governance framework with the objective to set the direction for and ensure a whole-of-government approach to, delivery of the Year One Plan.

For this reporting period, the framework comprised the Fire Services Reform Taskforce (FSR Taskforce), the Minister, the FSR Steering Committee, and Fire Services Reform Corporate Sub-Committee and Finance Sub-Committees, as outlined in Figure 5.

The FSR Taskforce provided a whole-of-government oversight function, providing relevant ministers with information on the reform's implementation progress.

A high-level taskforce and/or steering committee can also provide a mechanism to ensure relevant government departments and Ministers remain informed of, and involved in, reform progress and resolution of key issues impacting on the reform in a timely manner, however FSIM notes that this Taskforce has only met once during the reporting period.

The Year One Plan's governance framework was supported by relevant documentation (terms of reference, minutes, and agendas) and CFA and FRV participated in the framework. However, FSIM notes there are opportunities to strengthen the framework in preparation for the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan.

Figure 5: Fire Service Reform Governance Structure (at 30 June 2021)



To date, the FSR Steering Committee has reviewed and endorsed acquittal documents for Implementation Plan actions deemed to be completed by action owners. In delivering on its mandate to provide strategic advice and direction, there is a role for the FSR Steering Committee to review the effectiveness of an action in achieving a desired impact or contribution to the Statement's outcomes in the acquittal process.

Although the Year One Plan notes which agencies are responsible for delivery of actions, the Plan does not explicitly state the process and responsibilities for action acquittal. An acquittal template exists, which notes that agency heads are responsible for action acquittal, however FSIM notes that an overarching reference document that confirms who, or what authorising body acquits a specific action (especially actions with joint actors), what supporting evidence (and approval) is required to acquit the action, and who needs to be notified of an acquittal (e.g. contributing agencies) would be helpful for future reporting.

Given its role in developing strategic policy for the emergency sector, EMV is well placed to maintain ongoing governance oversight of future Implementation Plans. FSIM notes there are multiple governing bodies that have a role in acquitting actions, addressing issues, and providing direction that sit outside the governance framework but are directly related to it. The roles and functions of these bodies in acquitting actions and making decisions that directly impact Implementation Plans should be incorporated into and represented by an overarching governance framework.

Such a framework would clarify and articulate the scope, role, and approval functions of each governing body, identify issue escalation and resolution pathways and encourage an integrated and strategic approach to the development and delivery of the reform activities.

At 30 June 2021, EMV had initiated a review of the existing governance arrangements to better reflect accountability for delivery in the next phase of the reform. FSIM is supportive of a review of the governance framework, noting that changes to governance arrangements should clearly articulate CFA, FRV and EMV's individual and joint roles and responsibilities. The framework should also empower an overarching governance body with the necessary authority to address and resolve major challenges to the successful delivery of Implementation Plan actions.

Financial sustainability

The FRV Act requires that the Implementation Plan set out the government's proposed actions regarding the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV, including in relation to ensuring that volunteer brigades are not adversely affected by the fire services reforms.

FSIM has a requirement, under section 131 of the FRV Act, to review and assess the impact of fire services reforms upon the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV, and the efficacy of particular implementation actions taken by agencies.

An analysis of options relating to the costs of the reform of the Victoria fire services and the proposed new funding arrangements, are fundamental for a financially sustainable and complementary fire service.

FSIM will seek evidence of the cost mapping analysis project, led by EMV, in year two of the reform and will consider the impacts that reform implementation is having on the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV. This information is important to enable FSIM to develop an understanding of progress made by EMV in conducting an analysis of CFA's and FRV's financial sustainability to deliver the new fire services model. FSIM will also seek evidence on the impact of the reform on the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV.

FSIM recognises a continued close working relationship with CFA, FRV and EMV on this work will be a priority in year two.

Outcomes frameworks

Section 140 of the FRV Act sets out a legislative requirement for CFA and FRV to prepare and publish outcomes frameworks and provide quarterly updates on progress against the outcomes-based fire services performance measures. The Year One Plan includes an action against both CFA and FRV to prepare and publish their respective Year Two Outcomes Frameworks.

In the first year of operation, FSIM has met its requirement, under s141 of the FRV Act, to prepare and publish a quarterly report that sets out the fire agencies' quarterly updates. In preparing the quarterly reports, FSIM has a role in commenting on progress made towards the reform outcomes and on performance against the emergency sector's vision for safer, more resilient communities¹⁸.

There is an opportunity for CFA and FRV to better align performance indicators in the quarterly updates to agency-defined outcomes, and to clearly align the agencies' strategic and operational outcomes with those outlined in the Statement, where appropriate. There is also further opportunity to capitalise on the significant synergies between the two agencies' frameworks to inform the fire services input into a broader, sector level Emergency Management Outcomes Framework.

EMV has an opportunity to support and inform future enhancements to CFA's and FRV's outcomes frameworks in light of its role in developing the broader Emergency Management Outcomes Framework. EMV is well placed to ensure clarity on the scope and objectives of the frameworks, alignment of measures to outcomes, and encourage the adoption of shared, sector-based measures and outcomes where appropriate.

Year Two to Five Plan (Action 3.5)

EMV is coordinating the development of Implementation Plans over the ten year period of fire services reform. With the expiry of the Year One Plan in October 2021, EMV has commenced the planning and development process for the Year Two to Five Plan.

EMV advised that the focus of the Year Two to Five Plan is on embedding and strengthening CFA and FRV capabilities following the establishment of the new model. The Plan will consolidate and reframe Year One Plan actions yet to be completed and identify new actions to continue to support the delivery of reforms.

Stakeholder engagement on the Year Two to Five Plan commenced in June 2021. EMV prepared a stakeholder engagement plan to guide consultation with CFA, FRV and relevant stakeholders including representative bodies, in developing the Year Two to Five Plan.

EMV had also established planning and governance frameworks to guide the development of the Year Two to Five Plan.

The Year One Plan was a comprehensive and complex body of work and provided clear linkages between actions and long-term outcomes. However, FSIM notes there are opportunities to provide greater clarity and certainty to stakeholders in this next iteration of the Implementation Plan.

For example, the governance arrangements and processes for action acquittal should be clarified and confirmed at the outset of the Year Two to Five Plan. The Year One Plan lacked clarity on how, when, and by whom an action should be acquitted and did not specify the objective for each action, constraining an assessment of effectiveness. The planning process for the Year Two to Five Plan should incorporate the confirmation of an end date (or review date), objective, end-product or state, and approving body. The planning process should also seek to establish clear approval and issue resolution pathways for joint actions.

FSIM notes that the nominated lead agency is responsible for collecting and managing the documents or evidence required to acquit an action and agencies should consider this in their planning. There is also an opportunity for the Year Two to Five Plan to outline key dependencies between actions to better understand how delays in one action impact on other, related actions.

The Year One Plan outlined the transactional actions needed to operationalise the Statement's vision for the fire services. FSIM is supportive of a Year Two to Five Plan that provides a pathway to embed these transitional arrangements and gives clear direction on how to further strengthen the complementary fire services model.

¹⁸ Data on performance against the Vision includes operational data that demonstrates agencies' effectiveness in protecting life, property, and the environment from fire and other emergencies.

6

Concluding remarks



Section 6

Concluding remarks

FSIM is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the progress of the fire services reform implementation. This independent oversight provides government and the community with assurance as to the effectiveness of the newly established, complementary fire services model.

In this first year of reform, CFA and FRV achieved significant milestones, with the transition to new reform arrangements well underway. The establishment of FRV and completion of an assessment and corporate re-structure of CFA while maintaining effective fire services to protect the community are major achievements that must be recognised. CFA and FRV acted swiftly to identify and align systems, structures, resources, and capabilities required to provide a complementary service for the community.

To embed the reform, CFA and FRV must finalise the service delivery models and put in place effective project management and consultation processes to do this. They must also address operational inefficiencies resulting from administrative arrangements in year two to ensure that effective service delivery is maintained.

Finalisation of SLDA variations and CFA delegations is critical to finalising roles and responsibilities in the new service delivery model. Specifically, CFA and FRV should agree on roles and responsibilities for structural fire investigation and confirm the reasons for the reductions in legislative compliance for the provision of land use planning advice and develop strategies to address them.

CFA and FRV must finalise a model that provides for sufficient Commander vacancy management and relief to ensure effective and efficient operational management and maintain staff safety and wellbeing.

The \$126 million CFA Capability Initiative supports the Year One Plan objective to ensure to ensure firefighters have the right skills and access to the right resources to do their job and keep them safe. CFA and FRV should formalise and communicate a strategic and integrated approach to capability development where possible to enhance interoperability.

There is an opportunity for both CFA and FRV to agree on and communicate the operational requirements to deliver complementary fire services. A focus on community engagement in developing service delivery approaches will ensure CFA and FRV provide a service that aligns with community expectations.

FSOC will continue to be critical to strategic collaboration between CFA and FRV. The ongoing existence of a joint strategic collaborative forum between CFA and FRV will underpin accountability for delivery, enable CFA and FRV to jointly assess reform progress and impact, and provide for effective communication channels between CFA and FRV.

A safe workplace is fundamentally important to the success of the reform. CFA and FRV will need to promote values and positive culture to improve workplace behaviour. CFA and FRV are encouraged to further reflect on their diversity objectives across

their respective workforces and at a leadership level. FSIM understands the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan will set out requirements for CFA and FRV to review and improve workplace culture more broadly.

The reform requires a strategic approach to the oversight and delivery of the Implementation Plan to ensure that actions meet reform outcomes. A strong governance framework is needed to ensure accountability, provide a pathway for issue resolution, and drive collaboration throughout the period of the reform.

FSIM acknowledges CFA, FRV and EMV, and other emergency service entities for the significant cooperation and active contribution to the monitoring and reporting activities in this first year. This is particularly appreciated given the significant operational pressures that 2020/21 has presented.

Implementing the reform is a complex and challenging task. The commitment and collaboration across CFA, FRV and EMV has facilitated key elements of the reform. Continued respect, support and collaboration will deliver a complementary fire service that best serves the Victorian community.

Appendix



Appendix 1

Analysis and findings for FSIM's 36 prioritised actions

Theme	Objective	Action	Ref
Agency capacity and capability under the new model	An engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision making and feels safe and respected	Continue to consult with volunteers and consider any required improvements to consultative processes and escalation pathways	1.1
		Continue to deliver targeted improvements to volunteer recruitment and retention to ensure CFA maintains capacity to respond to critical incidents	1.2
		Commence delivery of \$22.7 M in volunteer support officers, peer support, counselling programs and brigade administration support	1.3
		Commence delivery of \$3.3 M in crew leader training	1.4
		Commence delivery of \$3.6 M in critical volunteer facing ICT systems	1.5
		Commence delivery of \$7.65M to deliver and assess training new volunteers	1.6
	An effective and productive working relationship with FRV and other emergency services agencies, building on the principle of interoperability	Finalise the transfer of any property, assets, liabilities, rights and obligations from CFA to FRV	1.9, 2.4
		Finalise service level agreements between CFA and FRV and any related party and ensure that the agreements support effective operations	1.10, 2.5
		Provide operational support to the CFA through the secondment model, to ensure CFA can continue to meet its statutory obligations Ensure that all necessary arrangements are in place for FRV staff who are seconded to CFA to ensure that they can perform their functions effectively	2.6, 2.13
		Finalise MoU for provision of corporate functions	1.11, 2.8
	Robust operating structures to enable firefighters to succeed at their roles	Finalise CFA/ CFA CO delegations and authorisations to FRV employees	1.12, 2.9
		Ensure that all necessary arrangements are in place for FRV staff who are seconded to CFA so that they can perform their functions effectively	1.15
	Firefighters have the right skills and access to training and support	Finalise relevant enterprise bargaining agreements	1.16, 2.1
		Commence delivery of \$40.7 M in new CFA volunteers' health and safety initiatives	4.3
	Firefighters have access to the right resources to do their job and keep them safe	Commence delivery of \$48.2 M in new CFA fleet and stations	4.4
		Identify and commence capital works at co-located CFA and FRV stations	4.5
		Finalise the transfer of in-flight infrastructure projects from CFA to FRV and deliver high priority station builds	4.6
	Continuously reviewing and improving structure	Develop the next iteration of the Fire Services Implementation Plan	3.5

Theme	Objective	Action	Ref
Collaboration	An effective and productive working relationship with FRV (etc)	Commence harmonisation of operational procedures across FRV and CFA where practicable and appropriate	1.8, 2.3
		Identify new opportunities to recognise and value the contribution made by both volunteer and career firefighters to delivering fire services (e.g. communications and collaboration)	2.7
	Robust operating procedures to enable firefighters to succeed at their jobs	Harmonise specialist response arrangements which have transferred from CFA; e.g. HAZMAT response, fire investigation, high angle rescue	2.12
	Strong links with the community which enable it to provide a service that reflects community risks	Commence a review of service delivery approaches to ensure they inform and align with community expectations and provide operational efficiency	1.19, 2.18
Workplace culture and diversity	Agencies reflect the diversity of the Victorian community and support multifaceted decision making	Deliver on existing Statement joint initiatives that promote positive cultural change and diversity	3.6
		Work together to understand current diversity in the fire services and consider options to improve diversity in the future	3.7
		Demonstrate progress towards reaching the government's commitment of 400 women career firefighters in FRV by June 2021	3.8
		Support diversity and inclusion in CFA	3.9
Financial sustainability	Financial sustainability	Conduct a financial sustainability assessment of FRV and CFA	5.1
		Develop a Funding Plan that determines the financial requirements of CFA and FRV	5.2

Appendix

Analysis of actions under ‘Agency capacity and capability under the new model’

Objective: An engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision making and feels safe and respected

Action 1.1
Continue to consult with volunteers and consider any required improvements to consultative processes and escalation pathways, between volunteers and the CFA to build a stronger volunteer-based fire service in accordance with the commitment and principles set out in the *Volunteer Charter*

Summary

Volunteers are vital to the fire services and also provide crucial surge capacity during major fire events. However, CFA’s volunteers report feeling under-utilised and undervalued. The outcomes of the *Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) and Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) Service Delivery Forum and the VFBV Welfare and Efficiency Survey*, have provided meaningful insights on volunteer engagement and identified the key areas of concern.

