

# Fire Services Implementation Monitor Annual Report

Fire Services  
Implementation Monitor

2021  
2022



## Publication information

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# Foreword

I am pleased to table my second annual report as the Fire Services Implementation Monitor (FSIM).

In this second year, my assessment of fire services reform implementation in Victoria focused on delivering the foundational actions and activities needed for reform to succeed. Reform implementation activity should be built on a clear and agreed understanding of interoperable, complementary fire services to guide delivery in line with the intentions of the reform. However, agencies are yet to define complementary services, making it difficult to make consistent and principle-based decisions to complete key fire services reform actions.

## Year Two to Five Implementation Plan progress

Agencies are continuing to progress work against individual actions, and I provide a status update of all 41 actions in this report. I have also outlined the steps agencies have taken in this second year of reform implementation in my progress summaries of 29 actions that fall within my key focus areas.

Two actions were completed in my reporting period — actions 5.5. and 5.6 — both relating to fire services sustainability. In assessing the effectiveness of these two actions against their objectives, I found there are improvements to be made to data availability and data quality to improve agencies' evidence base. I understand agencies are undertaking work to address these gaps, which, in addition to improving their respective evidence bases, should also inform upcoming, interrelated actions and help create a clearer picture of what sustainable fire services require.

I had consistent feedback via various channels on the impacts of secondment arrangements and industrial consultation requirements on delivering activities. For long-term reform success, both need to work effectively.

The reform is behind schedule. Issues such as pandemic restrictions, retrospective planning, and lengthy consultative processes have contributed to delays. However, as this is only the second year of a 10-year reform, there is time to address the issues identified in this report and maximise opportunities for future success.

## Listening to those impacted by reforms

This year I talked to people working in the reformed systems about how reform has impacted their experience. I thank them for their valuable perspectives. My year two report focuses on the locations and fire services cohorts I consider most affected. Recognition of these voices is crucial to formative assessment. I hope those who chose to engage with me and my office see themselves and their experiences reflected in the following report.

I committed to speaking to people within the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) from across the state. I met people emotionally connected to their work and sense of place, who have a genuine connection to their brigade or station and want the best outcome for Victoria's fire services and the Victorian community.

From volunteers, I heard their brigade is their second family. It provides a place to gather and connect to their community. Many have done this for decades and often alongside multiple family generations, passionately supporting their community.

For career firefighters, serving at a station is a vocation providing a sense of purpose and belonging. It's where they sleep, eat, and take pride in their efforts to protect the community.

These personal connections to a station or brigade have meant a sense of loss for some of those faced with changes brought about by reform, and I appreciate their participation, honesty, passion, and detailed reflections.

While it wasn't possible to speak to every volunteer or career firefighter in Victoria, I heard many similar themes — particularly at co-located stations in Melbourne's peri-urban fringe and major regional centres. Hearing like themes from those who engaged with me gives me confidence the issues in this report represent broader opportunities for improvement.

## Strengthening reform implementation

I make four recommendations to strengthen Victoria's fire services reform. All focus on identifying the underlying principles and additional governance arrangements needed to improve reform efficiency and understand effectiveness. They should also help support agencies to plan for and deliver sustainable, complementary fire services effectively.

## In closing

I note that the timing of the Victorian Government election prevented Parliament from sitting in late 2022. Consequently, agencies may have already addressed some issues highlighted in this report or progressed activity significantly.

I want to thank CFA, Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) and FRV for providing helpful and insightful evidence to drive this assessment and for their time and effort to support it. I particularly acknowledge career and volunteer firefighters' ongoing dedication to serving the Victorian community.

Finally, I commend the efforts to date, but we still have plenty of work ahead.



Hon. Niall Blair

**Fire Services  
Implementation Monitor**

# Executive summary

This annual report of the Fire Services Implementation Monitor (FSIM) assesses the second year of the implementation of Victoria's fire services reforms. The report covers reform implementation from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.

The report delivers on FSIM's obligations under section 131(1) of the *Fire Rescue Victoria Act 1958* (FRV Act) to monitor and review the progress of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) in carrying out the *Year Two to Five Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan* (Year Two to Five Implementation Plan).

The Minister for Emergency Services (the Minister) tabled the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan in Parliament in November 2021. The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan outlined 41 actions, recommended by the agencies and approved by the Minister, across five priority areas over four years of reform.

For this year two report, FSIM adopted a risk-based approach, assessing progress of 29 of the 41 Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions that, if not implemented effectively, FSIM considers could cause the greatest risk to achieving reform outcomes and objectives as outlined in the 2017 Fire Services Statement (the Fire Services Statement) and the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan. FSIM identified the 29 actions based on key findings made in *Fire Services Implementation Monitor Annual Report 2020–21: Setting the foundations* (FSIM's Financial Year (FY) 2020–21 Annual Report), reform risks identified by the agencies through various governance oversight groups,<sup>1</sup> and FSIM's assessment of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions that best support embedding reform.

FSIM grouped the 29 actions into five key focus areas. The key focus areas summarise the context, scope, objectives, and broad issues impacting progress of the grouped actions and comprise:

1. Complementary fire services
2. Culture and diversity
3. Fire services sustainability
4. Governance
5. Service provision.<sup>2</sup>

Each key focus area contains specific lines of inquiry. A line of inquiry comprises a group of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions that have a shared overarching objective or purpose. The line of inquiry assesses both the progress of the actions and outlines opportunities and challenges, as identified by FSIM, for agencies in meeting the relevant objective.

This report includes:

- an overview of FSIM's year two methodology and stakeholder engagement activities
- a progress summary for each of the 29 actions based on an information request to the agencies within the relevant lines of inquiry
- key findings in the relevant key focus areas and lines of inquiry and opportunities and challenges for the agencies to consider as they progress delivering on Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives
- an assessment of effectiveness on the two Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions (actions 5.5 and 5.6) completed by the responsible agency during the reporting period.

For the two actions completed during the assessment period (actions 5.5 and 5.6 under the Year Two to Five

Implementation Plan's Priority Five: "Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services" workstream), FSIM requested information from CFA, Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) and FRV to determine whether the output delivered on the action's objective. FSIM defines effectiveness as an action having met its objective as set out in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan with supporting evidence.

FSIM collected information throughout the year via multiple channels and stakeholders to inform the year two assessment. FSIM reviewed and analysed documents, attended events and meetings, and engaged staff and volunteers to collect information for this report.