A CFA’s reform objective is to foster a highly engaged volunteer workforce actively involved in decisions, driving CFA forward as a progressive, volunteer-based emergency service agency.

CFA’s commitment to volunteers is outlined in the *Volunteer Charter*, an agreement between the State of Victoria, CFA and VFBV on behalf of volunteers.

CFA recognises its volunteers seek to be involved and make contributions to their community. Over the last 12 months of the reform, CFA developed CFA’s Members Online (intranet) to provide volunteers a platform to voice their ideas via “Your Say CFA”, conducted an online consultation of its organisational realignment in June 2021, and directly engaged with brigades on developing a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Assessment Pilot Program.

CFA has committed to delivering a Volunteer Engagement Plan by October 2021. This plan will outline CFA’s approach to engaging its diverse volunteer base, providing support, and including volunteers in decision-making. CFA continues partnering with volunteers and the volunteer representatives to ensure tools, systems, and resources are designed and developed to better support new members and improve recruitment processes. CFA is also collaborating with the VFBV Joint Consultative Volunteerism Committee to improve its volunteer recruitment and retention.

Finding

FSIM notes CFA’s considerable program of work to understand the challenges and opportunities to improve volunteer engagement and will continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this.

Action 1.2
Continue to deliver targeted improvements to volunteer recruitment and retention to ensure CFA maintains capacity to respond to critical incidents

Summary

To maintain capacity to respond to critical fire and emergency incidents, CFA needs continuous and targeted improvements to volunteer recruitment and retention. This will contribute to CFA achieving the reform objective of an engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision making and feels safe and respected.

As at 30 June 2021 CFA has 54,194 total volunteers, which includes 29,633 operational and 24,561 support volunteers, with 63 per cent of total volunteers aged 45 and above, 46 per cent of total volunteers aged 55 and above, and 26 per cent of total volunteers aged 65 and above¹⁹.

CFA has developed a tool, the Baseline Capability Profiling Application (BCPA), to provide comprehensive data for brigades, districts and regions to identify specific skills, skill-gaps, turnouts, and member utilisation values. There is an opportunity for CFA to further clarify the minimum number of volunteers needed to address gaps in capacity and capability to then inform future recruitment targets. A broadened understanding would enable CFA to channel resources efficiently and provide greater assurance that its workforce has the capacity and capability to meet community needs.

¹⁹ VFBV volunteer data for CFA Quarter 4 2021 and trends

Since 1 July 2020, CFA made considerable progress in improving and supporting its volunteer recruitment and retention, including the development of Volunteer Hub, Volunteer Induction Program, Family Guide Package, and Knowledge Sharing Platform. CFA is presently working in partnership with volunteers and volunteer representatives in developing tools and systems to better support new members and improve the volunteer recruitment process. CFA uses the VFBV *Volunteer Welfare and Efficiency Survey* to report and measure on trends in improving volunteer engagement and wellbeing.

CFA's ageing volunteer workforce profile poses a long-term risk to the organisation if the appropriate recruitment and retention mechanisms are not in place to maintain a viable volunteer workforce. CFA acknowledges challenges with rural decline and an ageing membership. CFA is currently developing a Flexible Volunteering Project to provide brigades with a flexible and contemporary volunteering model and resources to increase volunteer capacity and capability. The recently established Young Adults Advisory Committee will focus on how younger people (18–30-year-old) like to volunteer and how to connect younger people with CFA and the work they do.

CFA conducts volunteer exit surveys, and this feedback provides the organisation with valuable insights into the prevalence or development of emerging trends and risks. This data informs a targeted response to volunteer turnover and supports future recruitment approaches.

Findings

FSIM acknowledges the CFA leadership's commitment to improve volunteer recruitment and retention and the progress that has been made to date.

Given the volunteer recruitment and support programs are currently still either at early implementation stage or are yet to be implemented, FSIM will continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of CFA's approaches to recruit and retain volunteers going forward.

Action 1.3 Commence delivery of \$22.7 million in volunteer support officers, peer support, counselling programs and brigade administration support, (part of the \$126 million CFA capacity initiative), including consultation with volunteers

Summary

CFA established a strategic approach to developing a volunteer support capacity program, the Volunteer Support Program (VSP), funded by the \$22.7 million government funding over a five year period, from FY 2020–21 to FY 2024–25. The VSP will contribute towards the reform objective of an engaged volunteer workforce that feels safe and respected.

As of 30 June 2021, CFA had experienced significant delays in scoping the VSP. The initial scoping of the VSP was conducted by an internal CFA working group, working with DCOs to identify gaps in existing support services and areas for improvement. As at 30 June 2021, CFA had identified four indicative initiatives to help achieve its long-term success measure of an engaged and supported volunteer workforce.

Subsequently, CFA advised FSIM, after further evaluation, four new initiatives were shortlisted under the VSP. They are:

CFA Pocket Book

The android and iOS application allows CFA members the ability to access operational doctrine and procedures when they need it in the field, and without the need for internet connectivity.

Brigade Capability Review

This project extends the current scope of the Brigade Capability Review post the 2020–21 pilots to implement and embed the review process across all brigades. The Annual Brigade Review and BCPA were designed to mitigate the limitations identified through inspections as legislated under section 29 of the CFA Act.

Volunteer workwear

The project aims to expand the provision for volunteer workwear from 10,000 to 30,000 sets (20,000 additional sets).

Digital stores

The project aims to expand the current digitisation of a single-level cell flash storage for structural ensemble to include entire end-to-end electronic ordering system for brigades and enables easy access to stored equipment.

Findings

FSIM notes that this action is in the early stages of development. FSIM will revisit in the next progress report.

FSIM will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of CFA in developing and implementing programs to improve volunteer support, including relevant cost/benefit analyses.

Action 1.4
Commence delivery of \$3.3 million in crew leader training, (part of the \$126 million CFA capability initiatives), including consultation with volunteers

Summary

Crew leaders from the primary brigade assume control of the fire and control all response until relieved or the fire is deemed safe. Strike team leaders lead a crew of four to five tankers and a command vehicle and represent the front line of attack in fighting big grass and bushfires.

As at 30 June 2021, CFA has 8,243 trained and operational crew leaders across the state. CFA is working to improve its Crew Leader Training Program by adopting a strategic approach to develop and update the capability of crew and strike team leaders in performing critical roles. In recognising the important of crew and strike team leader roles, CFA invested \$3.3 million five-year government funding to the following programs:

Face-to-Face Crew Leader Training Program

This is a face-to-face crew leader training program, targeting CFA volunteers who do not have adequate access to internet and computer services.

Crew Leader and Strike Team Leader Development Program

This program aims to enhance the skills and capability of CFA members in performing these critical roles, including real-life exercises, targeted coaching, and mentoring opportunities. CFA plans to have 15,000 crew leaders and 2,500 strike team leaders participate in this development program over the four-year period to FY 2024–25, subject to the prevalence of any Public Health Orders restricting the delivery of these programs during this period.

FSIM notes CFA identifies and confirms volunteers' skills and training needs through undertaking the Brigade Operational Skills Profiles (BOSP) review and brigade inspections as legislated under section 29 of the CFA Act. The July 2021 BOSP Report noted that CFA has a shortage of 1,129 crew leaders. The report also provided CFA with a baseline of the crew and strike team leader skills gaps that needs to be addressed.

CFA plans to evaluate ongoing effectiveness of the new training programs and identify opportunities for future training developments based on feedbacks obtained from participating volunteers and the mandated Victoria Education and Training Regulator annual learner survey. CFA would also expect to see an increase in number of crew leaders endorsed by District ACFO.

Throughout FY 2020–21, COVID-19 continued as a source of uncertainty and disruption for the new Face-to-Face Crew Leader Training Program. CFA's capacity to deliver this training is dependent on the availability of both volunteer and FRV seconded training instructors. CFA is presently working to increase the number of volunteer instructors to provide increased capacity to schedule trainings at times best suited to volunteers and within public health regulations and response levels.

With Victoria continuing to experience lockdowns, CFA has moved to a locally led identification of essential training requirements. At the beginning of each lockdown, each District ACFO assesses the current capability and skill maintenance gap within their districts to ensure firefighters are supported to attain and retain peak competencies.

Findings

FSIM acknowledges that CFA has established a strategic approach to develop crew and strike team leader training programs and has identified the number of crew and strike team leaders that require training, to maintain overall brigade capability.

FSIM notes that this action is in the early stages of development and will revisit in the next progress report to consider the effectiveness of the programs.

Action 1.5
Commence delivery of \$3.6 million in critical volunteer facing ICT systems, (part of the \$126 million CFA capability initiatives), including consultation with volunteers

Summary

CFA legacy information communications and technology (ICT) and online content management systems and processes are complex, difficult to use, expensive to maintain, and regularly impacted by technical issues such as the instability of the platform, software defects, and system limitations.

These challenges were particularly evident for CFA volunteers and members of the community to readily access CFA data and systems, including for donations, and navigating their way for important early fire warning information at a local brigade and community level. Not all brigades currently have reliable internet services which has further constrained members ability to remain connected and access training and policy materials at the station.

CFA allocated \$3.6 million to develop and upgrade three critical ICT infrastructure projects to better support volunteers and members of the community. These investments comprise the Customer Relationship Management System (CRM), Content Management System internet and intranet refresh (CMS), and Connected Brigade Project (CBP).

Customer Relationship Management System (CRM)

The CRM was fully delivered on 9 June 2021. The CRM and the integrated MyCFA²⁰ database (with approximately 30,000 Victorian subscribers) enables CFA brigades to obtain more detailed information about households, build a better understanding of community risk, and support effective engagement within their community in managing fire emergency risks.

Content Management System internet and intranet refresh (CMS)

The CMS external website was implemented on 16 June 2021, providing CFA with a reliable platform for delivering critical safety information. Visitors to CFA's website are now able to access localised brigade contacts and events. The next phase of the CMS project will provide a platform for 'Members Online' to improve the search functionality and enable volunteers to obtain up-to-date information.

Connected Brigade Project (CBP)

CFA has engaged Telstra to install secure and standard internet services across all 1,050 sites. The secured internet connections will support online training and improve communication between brigades, regions, districts, and headquarters.

The project was initially scheduled to be completed by March 2021 however, COVID-19 restrictions and modem specification issues have resulted in overall delays in delivering the project.

The CFA June 2021 Monthly Progress Report noted that the installation of secured internet services at 732 sites was completed, with the remaining 318 sites now due for completion by the end of 2021. CFA will continue to work with Telstra to address any ongoing risks.

Findings

FSIM acknowledges CFA's commitment to enhance and develop ICT infrastructure that improves online training and development opportunities, supports brigade administration and manages services delivery risks.

FSIM acknowledges CFA's commitment to progressing initiatives that invest in new communication technology and upgrade internet connectivity to better support volunteers.

FSIM considers this action is progressing and will revisit in the next progress report.

Action 1.6 Commence delivery of \$7.65 million to deliver and assess training new volunteers, (part of announced \$126 million CFA capability initiatives), including consultation with volunteers

Summary

Training is critical for new volunteer firefighters given the dangerous nature of the work they are involved in when responding to fire and other emergency incidents. CFA is committed to train all new volunteers to meet a minimum competency standard for operational deployment.

With the \$7.65 million government funding, CFA has enhanced its minimum competency standard, replacing the minimum skills Wildfire Course with a new General Firefighter training program (GFF program) in April 2021. With this investment, CFA aims to train 2,000 new operational members per year to 2024 and beyond.

To meet this target over a four-year period, CFA has developed a project plan that covers:

- a program to improve the basic safety of all firefighters on the fireground and ensure a base level of skills with pump operation, map reading, working as part of a team, and other identified skillsets;
- training of an additional 240 qualified and endorsed trainers and assessors to deliver virtual classroom trainings; and
- provision of new personal protective clothing (PPC) to 4,000 new members. This will ensure volunteers have access to PPC at the time of their training thus reducing any time between finishing their training and being able to respond to an incident.

As at 30 June 2021, 510 new volunteers have successfully completed the new training program throughout FY 2020–21. An additional 1,837 new volunteers are currently working their way through the program.

The GFF program risk assessment has identified that the successful rollout of the program requires significant improvement in CFA's ICT technology and internet connectivity to facilitate training, assessment, and information sharing across brigades. Other risks include COVID-19 restrictions constraining brigades' training, particularly the face-to-face components of the program, and the reduced number of new operational volunteers joining CFA following COVID-19.

²⁰ MyCFA is an external CFA website where communities can sign in to get local information on how to plan and prepare for fires and other emergencies in their areas.

In June 2021, CFA commissioned the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) to perform an independent peer review of trainings at CFA. The review will inform CFA's training frameworks and structures to align with best practices for volunteer-based emergency services.

CFA advised that an action plan will be developed in FY 2021–22 to enhance its training framework and volunteer training experience, based on AFAC's recommendations.

Findings

FSIM recognises CFA's commitment to develop future strategies to build capacity and capability of volunteers, informed by the AFAC report.

FSIM acknowledges the successful delivery of the new training program and notes that CFA is managing the dependencies of the program, including the ICT technology risk as identified.

FSIM will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of CFA training for new volunteers in the next progress report.

Objective: An effective and productive working relationship with FRV and other emergency services agencies, building on the principle of interoperability

Actions 1.9 and 2.4 Finalise the transfer of any property, assets, liabilities, rights and obligations from CFA to FRV

Summary

Pursuant to section 105 of the FRV Act, EMV prepared a Transfer Strategy to transfer CFA's property, rights, liabilities, and obligations in the co-located fire stations to FRV. The Strategy separates the transfer of items into five tranches with their respective allocation statements, transfer statements or agreements. They are:

Tranche One

Transfer of 37²¹ co-located stations and associated appliance from CFA to FRV, including the financial of assets transferred (Allocation Statement Number One (No 1)).

Tranche Two

Transfer of all employee liabilities (annual leave, long service leave and Operational Performance Improvement Initiatives claims) related to CFA employees transferred to FRV. Transfer of cash associated with the employee liabilities and the 350 Firefighter Program (P350) from CFA to FRV.

Tranche Three

Transfer of P350 In-flight capital projects from CFA to FRV, including the replacement station at Bendigo, a new career firefighter station at Lara, a co-located station at Craigieburn, and three Breathing Apparatus Vans for Frankston, Corio and Ballarat stations (Allocation Statement Number Two (No 2)).

Tranche Four

Transfer of equipment at 37 stations under Tranche One and Craigieburn (training centre) from CFA to FRV.

Tranche Five

Transfer of legal rights and contingent liabilities in relation to employees transferred under section 102 and section 103 of the FRV Act, and tools of trade (Allocation Statement Number Three (No 3)).

Tranches One, Two and Three were delivered in full prior to 30 June 2021. The remaining two Tranches (Four and Five) have experienced delays as outlined below.

Tranche Four

Tenancy Agreement and Schedules

As at 30 June 2021, the Lease and Licensing Agreement (Tenancy Agreement) for 33²² co-located stations was still pending. Whilst the Tenancy Agreement is not a deliverable of Tranche Four, nor is Tranche Four dependent on the Tenancy Agreement, an executed Tenancy Agreement would simplify the terms of Tranche Four. Completion of Tranche Four has therefore been delayed pending finalisation of the Tenancy Agreement. The Tenancy Agreement states that CFA will continue to operate from the co-located stations with FRV.

²¹ 37 formerly integrated and career-only CFA stations transferred to FRV under Tranche One. Lara, will remain as a volunteer station and the new station to be built at Lara will be a stand-alone FRV station.

²² Four co-located stations are not included in the schedules to the Tenancy agreement because Eltham, Latrobe West and Lucas are now stand-alone FRV stations, and Hoppers Crossing is now a stand-alone CFA station.

Each co-located station has its own schedule which forms part of the Tenancy Agreement. These schedules and the overarching Tenancy Agreement will determine how volunteers use and access facilities at co-located stations.

Prior to the establishment of FRV, initial discussions relating to the Tenancy Agreement were held between CFA and UFU Victoria, facilitated by EMV. Subsequent to FRV being established, discussions on the Tenancy Agreement were held between CFA and FRV, facilitated by EMV.

DJCS understood that there was agreement on the Tenancy Agreement. The Tenancy Agreement was subsequently circulated for execution. CFA executed the Tenancy Agreement on 30 April 2021. However, FRV identified changes that resulted in the need, consistent with FRV's industrial obligations, for the consultation process to recommence. As of 30 June 2021, finalisation of the Tenancy Agreement has continued.

FRV consultation process – Tenancy Agreement

FSIM notes that FRV is required by its industrial agreements to complete consultation with UFU Victoria.

FSIM notes that FRV has continued its consultation with UFU Victoria, and UFU Victoria has raised issues with schedules supporting the Tenancy Agreement. FSIM understands that FRV and the UFU Victoria continue to work through the issues raised by the union and a final outcome has not been reached.

FSIM has been advised that once CFA receives formal correspondence on the outcome of FRV's consultation with the UFU Victoria, subject to any request for further changes, CFA may need to consult further with CFA volunteers and the VFBV, particularly

volunteers having appropriate and agreed access to the facilities at the co-located stations and resolving feedback from the UFU Victoria.

As at 30 June 2021, the industrial consultation had not achieved a final outcome. In order for stakeholders to understand and address the issues to agree and finalise the tenancy arrangements, it is important that FRV provides CFA and EMV with clear and timely updates on the UFU Victoria's feedback. FSIM notes that subject to any proposed changes, CFA may need to consult further with its members and the VFBV before agreement can be reached on any amendments.

CFA service delivery capacity and volunteer engagement – Tenancy Agreement

The Tenancy Agreement and schedules have presented challenges for CFA given the agreed arrangements potentially impacting its service delivery capacity and volunteer morale. Prior to CFA signing the agreement in April 2021, volunteers raised concerns with the draft Tenancy Agreement to their chain of command. These concerns included the proposed limited space allocated for CFA volunteers, restrictions on permitted use of space and facilities with the co-located premises, and restrictions on adequate carparking at the co-located stations.

FSIM understands that these restrictions could hinder CFA's ability to respond to emergencies in a timely manner. CFA also advised that the conditions of the Tenancy Agreement remain a contentious issue impacting service delivery and volunteer morale.

CFA has advised that they have attempted to resolve these issues on behalf of volunteers, advising FRV that the conditions of the Tenancy Agreement potentially constrain CFA's ability to deliver services effectively at co-located stations and recruit new volunteers.

Tranche Five

Contingent liabilities

One aspect of Tranche Five is based on section 105 of the FRV Act and the Minister's Direction No 5 dated 30 December 2020. The Minister's Direction directed CFA to give to the Minister:

A statement (an allocation statement) that [...]:

- a. *sets out the property, rights, liabilities or obligations of the Country Fire Authority that are to be allocated to Fire Rescue Victoria, which must be property, rights, liabilities or obligations of the Country Fire Authority that relate to:*
 - i. *a liability of the Country Fire Authority; or*
 - ii. *an employee transferred under section 102 of the Act, on or before the Statement Date;*
- b. *identifies the location of any such property of the Country Fire Authority and identifies the rights, liabilities and obligations; and*
- c. *allocates that property and those rights, liabilities or obligations to Fire Rescue Victoria.*

This allocation statement is known as Allocation Statement No 3.

FSIM is advised that neither the FRV Act nor the Ministerial Direction Number Five cover the transfer of legal rights and contingent liabilities for section 103 transferred employees. However, Tranche Five does encompass the transfer of legal rights and contingent liabilities in relation to employees transferred under section 103 of the FRV Act and tools of trade.

FSIM has been advised that in the absence of a legislative mechanism, but to reflect Fire Services Reform as a machinery of government change and to ensure consistency between section 102 and section 103 transferred employees, the parties are negotiating another mechanism for the liabilities and obligations relating to section 103 transferred employees to be transferred to FRV.

The parties propose to achieve this by way of an indemnification agreement whereby FRV would indemnify CFA for liabilities and obligations relating to employees who had transferred from CFA pursuant to section 103 of the FRV Act. The terms of the indemnification agreement are to be agreed between CFA and FRV and should closely reflect Allocation Statement No 3.

The transfer of tools of trade has otherwise been dealt with by agreement of CFA and FRV through a Transfer Statement dated 28 February 2021 pursuant to a request by the then Minister for Police and Emergency Services dated 30 December 2020.

As at 30 June 2021, CFA and FRV have not finalised either Allocation Statement No 3 or a deed of agreement to indemnify CFA. This has led to overall delays in completing Tranche Five of the Transfer Strategy.

During the reporting period, CFA and FRV faced challenges in resolving differences regarding the scope and classes of liabilities and obligations relating to section 102 employees and properties transferred under the proposed allocation statement.

They also faced challenges resolving the nature of the liabilities of CFA which would be indemnified by FRV and the form of the proposed agreement.

To resolve these challenges, in June 2021, DJCS (through EMV) sought independent legal advice from the Crown Counsel. Allocation Statement No 3 is a matter between CFA and the Minister. Finalisation of an indemnification agreement is a matter between CFA and FRV. FSIM understands that CFA and FRV will finalise these documents once legal advice is received from the Crown Counsel.

This is a critical issue for the agencies to settle as there may be significant costs associated with any claims and damages arising from activities prior to 1 July 2020. Responsibility for these obligations, liabilities and associated costs must be clarified in the allocation statement and documented in the separate indemnification agreement.

FSIM understands that DJCS (through EMV) continues to work with both CFA and FRV to settle responsibility for these rights, obligations, liabilities and associated costs.

Findings

FSIM acknowledges that CFA and FRV faced significant challenges in progressing the asset transfer over the first 12 months of the reform, with direct impacts on CFA's and FRV's financial sustainability and operational capability and capacity.

In recognising these challenges, FSIM supports CFA, FRV and EMV continue to resolve the remaining issues of Tenancy Agreement and reach an agreed position of legal rights and contingent liabilities for section 102 employees and properties transferred from CFA to FRV. It is important that CFA, FRV and EMV agree on an effective consultation approach to collaborate and share information effectively across the agencies to resolve remaining issues and agree on further changes. FSIM will revisit this action in the next reporting period.

Actions 1.10 and 2.5

Finalise service level agreements between CFA and FRV and any related party and ensure that the agreements support effective operations for provision of operational support and management services

Summary

The services to be provided CFA and FRV, as outlined in the SLDAs to the OOSA signed on 30 June 2020 led to complex and unanticipated legislative, systems, process, and human resource challenges.

There are two SLDAs which detail the services CFA and FRV will provide for the other. Service transition to FRV as outlined in the SLDA was challenging where service delivery is governed by the CFA Act and *CFA Regulations 2014*, and other Acts and Regulations that provide powers and authorities to the CFA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and/or the CO and/or the CFA Board. Not all of CFA's power and authority under the various Acts and Legislations can be delegated to FRV employees, and where power and authority cannot be delegated, CFA can be assisted to deliver those services provided approval remains with CFA. As at 30 June 2021, these challenges were evident for:

- building codes, audits, inspection, and compliance services;
- dangerous goods services;
- land use planning.

There was a lack of role clarity for structural fire investigation service delivery because CFA and FRV had different interpretations of the operating model for this service as outlined in the SLDA.

To maintain service delivery, CFA and FRV developed alternative interim administrative and ancillary arrangements like MoUs, schedules, and interim work instructions for these services. The endorsement and implementation status of these arrangements was complex and, in some cases, incomplete. CFA and FRV committed to review the operation and effectiveness of the OOSA/SLDAs after 12 months. As of 30 June 2021, there was a lack of clarity between CFA and FRV about the process and timelines for review of the SLDAs.

CFA and FRV experienced efficiency and resource impacts resulting from the interim arrangements and there were some service delivery impacts. For example, CFA advises that where CFA is supported by FRV to provide service delivery for those services where CFA's authority and powers have not been delegated to FRV employees, CFA is required to authorise and approve work completed by FRV. Where CFA has delegated authority and powers to FRV to provide services on CFA's behalf, CFA does not need to approve FRV's work, however legislative liability remains with CFA and CFA undertakes quality assurance to ensure compliance with its legislative obligations. Where CFA exercised approval and/or quality assurance over FRV work, CFA and FRV developed systems and processes to maintain service delivery. However, FRV report that in some instances, there were insufficient staff levels for service delivery.