FSIM also conducted a year two engagement program primarily focused on discussions with CFA members and FRV staff at selected co-located stations and peri-urban areas as FSIM considers this cohort particularly impacted by the reforms. As such, the majority of staff who engaged with FSIM in FY 2021–22 were FRV Division B staff and CFA volunteers in co-located stations in peri-urban Melbourne and regional Victoria. FSIM acknowledges that, in electing to focus its year two consultation on co-located brigades, it has heard perspectives and issues that may not reflect the diversity of views across the fire services in Victoria. However, these targeted discussions informed a focused summary of the key issues in those areas most impacted by reform and FSIM considers reflecting those voices is a critical step to support staff and volunteers to continue to move forward constructively.

<sup>1</sup> Joint governance arrangements for the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan comprise Heads of Agency Steering Committee (HoA), Fire Services Operations Committee (FSOC) and six sub-committees comprising: operational communications, community safety, training, infrastructure and protective equipment, specialist response, and doctrine.

<sup>2</sup> The service provision key focus area was a mechanism to assess progress and effectiveness of agencies in delivering against related actions and is captured in the various lines of inquiry.

### Structural elements influencing reform implementation

In undertaking its year two assessment, FSIM has observed two fundamental factors that impact both how agencies operate as organisations and how the agencies operate effectively within the reformed fire services model. These factors are the implementation of the secondment model and industrial consultation requirements.

The secondment model is a fundamental component of reform and must work effectively for the government to realise its vision for a modern, integrated and sustainable system that keeps Victorians safe. FSIM notes that, of the five Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions that relate to secondment, two are reported as significantly delayed, two have reported minor delays and one is yet to commence. FSIM will continue to consider the impacts of the secondment model in year three through assessment of related Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions.

CFA and FRV each have formal consultation obligations and both agencies engage with their respective stakeholders. However, the nature and impact of these obligations are very different in the two agencies. There is a further requirement for FRV to consult with the United Firefighters Union of Australia – Victoria Branch (UFU) and secure consensus via the Consultative Committee process prior to implementing any matter or change relating to the employment relationship of FRV employees. In practice, this means that where both CFA and FRV settle on a position which impacts FRV employees, FRV must subsequently consult with and secure the agreement of its industrial

partner via the Consultative Committee established under the *Fire Rescue Victoria Operational Employees Interim Enterprise Agreement 2020* (FRV Operational Employees EBA). This consultation process contributed to delays in finalising some arrangements and presented a considerable challenge for agencies in committing to positions agreed in principle at executive level where there is a subsequent requirement to consult and seek agreement on those positions. FSIM will continue to monitor consultation processes into year three, noting that effective consultation is a fundamental component to progress and finalise service delivery arrangements.

### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action status and assessment

#### Status of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions

The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan set out 41 actions to be delivered during the period November 2021 to 30 June 2025.<sup>3</sup> The status of the 41 actions<sup>4</sup> reported to the Minister, via the DJCS-coordinated reporting process as of 30 June, 2022 is:

- two actions are complete
- nine actions are progressing and on track
- 20 actions are progressing and experiencing minor delays
- six actions are progressing and experiencing significant delays
- four actions have not yet commenced.

Many actions (13) did not meet their set completion dates outlined in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan. Agencies must apply formally to the Minister for approval to adjust

Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions. At the end of the reporting period, FSIM had not received ministerially approved change requests with updated completion timelines for those actions. As such, the action completion timelines reported are reflective of the timelines in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan.

### FSIM's key focus area assessment

#### Complementary fire services

The complementary fire services key focus area outlines progress and challenges for agencies towards achieving the government's vision for complementary fire services that are modern, integrated and keep Victorians safe.

FSIM finds that CFA and FRV are making strong progress towards providing more modern fire services; however, they face significant challenges in implementing a complementary approach to fire services delivery. FSIM identified three systemic issues that currently constrain delivery against key Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions that need to be addressed to successfully progress reform. These systemic issues comprise:

1. no agreed, shared definition of complementary fire services that is supported by documented and consistent principles
2. ineffective collaboration between CFA and FRV at times
3. absence of an overarching, empowered, strategic governance body with the authority and resources to address key challenges to reform progress.

<sup>3</sup> Some activities from the Victorian Government's Year One Plan have been reframed in the Victorian Government's Year Two to Five Implementation Plan. Appendix A of the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan provides an overview of the status of actions from the Year One Plan and how they align to the government's reform priorities over a four-year period. The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan also includes new actions to reflect the government's emerging reform priorities.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to Table 6 for individual Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions' status.

FSIM notes that agencies have each progressed work to define how services are delivered and to establish principles to underpin many operational service delivery arrangements. However, there is a need for agencies to define and agree on what constitutes complementary fire services. There is a role for an independent, strategically focused, empowered and resourced body to drive discussions and make strategic decisions where agencies cannot agree or are at an impasse. Without this, FSIM considers there to be a real risk that some Service Level Deed of Agreement (SLDA) schedules will remain outstanding at the end of the third year of reform and that other key pieces of work, including service delivery approaches, will be impeded where there is no clear and agreed definition of complementary fire services.

### **Improving culture and diversity**

The culture and diversity key focus area outlines progress and challenges for agencies towards achieving the government's vision to implement a cultural shift in the fire services, with a strong focus on valuing people and building a safe and respectful sector.

FSIM finds that FRV has made significant progress to develop and communicate its values and CFA is taking decisive action to transparently address cultural issues.

Valuing the work of volunteers and staff is underpinned by each agency's values and culture – and more importantly, how those values and cultures are reflected in service delivery. Since the reform's initiation, volunteers and staff continue to 'get on with the job', services continue to be delivered and FSIM notes that the agencies' values are relatively aligned. However, the operating

context and culture of how values are demonstrated in each agency differs and are further influenced by structural elements such as the secondment model and the co-located station arrangements. Operating in these different cultural contexts can bring challenges, particularly for those seconded staff operating across both agencies.

### **Sustainability of the fire services**

This key focus area outlines progress and challenges for agencies towards achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan's Priority Five objective to ensure the future sustainability of the fire services.

FSIM finds that the majority of work to deliver the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions underpinning sustainable fire services into the future is either underway or completed as at 30 June 2022. This work is positive and FSIM recognises the significant effort of agencies in achieving this progress. However, there is still much to do to comprehensively define workforce costs, workforce and volunteer capability and capacity costs, cost pressures arising from secondment arrangements, and to calculate the cost of the full range of fire agencies' service delivery demands.

Priority Five in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan includes several complex strategic actions that are informed by or influence other Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions. Future actions that inform the long-term sustainability of the fire services model (actions 5.7 and 5.8) are reliant on data, information, or progress from numerous activities outlined in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan. FSIM considers that mapping these interdependent

actions and milestones will support effective delivery of actions 5.7 and 5.8. This will ensure that the evidence base to deliver these actions (for example, understanding of costs of service delivery, asset management planning and costs, and costs associated with workforce and volunteer capabilities and development) is comprehensive and as accurate as possible.