Building codes, audits, inspection, and compliance services (BAIC)

FRV provided these services across Victoria, including in the CAoV in accordance with the SLDA. As FRV employees do not have delegated authority and powers to deliver these services in the CAoV, reports prepared by FRV underwent quality assurance and approval by CFA.

This led to interim processes being developed, which were resource intensive, less efficient, and resulted in report delays. While service delivery was not significantly impacted, it will be important that CFA and FRV clarify and communicate service delivery roles and responsibilities. CFA will need to identify powers and authority appropriate to be delegated and progress these delegations. Where delegations are made, CFA and FRV will need to agree a service delivery model that maintains effective and efficient service delivery, noting that CFA will retain statutory and liability responsibility even where delegations are made.

Dangerous goods services

Dangerous goods service provision was challenging for CFA and FRV. Under the SLDA, upon request of the CO, FRV provides dangerous goods services for CFA in the CAoV. However, CFA has not delegated authority and powers to FRV employees to undertake this work on CFA's behalf, so interim processes were established to enable CFA to undertake quality assurance and approve reports prepared by FRV. These processes resulted in pressures on both agencies, and report delays. FRV believes it does not have adequate specialist resources, as most of the relevant staff who transferred to FRV from CFA were not trained in this area and the current work scope is broader than anticipated. As noted with BAIC services above, CFA and FRV will need to agree on clear and efficient processes to maintain effective service delivery. CFA will need to identify powers that are appropriate to be delegated and progress these delegations. Where delegations are made, CFA and FRV will need to agree a service delivery model that maintains effective and efficient service delivery, noting that CFA will retain statutory and liability responsibility even where delegations are made.

Structural fire investigation arrangements

The structural fire investigation arrangements between CFA and FRV presented challenges in the first 8 months of the reform. As at 30 June 2021, CFA and FRV had not fully reached agreement on each agency's structural fire investigation roles and responsibilities. Both agencies continued to provide these services without a consistent, agreed approach to service delivery. Agreement on roles and responsibilities will enable this service to be effectively resourced.

Land use planning services

The delivery of land use planning services presented complex challenges for the agencies. In the SLDA, as the referral authority under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, CFA was to provide land use planning services in the CAoV on behalf of FRV where there is a Bushfire Management Overlay in FRV fire district. This means where CFA was specified as a referral authority, they would continue to provide expert advice and assessments if a proposed development or sub-division satisfies the Victorian Planning Provisions objectives.

CFA advises that it was required by Ministerial Direction to transfer 171 professional, technical and administrative (PTA) positions to FRV and consequently transferred 22 PTA Fire Safety Officers with specialist expertise in land use planning services to FRV. This meant CFA did not retain capacity and capability to deliver land use planning services, despite being the referral authority for ninety percent of applications. To address this service gap, the agencies agreed an interim arrangement, with FRV performing ancillary and administrative functions for land use planning on behalf of CFA.

These services are referred to as 'administrative and ancillary' because in essence, the service provided by FRV is assisting CFA to meet its statutory requirements and does not meet the 'operational support' definition in the CFA/UFU Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement 2016, nor associated policy documents as of 1 January 2020. In practice, FRV provided expert advice and assessments on all proposed development or sub-division required under the Victorian Planning Provisions. Senior CFA staff with expertise and accountability for land use planning services remained with CFA and provided quality assurance, approval and authorisation of the advice and products prepared by FRV for the CAoV.

FRV staff morale has been impacted because staff providing land use planning services are largely ex-CFA staff whose work is now subject to quality assurance and approval by CFA. In addition, 90 per cent of land use planning applications are in the CAoV and from 2016 to 2020 there was a 1,667 increase (approximately five percent annual increase) in the number of land use planning referrals. FRV advised that it may not have sufficient resources to respond to application increases, and during the reporting period FRV employed a further three relevant staff to meet demand.

These operational inefficiencies have impacted the communities service experience and resulted in reductions in legislative compliance (e.g. time taken to approve applications). FRV attributes increased time delays to double handling of reports where CFA exercises quality assurance, staff vacancies, and systems issues.

FSIM understands that the agencies have not agreed to transfer the function of land use planning services from CFA to FRV or amend the SLDA. Given the reductions in legislative compliance, CFA and FRV may wish to undertake analysis to confirm the reasons for these reductions and develop strategies to address them.

Findings

CFA and FRV have collaborated to implement the intent of the reform and address a range of administrative, operational, and human resource challenges in the first 12 months.

To embed the reform, CFA and FRV must finalise and communicate the service delivery models and put in place project management and oversight processes to do this.

Finalisation of SLDA variations and CFA delegations is critical to confirm roles and responsibilities in the new service delivery model. CFA and FRV must agree on the finalisation, authorisation and endorsement environment on issues requiring joint action.

CFA must identify powers and authority that are appropriate to be delegated and progress these delegations to enable FRV to provide services as per the SLDA, otherwise consideration should be given to amending the SLDA to accurately reflect responsibilities.

CFA and FRV must address operational inefficiencies resulting from administrative arrangements in year two to maintain effective service delivery.

CFA and FRV must agree on roles and responsibilities for fire investigation, which will enable these services to be efficiently resourced.

Action 2.6
Provide operational support to the CFA through the secondment model, to ensure CFA can continue to meet its statutory obligations

Actions 2.13 and 1.15
Ensure that all necessary arrangements are in place for FRV staff who are seconded to CFA to ensure that they can perform their functions effectively

Summary

Secondments from FRV to CFA are provided under the OOSA, executed on 30 June 2020. It states that FRV will provide operational support to CFA through secondment arrangements and Commander relief. A Secondment Agreement was made between the agencies on 31 October 2020. It included five classifications of FRV operational staff to be seconded to CFA: ACFO, Commanders, Instructors, Practice Areas for Drills (PAD) Supervisors, and PAD Operators. On 1 July 2020, 1,658 career staff from CFA were transferred to FRV, with 233 FRV staff then seconded back to CFA. The majority of secondees are former CFA staff.

CFA and FRV faced considerable systems, process, and human resource challenges with the secondment arrangements. They agreed supplementary instruments were needed to fully operationalise the intent of the agreement by 30 June 2021. Following FRV industrial consultation, CFA is revising the draft supplementary instruments.

CFA Commander rank vacancies in Victoria have been a long-standing issue²³. Post 1 July 2020, CFA advises these issues continued with the agencies experiencing significant challenges in managing Commander relief arrangements in addition to substantive vacancies. Several Commander positions were vacant over the reporting period. The Secondment Agreement provided for 45 ACFO positions and 96 Commanders positions to be seconded to CFA.

Throughout the reporting period, Commander vacancies fluctuated. At 30 June 2021, CFA had two ACFO vacancies and approximately 10 substantive Commander vacancies, with FRV endeavouring to backfill vacancies where possible. FRV conducted many Expression of Interests (EOI) for permanent Commander roles at rank, and then as a promotion opportunity to attempt to fill these roles. In the reporting period, FSIM did not investigate why so many EOIs were required to fill these vacancies. FRV made 18 permanent Commander appointments during the reporting period but were unable to provide any continuous relief for six positions.

New recruitment and induction processes meant it took longer to recruit and commence appointments. Though, CFA and FRV have, with agreement from the industrial body, implemented temporary changes to expedite the appointment process like reducing the time that applications were open. CFA and FRV used manual processes to ensure timely processing of secondees' wages,

entitlements, and CFA secondment requests. At times, short relief periods meant secondments finished before requests were formally approved, and secondees experienced systems access issues as a result. The agencies collaborate to manually manage Commander relief requirements, which is resource intensive.

In some instances, FRV provided short-term secondments to CFA to fill vacant roles. While this model provided CFA with some short-term capacity, it did not enable all vacant positions to be filled and meant CFA and FRV at times had to invest additional resources in appointing and training secondees.

Some CFA volunteers reported experiencing a high-level of Commander leadership turnover resulting in reduced operational support, and FRV had to backfill staff seconded on higher duties.

CFA and FRV had to consider how to backfill Commander annual, sick, and long service leave, particularly with recent annual leave entitlement increases and as many former CFA Commanders, now seconded back to CFA, had accrued significant annual leave. Fourteen out of 28 previous CFA Commander relievers were seconded back to CFA in areas where there weren't integrated/career brigades, while FRV retained 14 Commander relievers (creating a 'reliever pool') to relieve FRV Commanders or to provide CFA with Commander relief through secondment. CFA reported that 16 per cent of required Commander relief was unrelieved from 19 October 2020

to 4 July 2021. The most significant impact was in District 10, where 65 per cent of required Commander relief hours were unrelieved. When developing the Agreement, it does not appear that CFA and FRV undertook a comprehensive assessment of Commander relief requirements that considered all risks and impacts, including leave entitlements.

Where CFA and FRV are unable to agree on secondment approaches, these are reported to the Minister. To minimise further risks, it is critical CFA and FRV finalise a model that provides for sufficient vacancy management and Commander relief to ensure effective and efficient operational management, maintain staff safety and wellbeing, and avoid further Commander annual leave accrual. This may require comprehensive modelling of Commander relief requirements.

²³ CFA notes that pre reform, it did not identify the need to track unrelieved hours as management of unrelieved hours were subject to clauses in the CFA Operational Staff 2010 Enterprise Agreement. CFA started tracking unrelieved Commander hours in the second quarter of year one. In the absence of baseline information pre-reform, FSIM is unable to verify the extent of any increase in unrelieved hours or establish a baseline of vacancies.

Case Study

Commander Vacancy Impacts

CFA undertook a case study on its South-West region to show impacts of Commander vacancies, insufficient relief, and short-term secondments. The South-West region was selected as it experienced a 12.8 per cent Commander service delivery reduction over the reporting period, comparable to the state average. The case study showed that Commander vacancies and insufficient relief significantly increased the ACFOs workload in several districts, as they assumed responsibilities for activities like conducting brigade elections, event attendance, recruitment, vehicle fault reports, and approvals, like grants and store requests. CFA also highlighted high stress levels of operational secondees from the additional workload resulting from unfilled vacancies and a lack of relief.

The case study showed that preparedness activities were impacted by Commander vacancies, insufficient relief, and short-term secondments. In some districts, pre-season checks like development of Preparedness Matrices and Local Response Plans were incomplete or delayed, and there were delays in the completion of pre-incident plans in brigades without filled Commander roles.

There were also significant impacts on stakeholder and partnership meetings and relationships. Several districts reported that vacancies meant they were unable to attend meetings like the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee, shire safety meetings and pre-season liaison meetings, or that the short-term nature of some secondment arrangements meant it was difficult to contribute meaningfully in these forums. The North-East region reported that these vacancies impacted pre-season briefings and the preparation, training and mentoring of PTA staff.

A further impact of the Commander vacancies and insufficient relief has been on hazard reporting. The South-West case study showed three out of four districts experienced delays in meeting statutory requirements for injury and hazard reporting. Where hazards are identified, this needs to be investigated by the Commander. In absence of a dedicated Commander, the ACFO or a Commander from another area will investigate. CFA reported that this has seen delays in statutory compliance.

Findings

FSIM notes that CFA and FRV faced considerable systems, process, and human resource challenges in implementing the Agreement, including filling ACFO and Commander vacancies, and providing Commander relief to cover planned annual and long-service leave, and unanticipated sick leave.

The Secondment Agreement notes that 'the parties will ensure that there is no reduction to the operational and management support, including administrative, training, community safety and fire safety support to CFA and its volunteers' but in regard to the management of Commander vacancies and relief, this has not been the case. When developing the Commander relief secondment model, it does not appear that CFA and FRV undertook a comprehensive needs analysis of Commander relief requirements, and this should be addressed as part of the agreement's supplementary arrangements.

FSIM acknowledges that CFA and FRV have discussed the ACFO and Commander vacancy and relief issues through various meetings throughout the reporting period, however vacancies remain, and relief arrangements remain unresolved. If not resolved, ongoing vacancy and relief issues will continue to impact CFA preparedness activities.

CFA and FRV must finalise a model that provides for sufficient vacancy management and Commander relief to ensure effective and efficient operational management, maintain staff safety and wellbeing, and avoid further Commander annual leave accrual. This may require comprehensive modelling of Commander relief requirements.

CFA and FRV should ensure that there is a strong governance framework with agreed timelines to manage the development of the supplementary instruments for the Secondment Agreement and include resolution process where CFA and FRV do not agree.

Given the impact that ongoing vacancies, unrelieved positions and revolving leadership can have on volunteer and staff confidence, morale and engagement in district led and district informed decision making, the FSIM will continue to observe this issue for the remainder of year one implementation and into year two.

Actions 1.11 and 2.8 Finalise MoU for provision of corporate functions

Summary

The corporate services transitional arrangements MoU was agreed in principle. It was due to be executed in December 2020 but remains unexecuted because of delays resulting from FRV's internal review process. A review of the MoU development process may highlight opportunities for more efficient collaboration to avoid future delays.

Despite this delay, CFA and FRV collaborated to apply the draft MoU in good faith. During the reporting period, the transition and alignment of corporate service functions started. CFA and FRV delivered a large volume of work during this time, though it is unclear if they agree on which corporate services are now currently operating as intended.

As the MoU required the transition and alignment of services by 1 July 2021, CFA and FRV now need to amend the completion dates. FSIM understands that negotiations are underway to extend the MoU until December 2021. CFA and FRV advised that they will consider developing an appropriate framework, including governance oversight, to support longer term arrangements.

The corporate services to be transitioned and aligned between CFA and FRV were jointly developed and informed by the *Department of Treasury and Finance – Machinery of Government Changes - VPS Operating Manual* and in consultation with CFA and FRV subject matter experts. The 16 corporate services in the MoU are as follows:

1. Information exchange
2. Human resources and payroll
3. Workcover
4. Employee support services
5. Media and communications
6. Workplace disputes and grievances
7. Workplace behaviour and public complaints
8. Finance
9. Legal
10. Freedom of information (FOI)
11. Business assurance
12. Insurance – management of Journey Accident Claims
13. Contract and procurement
14. Program and project management
15. Property services
16. Information technology (IT)

CFA and FRV experienced challenges in transitioning and aligning their corporate functions during the first 12 months of the reform. The challenges are largely a product of the complexity of transitioning and aligning two previously established organisations' systems and procedures. Also, the fast-paced nature of the reform meant CFA and FRV had little time to develop a comprehensive change management strategy to guide and formally acquit corporate function transition. While CFA and FRV report several corporate services have been transitioned including finance, property services and legal, the practical implementation of these services was still being refined.

The transition impacted agency resources and efficiency, with the transition of human resources and payroll, and IT services presenting significant challenges. On 1 July 2020, 1,658 CFA staff transferred to FRV and 233 operational FRV staff were seconded to CFA. FRV is responsible for providing payroll services to its employees, though the draft MoU stipulates that CFA will continue to process payroll for CFA employees that have transferred to FRV until CFA is able to create a separate instance in its payroll systems for the transferred staff. Once this has been achieved, FRV will manage the payroll for transferred employees independently of CFA, including for former CFA employees who are seconded to CFA.

The payroll transfer was significantly delayed and a timeline for the transition yet to be determined. CFA and FRV agree that the payroll system, if not transitioned effectively, could impact service delivery. They are working collaboratively to develop a workplan to guide the transition and have engaged specialist expertise to support this work.

CFA and FRV also developed IT solutions to implement the reform, with interoperability requirements and secondment arrangements presenting significant IT challenges.

In addition to the MoU, FSIM notes that a draft IT agreement is being negotiated to formalise specific IT support between CFA and FRV. There is ongoing engagement to solve challenges including shared software and hardware access issues at co-located stations.

Findings

FSIM notes that despite the MoU being unexecuted, the agencies continued to implement the draft MoU in good faith and the transfer and alignment of corporate services is underway. FSIM acknowledges significant effort to resolve complex payroll services transition challenges.

FSIM acknowledges that CFA and FRV developed the draft MoU in the context of fast-paced reform but there is now an opportunity to further develop a framework to support both transitional and long-term arrangements. CFA and FRV must develop a road map for acquittal of corporate service transition actions to manage implementation. A review of the current MoU development process may highlight opportunities for more efficient collaboration to avoid future delays.

FSIM notes evidence of collaboration to resolve IT issues and encourages CFA and FRV to continue to work to mitigate any risks to service delivery arising from the IT transition.

Actions 1.12 and 2.9 Finalise CFA/ CFA CO delegations and authorisations to FRV employees

Summary

As of 1 July 2020, FRV response areas established in major regional cities interface with CFA Districts in the CAoV. The intention of the fire services reform was to build on principles of interoperability, with FRV providing support to CFA in CFA Districts and CFA providing surge capacity and back-up response in FRV response areas.

To deliver services in the CAoV, FRV requires legislative and regulatory powers and authority to be delegated from the CO and CFA Board to FRV staff not seconded to CFA.

The current state of delegation of CFA's legislative powers and authority to FRV in the CAoV can be summarised as follows:

- Some powers and authorities cannot be delegated due to legislative, regulatory and liability constraints
- Some powers and authorities can be, and have been delegated, or are being investigated.

The CO and CFA Board's power and authority to undertake functions in the CAoV is prescribed through at least 30 Acts and Regulations. Not all of these powers and authority can be delegated.

The CO can delegate authority and powers under the CFA Act and regulations to CFA Officers and employees and named individuals or holders of an office or position outside of CFA, such as FRV employees, if approved by the CFA Board. The CFA Board can delegate authority and powers under the CFA Act and regulations or any other Act or regulations to CFA Officers, CFA employees and FRV secondees only. Where there is a statutory power or function that is vested in the CFA Board, CFA is unable to lawfully delegate to FRV or FRV employees who are not seconded to CFA.

CFA's ability to delegate powers and functions to FRV employees not seconded to CFA depends on the service activity and whether the power/function is assigned to the CO or the CFA Board under the CFA Act and regulations, or another Act and regulation. Some functions are derived from multiple Acts and Regulations, some of which are the CO powers, and some are the CFA Board powers.

Where the CO or the CFA Board, can delegate powers to FRV employees (irrespective of whether they are seconded to CFA), these delegations can be exercised noting any limitations or conditions, however CFA must consider associated legal liabilities before delegating power and authority. In the reporting period, the CO and the CFA Board have made financial and operational delegations to FRV employees seconded to CFA to perform duties in CFA prescribed roles. A further two delegations of the CO were delegated to FRV staff to enable them to deliver services within the CAoV:

1. issuing permits for lighting fires during fire danger periods and
2. powers for Fire Investigators.

The legislative constraints on CFA to delegate powers and authority meant in some instances, the SLDAs were unable to be implemented as intended and resulted in the development of complex, resource intensive, interagency processes and interim work arrangements, which are outlined in the Actions 1.10 and 2.5. Where these challenges have impacted CFA providing delegations to FRV employees (not seconded to CFA), FRV staff are able to perform administrative or ancillary services for CFA in the CAoV. In these instances, to comply with the legislation, CFA provides final approval for their work and has dedicated additional quality assurance and approval resources to comply with the legislation and delays to service delivery were experienced. These arrangements have impacted both agencies' organisational efficiency and resources and CFA and FRV will need to continue to consider how to achieve the best service delivery outcomes in accordance with intent of the reform.

Where legislation does not constrain delegation of CFA powers and authority, CFA and FRV are continuing to investigate further delegations and authorisations to FRV employees. FSIM understands that CFA is currently considering further options for delegations, which will be presented to CFA Board in August 2021.

Findings

FSIM acknowledges the importance of FRV staff working in the CAoV being equipped to undertake their roles, and the importance of adequate quality assurance processes and resources in enabling effective service delivery and legislative compliance.

FSIM acknowledges that there are some significant challenges (legislative, regulatory and liabilities) to delegating powers and authority in the CAoV to FRV employees who are not seconded to CFA, but the agencies are collaborating to investigate further delegations to FRV.

FSIM recognises that there are risks to the CO and the CFA Board when delegating their powers and authority in the CAoV to third parties and that these are being mitigated through resource intensive and complex quality assurance processes between CFA and FRV. However, CFA must identify powers and authority that are appropriate to be delegated and progress these delegations.

FSIM will revisit this action in the next reporting period.

Objective: Robust operating structures to enable firefighters to succeed at their roles

Actions 1.16 and 2.1 Finalise relevant enterprise bargaining agreements, including the CFA Professional, Technical and Administrative Enterprise Agreement

Summary

Effective 1 July 2020, all CFA staff covered by the Operational Staff Agreement, together with 171 professional, technical, and administrative positions transferred with their existing terms and conditions of employment to FRV. This transition occurred pursuant to provisions in the FRV Act which provided for the automatic transfer of CFA staff to FRV together with a Ministerial directive to transfer CFA staff to FRV.

Action 2.1 ensures that FRV employees (including former CFA employees) will be covered by enterprise agreements setting out key terms and conditions of employment for FRV employees that maximise opportunities for harmonisation. In addition, Action 1.16 ensures CFA continues to provide secure working conditions for CFA employees.

Under the new model, FRV is responsible for implementing Enterprise Agreements (EAs) for all FRV employees, including former CFA firefighters and staff transferred to FRV, following approval by the Fair Work Commission (FWC). As part of the approval process to commence bargaining, and consistent with the Government Wages Policy, FRV will make submissions to government detailing relevant costings to ensure sufficient funding is available to meet

the requirements of the potential agreement outcomes. The EAs set out key terms and conditions of employment for all FRV employees.

FWC approved the FRV Mechanical Engineering Workshops Agreement 2020 in February 2021. As at 30 June 2021, the following three EAs are subject to approval being granted to negotiate. FRV anticipates that these EAs will be available for employees to vote on by 31 December 2021:

- FRV Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement;
- FRV Professional, Technical and Administrative (PTA) Staff Agreement; and
- FRV Corporate and Technical Staff Agreement.

FSIM notes that CFA has raised concerns regarding the CFA PTA Agreement which restricts CFA's ability to use PTA staff in some incident management roles. Clause 28.1.1 (c) of the agreement states that PTA staff will not perform the roles of Incident Controller, Deputy Incident Controller, Operations Officer and Deputy Operations Officers. As a result, this measure has constrained CFA's ability to use PTA staff as needed.

Based on evidence provided, FSIM understands that the FRV interim EAs have been developed based on the CFA's EAs approved terms and conditions prior to 1 July 2020 and notes that the PTA restrictions were already in place prior to the reform.

FSIM observes that CFA and FRV have agreed to an arrangement where CFA could request FRV's approval for seconded staff to undertake functions outside of their respective roles and responsibilities as outlined in the EAs on a case-by-case basis. In addition, FRV has released former CFA PTA personnel to undertake Incident Management Support roles as a CFA volunteer on numerous occasions.

Findings

Formal evidence has not been received regarding issues with the other EAs, therefore FSIM is not able to make a determination as to whether the remaining EAs are restricting or otherwise impacting CFA's operational service delivery.

FSIM acknowledges that the three outstanding FRV EAs will require significant consultation and negotiation and should consider operational efficiency, statutory compliance and the capacity of the agencies to undertake the work defined under each EA.

Objective: Firefighters have the right skills and access to training and support

Action 4.3

Commence delivery of \$40.7 million in new CFA volunteers' health and safety initiatives, including training programs for low voltage fuse removal, safe working at heights and alternative power systems; new generation personal protective clothing to active operational volunteers, and the rollout of a respiratory protection pilot, including consultation with volunteers (part of the \$126 million CFA capability initiatives)

Summary

An appropriately equipped and effectively trained volunteer firefighter cohort enhances the protection of the community. Training is essential to readiness; therefore, it is important for volunteer firefighters to be trained and equipped to provide a broad range of fire and other emergency services and keep the communities safe.

The \$40.7 million government investment over five-years to support the capability enhancements that are fundamental to the safety of CFA members. The funding contributes to delivering against the reform objective that *Firefighters have the right skills and access to training and support*. CFA plans to provide the following health and safety training and appliances to reduce significant health hazards that volunteer firefighters are exposed to while conducting their firefighting duties and to ensure they have the necessary skills needed to respond to incidents.

Volunteer wildfire personal protective clothing (PPC)

CFA allocated \$10.85 million, over two years to November 2022, to procure 24,000 sets of new volunteer wildfire PPC for operational volunteers. The modernised PPC has an enhanced level of protection from radiant heat and heat-related illness, improving safety of volunteer firefighters responding to bushfire emergencies. The PPC will also be tailored to both men and women, ensuring a safe and comfortable fit.

The project governance includes a working group with VFBV and volunteer representations. CFA has consulted with volunteers and the VFBV on user acceptance trials covering utility, fit and functionality, involved approximately 40 firefighters in 2018-19.

The PPC procurement project is currently at the commencement stage because CFA has made a decision to ensure new procurements of PPC meet the revised Australian protective clothing standard (AS/NZS 4824 Protective Clothing for Firefighters), released in July 2021.

CFA released a tender invitation for new PPC in June 2021 and expects to award a contract by 31 December 2021. CFA will conduct a Benefits Management Plan by September 2021 to assess the effectiveness of the project.

Structure firefighting helmets

CFA has completed the roll-out of structural firefighting helmets under this project to eligible operational members who have the appropriate certification. This program was funded by the Victorian Government's \$60 million investment in Victorian Fire Services as part of the Statement. CFA completed the project in February 2021, with almost 5,100 helmets distributed to members at 458 brigades.

The project closure report indicated positive feedback have been received from firefighters, including the high quality of training materials to ensure members knew how to correctly fit, care for, and maintain their new helmets.

Wildfire respiratory protection (WRP) trial

CFA allocated \$1.5 million funding to a WRP trial to research, trial, and evaluate alternative WRP products. The project will deliver recommendations to inform suitable products for CFA volunteers.