### **Governance**

The Governance key focus area outlines progress and challenges for agencies towards achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of an "effective and productive working relationship across the fire services and other emergency service agencies, building on the principle of interoperability".

FSIM finds that CFA and FRV have made progress towards this objective; however, FSIM observes there is no overarching governance body with the membership, authority, and strategic direction to discuss and resolve fundamental barriers to completing actions.



## Recommendations

In the context of these findings from the key focus areas, FSIM provides the following four recommendations that FSIM considers fundamental to addressing key challenges to effective reform implementation, specifically the finalisation of agreements and work to support sustainable fire services.

This is a 10-year reform, and the majority of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions are yet to be completed. At the conclusion of this second year of reform FSIM notes that much progress has been made and embedding the reform continues. There are challenges that need to be

resolved to complete key actions that are fundamental to reform success; however, FSIM has seen demonstrated commitment by CFA, DJCS and FRV to progress Year Two to Five Implementation Plan activity.

Ref	Recommendations
1	<p><b>Complementary fire services</b></p> <p>The Minister, in consultation with CFA, DJCS and FRV, should develop an agreed definition of complementary fire services, and how this translates to individual service delivery, underpinned by agreed principles to guide the finalisation of outstanding agreements</p>
2	<p><b>Complementary fire services</b></p> <p>The Minister should nominate an appropriately authorised, representative and accountable strategic governance body that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has authority to develop, endorse (and reinforce) detailed, definitive strategic foundational principles required to guide fire services sector-wide reform progress in line with broader emergency management principles and outcomes to ensure the community is provided with efficient and effective fire services</li> <li>• addresses issues where there are broader, strategic, whole-of-government barriers to implementation (for example, the ability to drive legislative change to complete an outstanding service delivery agreement)</li> <li>• oversees shared strategic programs of work or programs with significant implications for multiple agencies (for example, FRV's Health Model, accreditation, or Firefighters Registration Board (FRB)) or where there are shared strategic accountabilities</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>All 'in progress' actions</b></p> <p>CFA and FRV should confirm relevant and appropriate performance measures to demonstrate progress of their Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions towards their objectives</p>
4	<p><b>Fire services sustainability</b></p> <p>The Minister should request CFA, DJCS and FRV to convene a financial sustainability governance body to develop and agree on a project plan that clearly maps interdependent activities and key inputs (for example, initial funding plan actions, strategic workforce plan, CFA operating model, CFA seconded workforce capability and capacity requirements) impacting immediate (years three and four) and long-term funding requirements for CFA and FRV. This mechanism should discuss strategic fire services sustainability issues at a high level (excluding confidential financial data relevant to each individual agency) to understand and resolve strategic interdependent issues and identify opportunity for efficiencies.</p> <p>This plan could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• delivery milestones and timeframes for completion of interdependent actions</li> <li>• identifying what agency is responsible for delivery</li> <li>• oversight that enables monitoring of deliverables.</li> </ul> <p>Bringing together these aspects (at a minimum) may provide an opportunity to identify opportunities for funding synergies across the fire services.</p>

# 1.0

**Glossary**

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## 1.0 Glossary

<b>ACFO</b>	Assistant Chief Fire Officer
<b>BA</b>	Breathing apparatus
<b>CAoV</b>	Country Area of Victoria
<b>CEO</b>	CFA Chief Executive Officer
<b>CFA</b>	Country Fire Authority
<b>CFAI</b>	Centre for Public Service Excellence Commission on Fire Accreditation International
<b>CO</b>	CFA Chief Officer
<b>Co-located stations</b>	For the purposes of this report, co-located stations refer to those stations which were formerly CFA integrated stations
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus
<b>CSBA</b>	Community Safety Building Authority
<b>DEBRiS</b>	Decontamination, Exit, Breathing Apparatus Service Rehab and Staging
<b>Division A<sup>5</sup></b>	Former MFB staff managed under Part A of the <i>Fire Rescue Victoria Operational Employees Interim Enterprise Agreement 2020</i>
<b>Division B<sup>5</sup></b>	Former CFA staff covered under Part B of the <i>Fire Rescue Victoria Operational Employees Interim Enterprise Agreement 2020</i>
<b>DJCS</b>	Department of Justice and Community Safety
<b>EBA</b>	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
<b>EMV</b>	Emergency Management Victoria
<b>Fire Services Statement</b>	<i>2017 Fire Services Statement</i>
<b>FSPL Act</b>	<i>Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012</i>
<b>FRB</b>	Firefighters Registration Board
<b>FRV Commissioner</b>	Fire Rescue Commissioner
<b>FRV</b>	Fire Rescue Victoria
<b>FRV Act</b>	<i>Fire Rescue Victoria Act 1958</i>
<b>FRV ELT</b>	Fire Rescue Victoria Executive Leadership Team

<sup>5</sup> FSIM uses the terminology Division A and Division B throughout this report in place of other terminology (such as “former MFB” and “former CFA” operational staff). Division A and Division B terms were commonly used throughout FSIM engagement, reflect the current terminology used by career firefighters, and are consistent with the terms used in the current FRV Operational Employees EBA.

## 1.0 Glossary

<b>FRV Operational Employees EBA</b>	<i>Fire Rescue Victoria Operational Employees Interim Enterprise Agreement 2020</i>
<b>FSIM</b>	Fire Services Implementation Monitor
<b>FSIM's FY 2020–21 Annual Report</b>	<i>Fire Services Implementation Monitor Annual Report 2020-21: Setting the foundations</i>
<b>FSOC</b>	Fire Services Operational Committee
<b>FTE</b>	Full-time equivalent
<b>FY</b>	Financial year
<b>GARS</b>	Greater Alarm Response System
<b>HAZMAT</b>	Hazardous materials
<b>HoA</b>	Heads of Agency Steering Committee
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communications technology
<b>IT</b>	Information technology
<b>IPs</b>	Interoperability procedures
<b>JSOPs</b>	Joint Standard Operating Procedures
<b>MFB</b>	Metropolitan Fire Brigade
<b>Minister</b>	Minister for Emergency Services
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of understanding
<b>OH&amp;S</b>	Occupational health and safety
<b>OIC</b>	Officer in Charge
<b>PAD</b>	Practice Areas for Drills
<b>PPC</b>	Personal protective clothing
<b>PTA</b>	Professional, technical and administrative
<b>SLDA</b>	Service Level Deed of Agreement
<b>Step-up</b>	The term “step-up” refers to occurrences when FRV staff are called to an incident in regional Victoria and replacement support then comes from another FRV station or district. The term step-up is used interchangeably with move-up.