This project is in the initiation phase with recruitment for a project manager currently in progress. Consultation has occurred with the VFBV and volunteers through a member survey administered by the VFBV. The results have been analysed and a report prepared to inform the project. CFA anticipates that the intended project completion date of 2022 is achievable.

New volunteer skills training for low voltage fuse removal (LVFR), safe working at heights (SWH) and Alternative Power Systems training (APS)

In December 2020, CFA endorsed its 2020-24 Safety Compliance Project Plan, which incorporates the planning and delivery of LVFR, SWH and APS training projects.

The plan states how and when the objectives of the projects will be achieved, key performance indicators, and the major products, activities, and resources required. CFA will prepare a Project Closure Report that will assess the success of the projects based on the number of courses delivered, the number of volunteers trained, the number of equipment kits issued, and volunteer feedback received via surveys upon completion of the courses.

Consultation with volunteers and the VFBV on the project has occurred through the VFBV Infrastructure and Equipment Joint Consultative Committee.

Low voltage fuse removal (LVFR)

Currently, 944 members in 264 brigades have been trained in LVFR. To reduce the risks associated with LVFR, training and equipping brigades with appropriate equipment is critical. The funding received will support the continued rollout of the LVFR training program and equipment to nominated operational members of volunteer brigades.

CFA experienced delays in delivering LVFR training due to COVID-19 restrictions and delays in sourcing equipment due to supply chain issues. For FY2020–21, eight LVFR courses were put on hold and are now rescheduled to FY2021–22. CFA anticipates that the intended project completion date of 2024 is achievable.

Safe working at heights (SWH)

Currently, 73 members in 16 brigades have been trained in SWH. The funding received is supporting the rollout of training and equipment to nominated operational brigades.

CFA experienced delays in delivering SWH training courses due to COVID-19 restrictions and supply chain issues for equipment provision. Despite this, CFA has continued to conduct courses in accordance with the government restrictions and is focusing on development of the online learning component of the course. CFA anticipates that the intended project completion date of 2024 is achievable.

Alternative Power Systems (APS)

The APS project aims to research and identify products to assist CFA volunteers in controlling hazard associated with APS, for example solar panels. It is essential to provide volunteer firefighters with a safe working environment while attending and responding to incidents in response to urban and regional growth. Currently, the project has had trials of products postponed due to some training ground closures as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. CFA anticipates that the intended project completion date of 2024 is achievable.

Findings

FSIM acknowledges CFA is committed and continuing to provide fit-for-purpose equipment and trained volunteer firefighters to protect the community.

FSIM notes that both CFA and FRV operate in urban areas and on the urban fringe, delivering fire and other emergency services, but utilising slightly different procedures, appliances, and equipment to do so. There are opportunities for CFA and FRV to standardise personal protective clothing and safety training for greater interoperability of career and volunteer firefighters and an improved outcome for the community.

Given the initiatives to improve CFA volunteers' health and safety are either at their initial stages or yet to commence, it is challenging to understand the effectiveness of the equipment and training courses in enhancing skillsets and keeping volunteer firefighters safe while responding to fire and other emergency incidents. Inclusion of program monitoring and evaluation will assist CFA in understanding the impact these programs will have.

FSIM will revisit this action in the next reporting period.

Action 4.4 **Commence delivery of \$48.2 million in new CFA fleet and stations (part of announced \$126 million CFA capability initiatives), including consultation with volunteers**

Summary

The Victorian Government allocated \$48.2 million in funding for the replacement of 15 stations (\$22.117 million) and 50 appliances (\$22.731 million) as part of the \$126 million Capability Funding Package. The funding aims to improve firefighter safety by addressing occupational health and safety (OH&S) issues associated with older stations and tankers. This investment also supports the reform objective that firefighters have access to the right resources to do their job and keep them safe.

CFA has prepared a Station Replacement Program Plan and Tanker Replacement Project Plan.

Station replacement program

CFA received \$22.117 million in funding for the replacement of 15 fire stations²⁴, which will be delivered in a phased approach over four years to FY 2023–24.

CFA established a Program Reference Group to assess and provide direction and approval of any change requests that may impact the scope, budget, and milestones of the overall program and/or individual projects within the program.

CFA conducted an initial scoping exercise and considered a range of factors in selecting the specific stations for improvement works. These included the existing conditions of the stations, evident OH&S issues, space requirements to house upgraded appliances that are deployed to ensure a brigade can adapt to the changing risk profile of its community, and district and regional priorities. These selection factors are utilised within the *CFA Asset Management Accountability Framework* to prioritise the most urgent stations for replacement.

As at 30 June 2021, CFA reported a delay in construction progress at Coldstream due to COVID-19 restrictions and wet weather. The remaining 14 replacement stations are on track and are either at land acquisition or planning stages. The 14 replacement stations are located at Golden Square, The Basin (Dandenong), Morrisons, Natte Yallock, Pyalong, Dartmoor, Dimboola, Modewarre, Warracknabeal, St Leonards, Molka, Winnindoo, Hoddles Creek and Leitchville.

Fleet replacement program

CFA received \$22.731 million for the replacement of 50 single cab tankers over four years to 2023–24. The CFA Tanker Replacement Project Plan anticipates the phased manufacture and deployment of 48 heavy tankers and two crew cab light tankers by September 2023, with project closure anticipated by end of December 2023.

A *Tanker Replacement Project Governance Framework* has been established, with the CFA CEO being the project sponsor and the Executive Director, Infrastructure Services the project owner.

Currently, CFA is in the process of finalising a list of locations for the rollout of appliances based on an evidence-based assessment of service delivery requirements, including district and regional priorities identified in consultation with volunteer representatives.

Future Challenge

CFA currently owns or leases over 1,250 individual built infrastructure assets with a conservative replacement value of over \$1.5 billion. CFA undertook an evidence-based analysis of station conditions as part of the *Asset Management Plan – Building*, approved by the CFA CEO in June 2021. This Plan outlined a program of maintenance, renewal, and improvement projects to deliver a fit-for-purpose asset portfolio capable of delivering the service requirements of CFA.

CFA also assessed its asset investment needs for the CFA fleet over a rolling 5-year period. The *Fleet Asset Management Plan for 2020–21 to 2024–25* sets out the lifecycle management needs of the fleet assets managed by CFA.

Both plans show CFA is experiencing a budget shortfall to meet the planned assets upgrade and replacement commitment. CFA demonstrates a strong commitment to upgrade stations and replace appliances under significant budget constraints and is presently considering a range of options.

Findings

FSIM acknowledges the significant efforts undertaken by CFA to improve firefighter's safety by addressing occupational, health and safety issues associated with stations and tankers through the replacement of 15 fire stations and 50 appliances.

FSIM will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of CFA's station and fleet replacement projects with a focus on CFA capability in identifying and prioritising stations and fleets for replacement based on risk and need.

Action 4.5

Identify and commence capital works at co-located CFA and FRV stations to assist with co-location, including consultation with career and volunteer firefighters operating from the co-located stations

Summary

On 1 July 2020, 37 co-located stations (with the exception of Lara Fire Station) were transferred to FRV via an Allocation Statement prepared under section 105 of the FRV Act. The then Minister for Police and Emergency Services signed the Allocation Statement on 26 February 2021.

In addition to the delivery of appropriate capital works at co-located stations, this action specifies the need for consultation with career and volunteer firefighters throughout this process.

²⁴ CFA also received \$2.5 million capex funding over two years (separate to the station replacement funding of \$22.117 million) for the replacement of the Clyde Volunteer Fire Station, including land acquisition.

Following the transfer, FRV is now responsible for the identification, planning, and delivery of capital works at the co-located stations, including consulting with CFA throughout the process.

The Tenancy Agreement (refer to complementary Actions 1.9 and 2.4) will determine volunteers' use and access to the co-located fire stations and will inform future capital works at these stations.

Pending the Tenancy Agreement finalisation, FRV initiated the Fire Station Condition and Functionality Capital Plan in 2020. The capital plan was developed so that FRV can assess the conditions and functionality of its 85 FRV stations. The capital plan identified and prioritised stations for redevelopment and renovation over the 10-year period from 2020 to 2029.

Findings

FSIM notes that finalisation of the Tenancy Agreement and future design of the co-located stations will impact ongoing operational harmonisation and volunteers' morale at the co-located stations.

FSIM is supportive of the two agencies continuing to work collaboratively on capital works including station design to support the implementation of a complementary fire services delivery model.

Action 4.6 Finalise the transfer of in-flight infrastructure projects from CFA to FRV and deliver high priority station builds as per the documented project schedules

Summary

The reform required CFA to transfer assets and staff to FRV effective 1 July 2020. Tranche Three of the Transfer Strategy includes the transfer of in-flight projects under the 350 Firefighter Program (the P350 program)²⁵ and non-P350 funded projects, from CFA to FRV. This action ensures that the responsibility for delivery of in-flight projects is, with a few exceptions, transferred with the ownership of assets from CFA to FRV under the reform.

The Allocation Statement for the transfer of P350 in-flight capital projects was signed by the then Minister for Police and Emergency Services on 26 February 2021.

CFA and FRV signed the Transfer Statement for the transfer of P350 in-flight capital projects and associated funding in June 2021. Funding, accountability for progress, and governance of projects were transferred to FRV in June 2021.

Effective 1 July 2021, CFA will continue to deliver five projects on behalf of FRV, given they were at the final stages of completion. These projects include Morwell station, Melton station, Bendigo temporary fire station, the Heavy Pumpers, and the Combined Aerial Rescue Pumpers construction. CFA expects these projects to be completed in FY 2021-22.

FRV is continuing to lead the land acquisition and construction of the transferred in-flight capital projects. FSIM notes that the P350 infrastructure projects were behind schedule and a 12-month extension to June 2022 had been sought by CFA before being transferred to FRV, which was approved by the then Minister for Police and Emergency Services on 18 November 2020. FSIM notes FRV will formally request an extension of the P350 in-flight infrastructure projects from the current approved completion date of June 2022.

FRV advised that finalisation of these projects is dependent on the Tenancy Agreement, FRV Station Design Guide and land acquisition.

Findings

CFA has advised that service delivery to the community has not been directly impacted as a result of the transfer of in-flight infrastructure and high priority builds. CFA's co-located volunteer brigades will continue to support FRV firefighters in responding to incidents in the response areas of the transferred co-located stations.

FSIM acknowledges CFA and FRV's commitment to work together to deliver in-flight infrastructure projects and to develop high priority station builds to enhance joint-operational capacity and capability.

FSIM will continue to evaluate the delivery of in-flight infrastructure projects in the next progress report.

²⁵ CFA commenced the P350 program in 2015. The program included land acquisition and new station builds, modification of existing stations, as well as the delivery of new vehicles, to support the recruitment and deployment of 350 new career firefighters

Appendix

Analysis of actions under ‘Collaboration’

Objective: **An effective and productive working relationship with FRV and other emergency service agencies building on the principle of interoperability**

Actions 1.8 and 2.3 **Commence harmonisation of operational procedures across FRV and CFA where practicable and appropriate**

Summary

Harmonisation of operational procedures refers to the alignment of CFA and FRV operational procedures where practicable and the review and update of interoperability procedures (IPs)²⁶. Harmonising operational procedures facilitates a complementary approach to fire and emergency response.

Operational procedures are formal, written instructions that provide direction to agencies to prepare for and respond to incidents. CFA and FRV are responsible for developing and maintaining their respective suite of operational procedures.

IPs are documents that outline the systems, structures, resources, capabilities, and/or statutory obligations of CFA and FRV when providing joint responses and apply to FRV operational employees, FRV seconded operational employees, and CFA members involved in unilateral operational activities²⁷ and/or joint operational activities²⁸.

In November 2020, CFA and FRV signed a Joint Operational Activities (JoA) MoU that sets out the high level intent for each agency to, wherever practicable, support the other agency through the provision of equipment, human resources, and specialist advice. The MoU is to be reviewed annually and is underpinned by a series of IPs.

The Fire Services Operations Committee (FSOC) which is chaired alternately by CFA and FRV serves as an escalation point for operational issues requiring resolution. In April 2021, FSOC endorsed a future FSOC work plan for 2021-22. The work plan identifies opportunities to strengthen a broader scope of joint working arrangements, including joint operations in technical rescue, Commander induction program, state-wide capacity for HAZMAT response, co-response model and Greater Alarm Response System (GARS).

The work plan also includes a program of work to review and update the IPs that underpin the JoA MoU. FSOC reviews and updates IPs before they are formally signed by the CO of CFA and Fire Rescue Commissioner (FR Commissioner). FSOC has established operating principles so that discussion at FSOC is required prior to either agency amending procedures where such changes affect the other agency.

CFA doctrine

CFA made its full suite of operational doctrine available to FRV in 2020. CFA will continue to work with FRV to harmonise, where practical, doctrine to support interoperability, noting that CFA and FRV have different practices to review and update doctrine.