## 1.0 Glossary

<b>Tenancy Agreement</b>	The Lease and Licensing Agreement for the 34 co-located stations <sup>6</sup>
<b>UFU</b>	United Firefighters Union of Australia – Victoria Branch
<b>Vacancy and relief</b>	<p>The Secondment Agreement relates to various categories of staff seconded to CFA. For the purposes of this report, the terms ‘vacancy’ and ‘relief’ relate specifically to only Commander and ACFO positions seconded to CFA from FRV as defined under the Secondment Agreement.</p> <p>‘Vacancy’ refers to the situation where a substantive Commander or ACFO position (as defined under the Secondment Agreement) does not have an FRV seconded staff member formally appointed to that role.</p> <p>‘Relief’ refers to the situation where a Commander or ACFO seconded to CFA is absent from their substantive position (for example, on extended leave) and FRV is required to provide a suitably qualified employee to backfill the position.</p>
<b>VFBV</b>	Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria
<b>VSP</b>	Volunteer Support Package
<b>Year One Plan</b>	Minister for Emergency Services’ <i>Year One Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan (2020–21)</i>
<b>Year Two to Five Implementation Plan</b>	Minister for Emergency Services’ <i>Year Two to Five Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan</i> , November 2021

<sup>6</sup> There are 33 CFA brigades at sites that are now operated by FRV and one co-located site (Lara) where CFA retains the asset and FRV is the tenant.

# 2.0

## **Introduction**

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**Fire services reform**

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**Fire services reform outcomes**

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**Year Two to Five  
Implementation Plan**

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**Role of FSM**

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### Fire services reform

In 2017, the Victorian Government released the Fire Services Statement. The Fire Services Statement was a culmination of eight separate reviews into Victoria's fire services since 2009 and acknowledged that many issues and recommendations arising from these reviews had not been addressed. The Fire Services Statement set out a vision for a modern fire services model for a safer Victoria and is underpinned by the legislated requirement for the Minister to prepare Implementation Plan(s) that outline the actions needed to realise government's vision for fire services.

As part of the new fire services model, the Victorian Government committed to, and enshrined in legislation, the role and function of the FSIM. The FSIM provides the community with a level of transparency and assurance on whether actions under the Minister's Implementation Plan(s) are on track to meet the objectives of the reform.

This year two report provides FSIM's second year fire services reform assessment, covering the implementation period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, with reference to the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan. The purpose of this report is to:

- deliver on FSIM's legislated function to monitor progress and effectiveness against the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions
- provide assurance to the community by identifying risk relating to agencies achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action objectives and reform outcomes and noting achievements
- provide a formal record of activity taken by agencies against key actions in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan
- outline the operations of FSIM over FY 2021–22.

On 1 July 2020, Victoria's new fire services model was implemented through the establishment of FRV, which brought together the former Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) and CFA career firefighters, and restored CFA to a community-based, volunteer firefighting organisation.

The reform restructure resulted in a range of staff and asset transfers from CFA to FRV, which included associated property, rights, liabilities, and obligations. Key elements transferred to FRV are outlined in Figures 1 and 2 below and include:

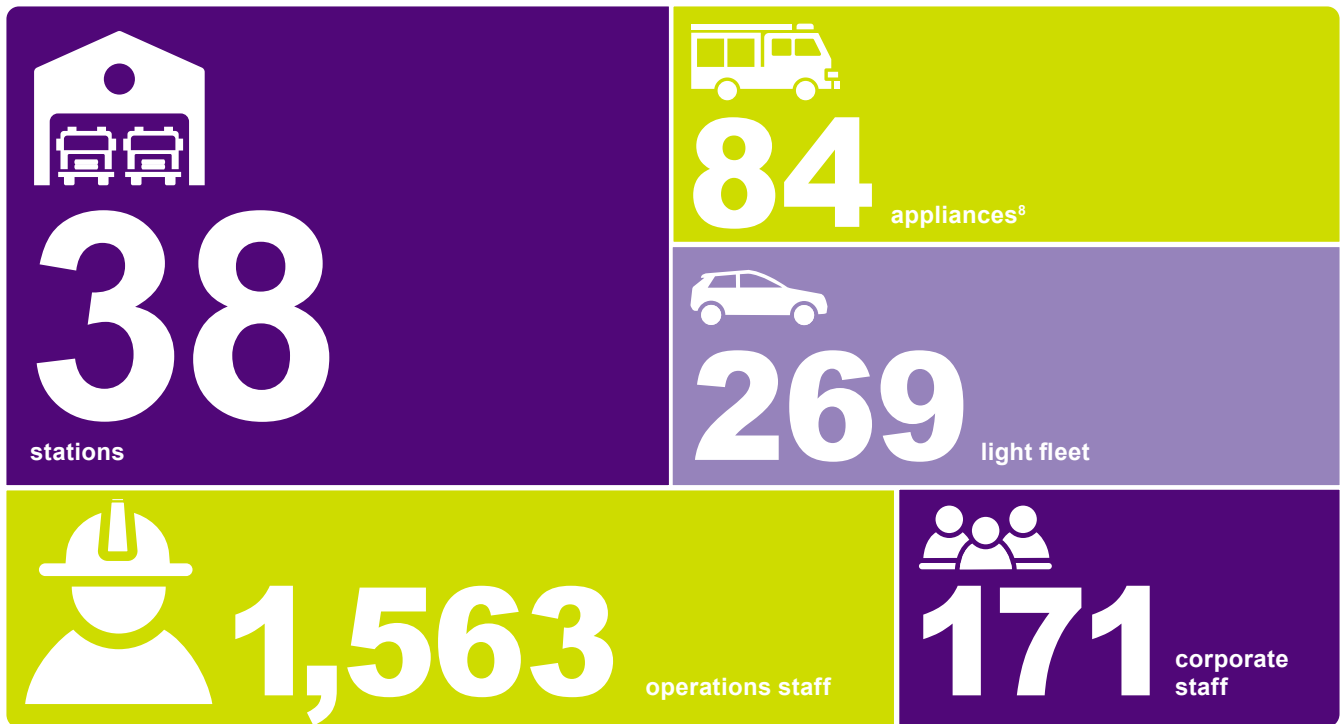
- all staff covered by the Operational Staff Agreement (1,563 positions), together with 171 professional, technical and administration (PTA) positions
- some former CFA response areas, particularly in Melbourne's peri-urban fringe and Victoria's regional centres
- 38 integrated<sup>7</sup> and career-only fire stations and specified appliances
- firefighting equipment and other tools of trade associated with staff and stations transferred
- rights and responsibilities (including funding) of specified projects.

<sup>7</sup> Pre-reform, CFA used the term "integrated" when referring to stations where both CFA volunteers and CFA career staff were located. Post reform, agencies refer to stations with CFA volunteer and FRV career staff as "co-located" stations. 37 stations were transferred with one station (Lara) tenanted by FRV but owned by CFA.

## Fire services reform (continued)

### Summary of key transfers from CFA to FRV

Figure 1: Transferred assets.

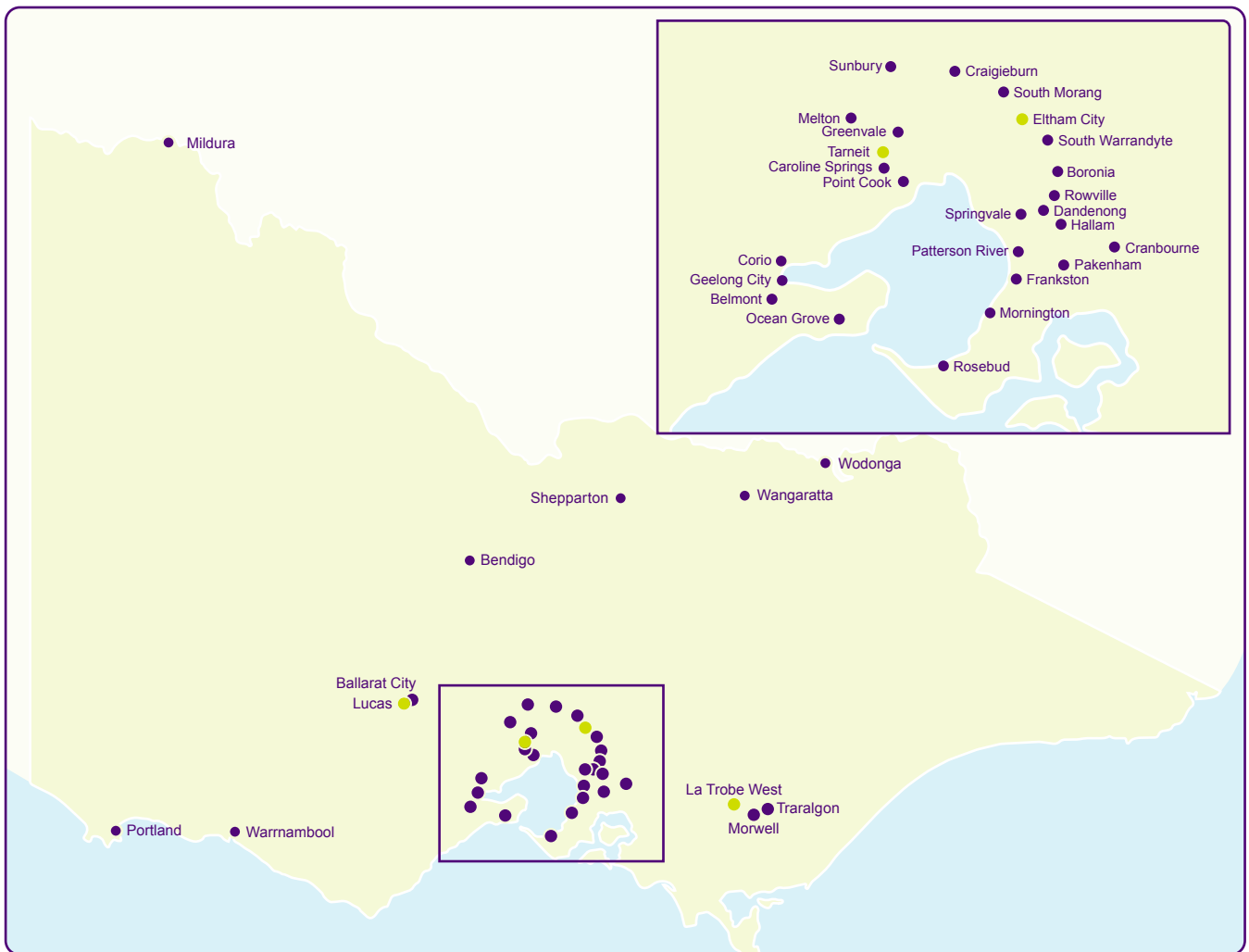


<sup>8</sup> FSIM FY 2021-22 information request.