CFA adopts a formal and structured approach to the development, volunteer consultation, and approval processes for Standing Orders (SO) / standard operating procedures (SOPs) which must be followed when updating operational doctrine. CFA consults with internal stakeholders when developing or amending operating procedures and once authorised by the CO for release, a communications process through the Chain of Command, and broader distribution through digital networks occurs to the CFA membership.

CFA's operational procedures are available to volunteers, career firefighters on secondment to CFA, and operational support staff via Members Online. Updates to doctrine are communicated via email from the CO to the field.

CFA has advised it has limited capacity to undertake a review of doctrine however, as part of the CFA realignment, responsibility for doctrine was transferred to the Deputy Chief Officer Operational Doctrine and Training with an intent to establish a doctrine team. The team will undertake a review and establish processes and pathways for continuous improvement and harmonisation across CFA and FRV.

FRV doctrine

FRV has prepared a project plan with the objective to harmonise operational procedures across CFA and FRV, to support interoperability where practicable. FRV anticipates that a full review and update of FRV operational doctrine will be completed by FY 2022-23 as part of a broader program of work to modernise its fire service doctrine. FRV's operational doctrine framework is accessible to staff via the FRV intranet. Seconded staff to CFA access the documentation via CFA systems and the FRV intranet.

²⁶ Formerly referred to as Joint Standard Operating Procedures.

²⁷ Joint Operational Activity means an incident where both CFA and FRV are present and where an FRV Operational Employee or CFA Member is in overall control of the incident.

²⁸ Unilateral Operational Activity means when CFA attends an incident in the FRV Fire District where FRV is not present, or when FRV attends an incident in Country Fire Victoria where CFA is not present, and includes where either Agency is dispatched to the incident by ESTA or where an Agency has provided Move Up to the other.

FRV prepared a template for future IPs, made its doctrine framework available to CFA, and continues to work with CFA to improve consistency across procedures.

FRV intends to use the existing debrief and after-action review processes to support continuous improvement. FRV currently reviews FireComms logs and reporting systems²⁹ to monitor compliance with both CFA and FRV operational procedures. FRV has sought and continues to encourage staff feedback on the procedures.

CFA and FRV are reviewing existing IPs covering a range of standard operating procedures, systems and technology and have so far finalised one IP relating to Mutual Operational Command Support. Further work towards implementing new IPs will occur during FY 2021-22.

Findings

FSIM acknowledges the scale and complexity of the program of work to harmonise procedures to support and enable interoperability, and the significant efforts to date by both CFA and FRV to adopt a collaborative approach to update doctrine to be complementary. FSIM also notes that CFA and FRV are at different stages, with varying degrees of resources, in undertaking this work.

Operational issues with the procedures have and continue to arise. FSOC is used as a forum to discuss issues and establish working principles to guide resolution on interoperability matters. There is an opportunity for FSOC, or an agreed body represented by CFA and FRV, to provide shared oversight of their respective programs of work in reviewing and updating their doctrine framework. This would further encourage reciprocal communication, input, and feedback on agency doctrine.

Interim work instructions are in place for several functions in lieu of finalised IPs. The transfer of functions is yet to be finalised, which may impact the ability of CFA and FRV to finalise their respective doctrines.

Both CFA and FRV communicate their doctrine to staff and volunteers through various channels. FSIM is supportive of ongoing assessments of staff and volunteer awareness and understanding of procedures to identify any potential risk areas.

Action 2.7 Identify new opportunities to recognise and value the contribution made by both volunteer and career firefighters to delivering fire services (e.g. communication and collaboration)

Summary

The FRV Act introduced significant, structural changes to the fire services in Victoria. Embedding the new model requires the transfer of people, assets, functions, roles and responsibilities, and delegations. These changes necessitate new and amended agreements and arrangements, and supporting processes, systems, and procedures.

The objective of this action is to develop an effective and productive working relationship between CFA, FRV, and other emergency service agencies building on the principle of interoperability.

In this first year of reform, CFA and FRV established FSOC to promote opportunities for collaboration and joint interoperability. FSOC's work plan sets out fundamental components of embedding the new model so that each agency is clear on its roles and responsibilities.

In November 2020, CFA and FRV signed a JoA MoU that set out the high-level intent for each agency to, wherever practicable, endeavour to support the other agency through the provision of equipment, human resources, and specialist advice.

CFA and FRV continue to collaborate on a range of planning and consultation activities. FRV is coordinating the finalisation of multi-agency response plans (for example, the Plenty Gorge Response Plan) for identified high-risk areas to support a complementary approach to emergency management before, during, and after a fire. FRV is conducting statewide 'after action' reviews (such as Calder Park Drive review) and combined drills and discussions around procedural and policy making decisions.

Clear evidence has been provided demonstrating that CFA and FRV engage with each other and key stakeholders through various stakeholder meetings. For example, CFA and FRV ACFOs meet to discuss career/volunteer personnel issues such as co-located new stations for Frankston, Clyde North and Morwell, or alterations/extensions to current co-located stations.

Findings

CFA and FRV have, in this first year of reform, established principles, structures, and processes with the aim to support a collaborative culture going forward and collaboration is demonstrated, encouraged and led at an executive level.

FSOC was established by CFA and FRV to drive ongoing and effective collaboration and FSIM is supportive of this forum continuing throughout the reform period.

²⁹ Australian Incident Reporting System (AIIRS) and Fire and Incident Reporting Systems (FIRS).

FSIM notes that the success of CFA and FRV in achieving the objectives of this action relies on CFA and FRV reaching agreement on a suite of operational matters arising from the reform. Specifically, the Year One Plan actions to finalise the transfer of assets, service level and tenancy agreements, the secondment model, and MoUs and delegations will determine how CFA and FRV collaborate at an operational level.

This action is a fundamental component of a successful, complementary fire service. FSIM will continue to assess progress against these actions and the role of FSOC to assess the effectiveness of efforts to develop a collaborative culture between CFA and FRV in delivering fire services.

Objective: Strong links with the community which enable it to provide a tailored service that reflects community risks

Actions 1.19 and 2.18
Commence a review of service delivery approaches to ensure these inform and align with community expectations and provide operational efficiency

Summary

The establishment of FRV and the restoration of CFA to a fully volunteer firefighting service has impacted and changed the way both CFA and FRV deliver services to the community.

This action requires CFA and FRV to develop state-wide service delivery approaches and capability plans to best service the needs and expectations of the Victorian community in the context of the new model.

CFA and FRV established FSOC to support the provision of a complementary fire service delivery to the community. FSOC is founded on three principles:

- The ongoing sustainability and viability of volunteer CFA brigades
- The ongoing effective and efficient use of full-time fire brigades
- A better outcome to the community from joint fire service delivery.

The FSOC work plan outlines how CFA and FRV intend to work together on a range of interoperability programs to optimise service delivery to communities. FSOC terms of reference commits CFA and FRV to identify and promote opportunities for collaboration, and joint interoperability, to provide a complementary fire service delivery to the community³⁰.

Each agency has also undertaken various internal activities to assess their respective operating models. For example, prior to the reform, CFA commenced a review of its response model with the aim to ensure that the most appropriate resources were dispatched in emergencies. The review was subsequently paused however CFA has since resumed work and the review is progressing.

In 2021 CFA commissioned its annual survey of householders living in bushfire prone locations to identify their perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, preparedness, and responses to bushfire risks.

CFA uses the survey to inform future programs, services and broader strategic planning. CFA is developing an engagement framework to guide community consultation.

FRV undertook preliminary research on international fire and rescue accreditation models, in particular the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. The model incorporates a community risk assessment and standards of cover. Additionally, FRV commissioned work to support the development of an FRV Strategy. FRV's Executive Leadership Team provides oversight to the project, noting a steering committee will be established as a long-term governance arrangement for the project.

Findings

CFA and FRV are working collaboratively through FSOC to develop a forward plan for joint operational response capability and to address key interoperability issues as they arise.

There is an opportunity for both CFA and FRV to further engage and consult to both inform the community of the revised serviced delivery approach and determine whether the approach aligns with community expectations.

FSIM considers the development of a shared response service delivery approach to be a critical element of the reform. Agreement on a complementary service delivery review approach at the outset could provide clarity on the skills, resources, and equipment needed at an agency level.

³⁰ Fire Services Operations Committee: Terms of Reference Statement

Objective: Robust operating procedures to enable firefighters to succeed at their jobs

Action 2.12
**Harmonise specialist response
arrangements which have
transferred from CFA; e.g. HAZMAT
response, fire investigation, high
angle rescue**

Summary

The establishment of the new fire service delivery model led to the transfer of multiple specialist response personnel and equipment from CFA to FRV. The general principle underpinning the transfer was that, where CFA specialist response arrangements and services were located in what is now predominantly FRV Fire District boundaries, CFA transferred the relevant specialist response resources, equipment, and personnel to FRV³¹. This action requires that arrangements be put in place to formalise the transfer and that specialist response roles and responsibilities are clarified and confirmed to optimise service delivery.

FSIM notes there have been no changes to legislative responsibility or accountability to deliver specialist response services in the CAoV and CFA continues to have obligations to maintain specialist response capabilities. This includes calling on the resources transferred to FRV, as required, within the CAoV.

Fire investigations

CFA and FRV prepared SLDAs to detail the services each agency will provide for the other. With regard to fire investigations, SLDAs specified that:

- CFA would provide bushfire investigation services, including coordination of bushfire investigations in the CFA area under the direction of the CFA CO via a Commander seconded from FRV to CFA
- The Commander would be embedded in the FRV Fire Investigation Unit.
- FRV would coordinate structural fire investigation services in both FRV districts and CAoV.

Systems and resourcing challenges experienced by CFA and FRV prevented the SLDAs from being implemented as intended. CFA continued to deliver several structural fire investigations services. As of 30 June 2021, there was no common approach to structural fire investigations and roles and responsibilities for service delivery and oversight were unclear. FSIM understands that CFA and FRV are working to resolve these issues by developing a Structural Fire and Bushfire Investigations Schedule to the SLDA³².

FRV implemented a Fire Investigation Skills Maintenance Passport program on 1 July 2021. The program aims to harmonise fire investigation skills maintenance for Division A and B operational staff fire investigators. The passport system sets out the annual requirements for FRV fire investigators in maintaining the FR Commissioner's endorsement (and CFA CO's delegation) to work as a fire investigator.

The CFA CO delegated authority to qualified seconded and non-seconded FRV employees and volunteers to conduct fire investigations within the CAoV in April 2021. The FR Commissioner's delegations and endorsements relating to fire investigations were also formalised in April 2021.

HAZMAT response

CFA transferred four former CFA heavy HAZMAT appliances and relevant staff to FRV in July 2020. CFA volunteer brigades with HAZMAT capability will continue to respond to low risk and low complexity HAZMAT incidents in CAoV with FRV called upon for high complexity incidents. The JoA MoU requires FRV to provide HAZMAT capability to assist CFA with incidents in the CAoV that require an escalation from an initial CFA response.

Technical rescue

CFA transferred most of its technical rescue response capacity to FRV. CFA also transferred primary responsibility for trench rescue incidents to FRV as the control agency. CFA retains capacity to respond to technical rescues in the CAoV but can escalate and request resourcing support from FRV. The State Emergency Management Plan was amended in September 2020 to assign primary responsibility for trench rescue incidents to FRV.

Confined space rescue road crash rescue, rehabilitation units and emergency medical response

Responsibility for confined space incidents and specialist capabilities in road crash rescue, rehabilitation units and emergency medical response remains with each fire service in their respective jurisdiction.

³¹ An exception to this is that structural fire investigation across CFA and FRV areas was transferred to FRV.

³² The SLDA forms part of the Overarching Operational Services Agreement

High angle rescue

CFA transferred some high angle rescue equipment to FRV under the asset transfer arrangements but continues to maintain high angle rescue capability at multiples sites across the CAoV³³. CFA is also building a dedicated training location for high angle rope skills development and maintenance programs.

Training

CFA's specialist instructors were transferred to FRV however, they will provide services to CFA under the new model. FRV advised it is developing specialist qualifications using the most appropriate aspects of former MFB and CFA training. While a Specialist Response Instructors Schedule to the SLDA is yet to be completed, training is delivered through interim arrangements. CFA has reported a reduced capacity in specialist instructors which has limited CFA's ability to schedule and deliver specialist training.

Findings

There is evidence to demonstrate that CFA and FRV are working collaboratively to harmonise specialist response arrangements.

The FSOC work plan includes actions to define the roles and responsibilities for structural fire Investigations and develop state-wide capability for technical rescue and HAZMAT response. FSOC also provides a forum to address and resolve key joint operational matters³⁴. FSIM sees an ongoing role for FSOC to raise and address significant interoperability matters as they arise.

In the absence of signed schedules³⁵ to the SLDA, ongoing communication with staff regarding specialist response arrangements is essential.

At the emergency management sector level, EMV is currently leading a review of the State Emergency Management Plan to clarify which agencies take control and which provide support for specialist response. This work may provide greater clarity and an effective communication tool to ensure staff across all fire agencies are clear on the transfer of roles and responsibilities relating to specialist response.

³³ Natimuk, Lakes Entrance, Apollo Bay, Wandin, Monbulk, Yea

³⁴ As an example, FSOC considered the issue of CFA staff continuing to conduct fire investigations and resolved that business rules be written to clarify responsibility at volunteer, district, region, and state unit levels.

³⁵ Actions 1.10 and 2.5 provide further detail on the status of service level agreements between the two agencies.

Appendix

Analysis of actions under 'Workplace culture and diversity'

Objective: Agencies reflect the diversity of the Victorian community and support multifaceted decision making

Action 3.6
Deliver on existing Statement joint initiatives that promote positive cultural change and diversity

Action 3.7
Work together to understand current diversity in the fire services and consider options to improve diversity in the future

Summary

In collaboration with EMV, both CFA and FRV have initiated diversity and culture change programs across the fire services. CFA and FRV are members of the joint Emergency Management Inclusion and Diversity Leadership Group, chaired by the EMC. The group drafted a shared 2021-22 work plan, which focuses on addressing sector-wide barriers to inclusivity and diversity and endeavours to use existing leadership opportunities and initiatives to collectively drive change. CFA and FRV have demonstrated their commitment as defined entities under the *Gender Equality Act 2020* and commenced development of organisation wide diversity and inclusion strategies. This includes the CFA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-24 and FRV's Diversity and Inclusion Roadmap 2021-24, which leverages existing programs and establishes new ones.

CFA and FRV's diversity and inclusion data and program evaluations are at varying stages of maturity. While CFA and FRV have collaborated over recent years to understand diversity and inclusion in the fire services, they should collaborate to streamline staff diversity and inclusion datasets and community profile data in co-located areas. CFA and FRV began to enhance diversity and inclusion data and analytics. CFA took strong steps to understand brigade and community profiles. FRV will consider data requirements as it develops its workplan. Although the reform had a significant gender focus, CFA and FRV are exploring strategies to understand other forms of workforce and community diversity. There are also opportunities for them to better understand if initiatives are effective.

A safe workplace is fundamentally important to the success of the reform. CFA and FRV have made changes to their workforce conduct and complaints processes to improve workplace culture. CFA decentralised its complaint review model and established additional human resources capability in the regions. This saw a reduction in the number of recorded complaints, reduced the time to resolve complaints, and enabled CFA to conclude several longstanding investigations. There was a reduction in cumulative cases from 145 in September 2020 to 90 cases in June 2021.

During the reporting period, FRV saw a 67 per cent increase in the number of employee requests about employee conduct issues. While FRV attributes this to increased employee awareness of the conduct and complaints processes, additional evidence is required to confirm this relationship. There is an opportunity for CFA and FRV to use the data currently collected to inform decisions and programs that address staff culture challenges.

Findings

FSIM acknowledges the commitment to progressing initiatives that promote positive cultural change and diversity, and to enhance and develop programs to improve diversity and inclusion data collection and analytics, and behavioural conduct processes.

CFA and FRV must consider the effectiveness of existing and newly developed diversity and inclusion programs by planning for and undertaking monitoring and evaluation of programs. This is crucial to understanding the effectiveness in implementing the intentions of the reform.

FRV must further investigate why there was such a significant escalation in complaint and conduct enquires (67 per cent) over the reporting period as the relationship between the improved awareness and increase in complaints is unclear.

FSIM recognises that organisation wide cultural change takes time and will continue to review and assess the impact these foundational activities have in future reports.

FSIM notes that a safe workplace is fundamentally important to the success of the reform. FSIM will seek further information on how CFA and FRV are fostering culture change to support a safe workplace and appropriately address issues and complaints in future reporting.

Given that CFA and FRV's diversity and inclusion data collection and analysis are at varying stages of maturity, CFA and FRV should collaborate to streamline staff diversity and inclusion datasets and community profile data in co-located areas.

Action 3.8
Demonstrate progress towards reaching the government's commitment of 400 women career firefighters in FRV by June 2021

Summary

While FRV demonstrated progress towards reaching the Victorian Government's commitment of 400 women career firefighters, this target was not met by June 2021. In June 2020, MFB had 89 women career firefighters and 52 women firefighters were transferred from CFA to FRV. This meant that to meet the target, FRV needed to recruit 259 women firefighters over a 12-month period. On 30 June 2021, FRV had 169 women firefighters, with 28 women recruited in the two recruitment rounds undertaken in FY 2020–21. This was an increase of 14 (50 per cent) women recruited from the 2019–20 MFB recruitment rounds.

Significantly more men than women apply for these roles. In 2020–21, there were 970 women and 4,830 male applicants. Out of those applicants, 247 recruits were engaged with 28 (11.3 per cent) women and 219 (88.6 per cent) men. At the current rate of female recruitment, it could take FRV several years to reach the target of 400 women career firefighters. FRV's newly established Diversity and Inclusion team are developing a Three-Year Roadmap (2021–24), female recruitment strategy, and female support programs and FRV have employed Women's Support Coordinators.

Continued retention of women firefighters is critical to reaching the 400 women career firefighters target and FRV demonstrated a very successful retention rate. For the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 the female firefighter retention rate at FRV was 99.4 per cent. Women are represented throughout operational ranks.

Findings

Reaching the target of 400 career firefighters will take several years at the current recruitment rate, though FRV demonstrated a commitment to meeting this target by establishing a Diversity & Inclusion Team and other initiatives.

FSIM acknowledges the strong retention rate of women firefighters at FRV. There is an opportunity for FRV to capitalise on this retention rate to inform their recruitment strategies.

Action 3.9
Support diversity and inclusion in CFA and make progress towards delivering on the commitment to increasing the number of women in brigade leadership roles to 15 per cent from 265 to 909 by mid-2022

Summary

As of 30 June 2021, there were 353 women volunteers in CFA brigade leadership roles. This represents a 33.2 per cent increase from the Statement baseline of 265 women in brigade leadership roles set in 2017, and a six per cent (20 women) increase from 333 women volunteers in leadership roles as at 1 July 2020. A further 556 women will need to be elected to brigade leadership roles for CFA to meet the target by mid-2022.

CFA advised that the Victorian Government target consists of Captain and 1st–4th lieutenant. However, it further advised that there are several other brigade leadership roles which have not been included such as 5th–10th Lieutenant, Secretary and Treasurer roles. CFA further stated that if these roles were included, CFA will have 1,106 women in brigade leadership roles by mid-2022, which is a 15.6 per cent of the total women in leadership roles.

Retention of female volunteers is critical to achieving targets for women in leadership roles. The number of females that resigned since 2017 to 2021 decreased from a high of 203 in 2017 to 47 in 2020 with an increase to 113 in 2021.

There is an opportunity for CFA to understand why female volunteer retention rates have improved overtime to leverage on this success.

CFA has several programs targeted at building female networks and leadership opportunities. Though, it is unclear whether such programs are contributing to improved female leadership outcomes.

CFA faces several challenges to achieve this target by mid-2022. While FSIM does not know how many women nominated for brigade leadership roles or their election success rate, there may not presently be enough qualified operational women volunteers and election opportunities to meet the target.

There are more than five times more men than women in operational roles, and while women make up 25 per cent of CFA's volunteer workforce, most are in support roles, which means they are unable to nominate for brigade leadership roles such as Captain and 1st–4th lieutenant. Surveys have also showed that age, work, and family barriers also prevent women from nominating for leadership roles. Further, the election schedule makes it difficult for CFA to meet this target by mid-2022, particularly with some elections being postponed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings

There has only been marginal progress in the reporting period to reach the Statement and Year One Plan target.

CFA should advocate to broaden the definition of leadership roles to include other operational and non-operational leadership roles such as brigade 5th–10th Lieutenant, Secretary and Treasurer roles. FSIM supports this approach, noting that leadership can take many forms.

CFA offers several programs to train and develop female leaders, but at this early stage there is limited evidence of the effectiveness of these programs to meet the intention of the reform.

Appendix

Analysis of actions under 'Financial sustainability'

Action 5.1 Conduct a financial sustainability assessment of FRV and CFA

Summary

Section 130 of the FRV Act requires the Minister to ensure the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV post reform, including ensuring that volunteer brigades are not adversely affected by the reform.

The FSR Steering Committee endorsed the Fire Services Financial Sustainability Program (the Program) in April 2021. The Program consists of two workstreams under section 130 of the FRV Act. They are:

- a cost mapping analysis and independent financial analysis by an external consultant
- initial funding plans for CFA and FRV for FY 2022–23 and FY 2023–24. The intention is that the initial funding plan will be finalised in December 2021 to align with the FY 2022–23 State Budget Cycle, and the long-term funding plan will align with the FY 2024–25 State Budget Cycle.

EMV is leading both workstreams on behalf of DJCS, working together with CFA and FRV. EMV established the FSR Financial Sustainability Working Group to consider key aspects relating to the Program and assist with delivery via the provision of advice, input, and coordination.

In March 2021, EMV prepared an *Initial Financial Sustainability Assessment Framework and Methodology* which detailed the proposed approach for a cost mapping exercise and the data each fire agency will provide to enable an assessment of drivers related to spending.

The cost mapping exercise aims to establish a cost and performance baseline to inform decisions on future funding plans, financial management and future investment.

EMV is coordinating a cost mapping analysis project and CFA and FRV have provided data to support the cost mapping exercise. The outcomes of the cost mapping analysis will feed into an independent financial review that commenced in July 2021 and is expected to be completed by October 2021. The independent financial analysis will then inform the development of the initial funding plans for both CFA and FRV.

FSIM acknowledges the challenges faced by CFA and FRV in conducting the cost mapping and analysis given their different service delivery activities, delivery support functions and funding/cost structures.

FSIM has been provided with information on program planning, methodology, a draft risk register and various committees' meeting minutes. FSIM will seek further evidence of the cost mapping analysis and its findings. This information is important for FSIM to develop a foundational understanding of the impact of the reform upon the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV.

Under section 131 of the FRV Act, FSIM is responsible for reviewing the progress of CFA and FRV in carrying out the Implementation Plan, including by assessing the impact of fire services reforms upon the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV, and the efficacy of particular implementation actions taken by CFA and FRV. A continued close working relationship with CFA, FRV and EMV on this work will be a priority in year two.

Findings

FSIM acknowledges the challenges presented by this implementation action and supports CFA, FRV and EMV in continuing to develop and finalise the cost mapping analysis.

This action is a fundamental component of a financially sustainable, complementary fire service. FSIM will continue to assess progress against this program of work and the effectiveness of efforts to develop a collaborative culture between CFA and FRV in delivering this action.

Action 5.2

Develop a funding plan that determines the financial requirements of CFA and FRV and identifies and address the impact of:

- 1. transfers of functions, resources, and assets between CFA and FRV**
 - 2. the change to the FRV fire district upon the fire services property levy revenue base after the commencing day**
 - 3. any changes to the differential rates of the fire services property levy after the commencing day**
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Summary

Section 130 of the FRV Act requires the Minister to prepare an initial and long-term funding plans to determine the financial requirements of CFA and FRV, and identify and address:

- transfers of functions, resources and assets between CFA and FRV;
- the change to the FRV fire district upon the fire services property levy revenue base after the commencing day of the reform; and
- any changes to the differential rates of the fire services property levy after the commencing day of the reform.

FSIM notes the cost mapping analysis (refer to complementary Action 5.1), and outcomes of the independent financial review will inform the development of the initial funding plans for both CFA and FRV. The initial funding plan is expected to be developed by December 2021 and scheduled for consideration as part of the FY 2022–23 State Budget Cycle.

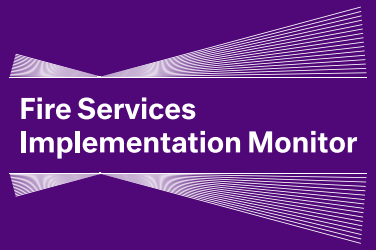
FSIM is looking forward to working in partnership with CFA, FRV and EMV in reviewing and determining if the reform has had an impact on the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV, and a continued close working relationship on this work will be a priority in year two.

The development of the long-term funding plan for CFA and FRV is required to be supported by the first three years financial data of each agency, as legislated by the FRV Act. The financial year ending 30 June 2023 is the end of the first three years of the current operating model. The Program aims to table the long-term funding plan for consideration as part of the FY 2024–25 State Budget Cycle. To do so, EMV advised that preliminary work to develop the long-term funding plan will commence in late 2022.

Findings

FSIM supports CFA, FRV and EMV in continuing to develop and finalise the initial funding plan.

This action is a fundamental component of a financially sustainable, complementary fire service. FSIM will continue to assess progress against these works and the effectiveness of efforts to develop a collaborative culture between CFA and FRV in delivering this action.



**Fire Services
Implementation Monitor**