## Fire services reform (continued)

Figure 2: Map of stations transferred to FRV as part of reform



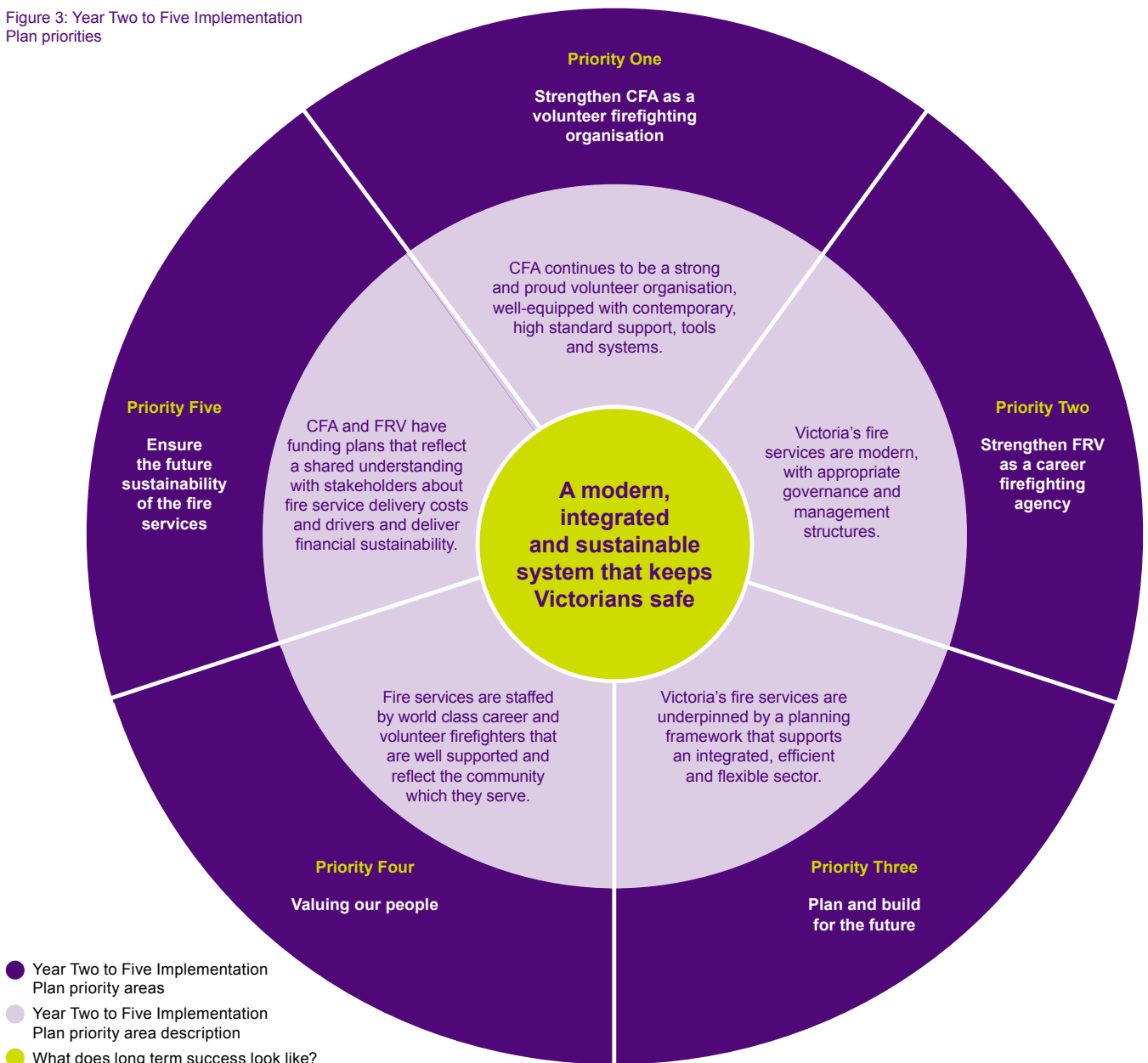
## Fire services reform outcomes

The Fire Services Statement provided success statements, or “outcomes” for reformed fire services. These outcomes informed legislative amendments and supporting implementation plan(s) priorities.

The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan retained the same priorities as the *Year One Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan 2020-21* (Year One Plan) with one exception to Priority Four, amending “valuing our firefighters” to “valuing our people”.

Figure 3 outlines the linkages between the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan priorities and Fire Services Statement outcomes.

Figure 3: Year Two to Five Implementation Plan priorities



### Year Two to Five 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 FRV Act. Supporting Implementation Plan(s), and amended iterations (for example, the Year Two to Five 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 Fire Services Statement in carrying out their functions
- the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV, including 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 November 2021, the Minister tabled the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan in Parliament which set out 41 actions across five priority areas to be delivered across four years of reform. It outlined success statements at year five and updated actions to transition the government's focus from reform initiation to strategic and future focused actions to operationalise and embed reform priorities. The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan outlines CFA, DJCS and FRV actions that contribute to delivering reform goals while continuing to deliver fire and rescue services to the Victorian community. These actions were recommended by the agencies and the Minister approved the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan.

The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan includes many reframed, multi-year activities and strategic actions from the Year One Plan and also includes new actions that reflect organisational reform priorities and build on the achievements from year one.<sup>9</sup> CFA, DJCS and FRV report quarterly to the Minister on the status of the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions through a reporting process coordinated by DJCS.

### Role of Fire Services Implementation Monitor

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 to support delivery of the FSIM's functions and duties under the FRV Act. FSIM and the supporting office operate in accordance with the Victorian Public Sector Values<sup>10</sup>, which also underpin FSIM's monitoring and evaluation approach. Additional information on FSIM's methodology for assessment can be found in the following section.

<sup>9</sup> Victorian Government, 2021, *Year Two to Five Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan*, Parliament of Victoria <<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/assembly/tailed-documents/search-tabled-documents-database/details/3/11055>>, pg 10.

<sup>10</sup> Victorian Government, 2022, *Public Sector Values*, Victorian Public Sector Commission <<https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/ethics-behaviours-culture/public-sector-values/>>

# 3.0

## Methodology

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Context

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## Context

This annual report delivers on FSIM's obligations under section 131(1) of the FRV Act to monitor and review the progress of CFA and FRV in carrying out the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan. Specifically, FSIM's obligations are to assess:

- the progress of CFA and FRV in completing an implementation action
- the effectiveness of the methods used by, or actions taken by, CFA and FRV in carrying out an implementation action
- the impact of the fire services reforms on the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV
- ongoing efforts to improve the interaction between CFA and FRV.

By assessing and reporting on the effectiveness and efficiency of reform progress, FSIM provides transparency and assurance to the public that government and fire services agencies are held accountable for the ongoing implementation of Victoria's fire services reforms. FSIM also aims to support a continuous improvement approach to reform implementation through identifying potential opportunities and challenges for agencies in meeting reform objectives.

## Scope of FSIM's assessment

FSIM's year two methodology takes a risk-based approach, assessing progress of 29 Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions that, if not implemented effectively, FSIM considers could cause the greatest risk to achieving reform outcomes and objectives as outlined in the Fire Services Statement and the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan. FSIM identified the 29 actions based on key findings made in FSIM's FY 2020-21 Annual Report<sup>11</sup>, reform risks identified by the agencies through various governance oversight groups,<sup>12</sup> and FSIM's assessment of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions that best support embedding reform.

FSIM grouped the 29 actions into five key focus areas. The key focus areas summarise the context, scope, objectives, and broad issues impacting progress of the grouped actions and comprise:

1. Complementary fire services
2. Culture and diversity
3. Fire services sustainability
4. Governance
5. Service Provision.<sup>13</sup>

Each key focus area contains a series of lines of inquiry. A line of inquiry comprises Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions that

have a shared overarching objective or purpose. In the case of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priority Five, FSIM considered each action as an individual line of inquiry, given their significant strategic impact on the sustainability of the fire services. The line of inquiry assesses both the progress of the actions and outlines opportunities and challenges, as identified by FSIM, for agencies in meeting the relevant objective. Where an action is noted by the Minister as completed, FSIM also makes an assessment on the effectiveness of the relevant agency/ies in meeting the action objective. The five key focus areas and their respective lines of inquiry are outlined in Table 1. Table 2 provides a more detailed summary of the key focus areas, lines of inquiry, overarching objectives and topics.

FSIM also includes in this report a status update of all 41 Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions as reported to the Minister, via the reporting process coordinated by DJCS at Table 6, in Section 5.0.

FSIM undertook an additional internal focus area – service provision – in the year two assessment. This focus area focused on understanding and reviewing workflow processes to explore any potential impact of reform on key processes.

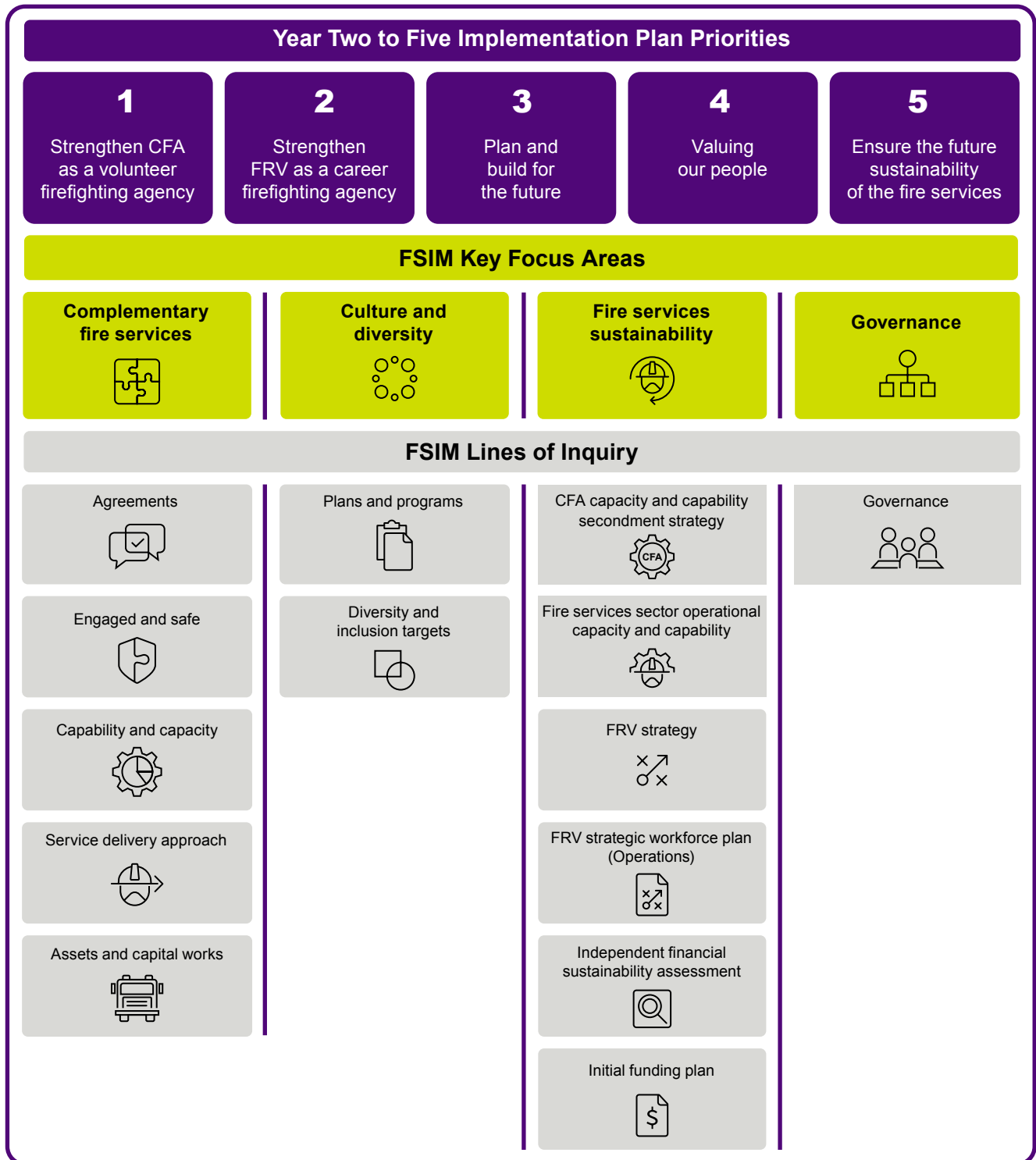
<sup>11</sup> Fire Services Implementation Monitor, 2021, *Fire Services Implementation Monitor Annual Report 2020-21: Setting the foundations*, Victorian Government <<https://www.vic.gov.au/fire-services-implementation-monitor-annual-report-2020-21>>.

<sup>12</sup> Joint governance oversight groups comprise HoA, FSOC and six sub-committees comprising: operational communications; community safety; training; infrastructure and protective equipment; specialist response; and doctrine.

<sup>13</sup> While FSIM requested information from agencies regarding the service provision key focus area, FSIM has not provided a summary in this report noting that there are no Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions to report on. Information obtained through the service provision key focus area provided background knowledge relevant to the remaining four key focus areas.

## Scope of FSIM’s assessment (continued)

Table 1: Year Two to Five Implementation Plan



## Scope of FSIM's assessment (continued)

Table 2: FSIM's year two assessment approach

<b>FSIM Key Focus Area</b>	<b>FSIM Line of Inquiry</b>	<b>Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective</b>	<b>Year Two to Five Implementation Plan topics</b>
<b>Complementary Fire Services</b>	<b>Agreements</b>	An effective and productive working relationship across the fire services and other emergency service agencies, building on the principle of interoperability	Harmonisation, SLDAs, Delegations, memorandum of understanding (MOU)
	<b>Engaged and safe workplace</b>	CFA: An engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision-making and feels safe and respected  FRV: An engaged workforce that feels safe and respected	CFA Engagement Framework, FRV Health Model, FRV EBAs
	<b>Capability and capacity</b>	Firefighters have the right skills and access to training and support and ensure the future sustainability of the fire services	FRB, CFA health and safety initiatives
	<b>Assets and capital works</b>	Firefighters have access to the right resources to do their job and keep them safe	CFA Fleet replacement program, Transfer of assets, Capital works
	<b>Service delivery approach</b>	CFA: An engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision-making and feels safe and respected  FRV: Strong links with the community which enable it to provide a tailored service that reflects community risks	CFA operating model, FRV accreditation
<b>Culture and diversity</b>	<b>Plans and programs</b>	CFA has an engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision-making and feels safe and respected, and both agencies recognise and value the work of their people and reflect the diversity of the Victorian community	CFA Volunteer Support Package, FRV Values, CFA cultural change programs, FRV diversity and inclusion initiatives
	<b>Diversity and inclusion targets</b>	CFA and FRV promote cultural inclusiveness and diversity through fit for purpose plans, programs, and initiatives	Diversity and inclusion targets, workforce planning, turnover and retention
<b>Fire Services Sustainability</b>	<b>Workforce sustainability</b>	Agencies can identify and quantify current service delivery drivers and their costs, as well as identify opportunities for efficiencies, improve performance and provide insights into ensuring business and operational practices embedded today, are viable and sustainable into the future	FRV Strategy, FRV Strategic Workforce Plan (Operations), CFA Capability Statement, Operational capability and capacity sector review of CFA and FRV
	<b>Financial sustainability</b>	CFA and FRV have an agreed understanding of financial sustainability, including how it can be achieved. Funding plans are supported by an evidence-based cost and performance baseline analysis	CFA Capability Statement, Operational capability and capacity sector review of CFA and FRV, FRV Strategy, FRV Strategic Workforce Plan, independent financial sustainability assessment, Initial funding plans
<b>Governance</b>	<b>Governance</b>	An effective and productive working relationship across the fire services and other emergency service agencies, building on the principle of interoperability	Joint governance arrangements, reform governance more broadly

## Assessing progress and defining effectiveness

FSIM is required to assess both the progress and effectiveness of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions under section 131(1)(a) of the FRV Act. This report provides a progress summary for each of the 29 actions based on information received from agencies, noting that FSIM determines effectiveness once a Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action has been noted by the Minister as complete. FSIM assesses effectiveness as an action having met its action and overarching objective, as set out in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan, with supporting evidence.

Two actions were completed in the year two assessment period: actions 5.5 and 5.6 within the Priority Five: “Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services” workstream. FSIM requested information from CFA, DJCS and FRV to obtain evidence that an action had been completed and to determine whether the output delivered on the action’s objective. FSIM includes an assessment of effectiveness for these two actions in their respective lines of inquiry in section nine of this report.

The fire services agencies are two years into a 10-year reform program and the majority of actions are yet to be completed. To inform agencies’ implementation progress, this report includes key findings in the relevant lines of inquiry and highlights opportunities and challenges for the agencies to consider as they progress delivering on Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives. The identification of opportunities and challenges is based on an assessment of documentation provided by agencies through information requests, stakeholder engagement, and FSIM observations at various forums including HoA meetings.

CFA and FRV currently collect and report on a broad range of performance metrics, including through their outcomes framework reporting, that can help to provide insights on progress towards Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives. FSIM considers agency-defined performance measures and associated metrics relevant to making assessments on effectiveness in future years and has included this as a recommendation for year two.

## Information sources

FSIM collected information throughout the year via multiple channels and stakeholders to inform the year two assessment. FSIM reviewed and analysed documentations, attended events and meetings, and engaged staff and volunteers to collect information for this report. FSIM’s key information sources are summarised in Table 3.

In addition to the formal evidence received as part of FSIM’s evidence gathering process, this report also took into account historical reports into Victoria’s fire and emergency services, such as the 2015 review by David O’Byrne and other inquiries into Victoria’s emergency services, such as the independent review into Victoria’s ambulance services. While the current reformed fire services are not directly accountable for the implementation of any recommendations or actions in these historical reports, they do provide a useful reference point for many of the challenges seen in the current reform’s implementation. Learning from the past and taking those learnings into the future is a valuable exercise, and central to the premise of continuous fire services improvement.

FSIM’s approach to the collection, use and disclosure of information is underpinned by its obligations under section 138 of the FRV Act. FSIM maintained its commitment to protecting the anonymity of staff and volunteers who provided information to FSIM in the preparation of this report. The information gathered was limited to the development of FSIM’s assessment of the fire services’ progress and effectiveness in implementing reform, and information and views provided by staff and volunteers referred to in this report is de-identified.



## Information sources (continued)

Table 3: FSIM's key information sources

Type of Information source	Information sources included
<b>Document review and analysis</b>	<p>Legislation, agency and departmental policy and guidelines</p> <hr/> <p>CFA, DJCS and FRV documents and data, including strategic plans, reports (including outcomes reporting and Year Two to Five Implementation Plan reporting), communication materials (e.g. letters and emails) and meeting minutes and papers</p> <hr/> <p>Victorian fire services' reviews and literature reviews</p>
<b>Event and meeting attendance</b>	<p>CFA staff and volunteer events, forums, and presentations</p> <hr/> <p>HoA weekly meeting observations</p> <hr/> <p>FRV Strategic Advisory Committee meeting observations</p> <hr/> <p>Monthly senior executive meetings with each of CFA, DJCS and FRV</p> <hr/> <p>Quarterly meeting with the Minister for Emergency Services</p>
<b>Staff and volunteer engagement</b>	<p>Virtual and in-person site visits at fire stations and brigade locations across Victoria</p> <hr/> <p>Staff and volunteer interviews, focus groups and questionnaires</p> <hr/> <p>CFA's ACFO / Manager Community Safety / District Planning Committee Chair Forum, CFA Co-Located Brigades Forum, CFA/VFBV State Championships</p> <hr/> <p>Individual topic-based meetings with CFA, DJCS and FRV corporate staff as required</p>

## Stakeholder engagement

### Scope of FSIM engagement

#### Targeted engagement with specific cohorts

FSIM's year two engagement program primarily focused on discussions with CFA members and FRV staff at selected co-located stations and peri-urban areas. FSIM adopted this approach because it considers these cohorts to be particularly affected by the reforms through changed reporting lines, impacts of the development and operationalisation of the Tenancy Agreement, and transition of resources (including staff and assets). As such, the majority of staff with whom FSIM engaged in FY 2021–22 were FRV Division B staff and CFA volunteers in co-located areas or CFA regions adjacent to FRV response areas. Staff and volunteer commentary included in this report is reflective of the experience of these cohorts who engaged with FSIM.

FSIM acknowledges that, in electing to focus its year two consultation on co-located stations and brigades, it has heard perspectives and issues that may not reflect the diversity of views across the fire services in Victoria. As such, the experiences of FRV firefighters and support staff in metropolitan Melbourne and CFA staff and volunteers in many areas in the Country Area of Victoria (CAoV) do not feature prominently in this report. Within this context, it is worth noting that there are over 1,200 CFA brigades and 85 FRV stations and FSIM engaged directly with a small subset of CFA's 52,000+ volunteers and 1,151 staff<sup>14</sup> and FRV's 4,298 staff.<sup>15</sup> Issues raised by staff and

members at co-located stations FSIM engaged with should not be construed as representative of the broader experience of the reforms across all stations or brigades and this report does not reflect all the diverse experiences and views of CFA members and FRV staff across the State. However, targeting these discussions has informed a focused summary of the key issues in those areas most impacted by reform and FSIM considers reflecting those voices is a critical step to support staff and volunteers to continue to move forward constructively.

In addition to staff and volunteers, FSIM also met regularly with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) who offered suggestions and provided information on activities, collaboration and Year Two to Five Implementation Plan progress more generally. The same offer to engage was extended to UFU via FRV; however, engagement with this stakeholder did not occur during the reporting period and as at 30 June 2022 the offer to UFU to engage with FSIM remained available.

FSIM conducted interviews and discussions with over 360 CFA volunteers and FRV firefighters across Victoria in addition to convening numerous discussions with corporate staff throughout the year. FSIM spoke with over 155 CFA brigade volunteers, 111 FRV station staff, and 87 Assistant Chief Fire Officers (ACFOs) and Commanders, (predominantly secondees from Division B), across 49 stations and brigades.

Engagement activities were guided by structured questions and formats, outlined in further detail below. While FSIM used a structured approach to engagement activities, FSIM found that a number of staff and volunteers, particularly those in co-located stations, requested the opportunity to raise concerns and issues outside of FSIM's structured questions. Where these requests were made, efforts to accommodate discussions were taken. However, FSIM notes that it is outside FSIM's remit to resolve individual issues or grievances, provide personal advice and support, or address complaints about services provided by government organisations or fire services agencies.

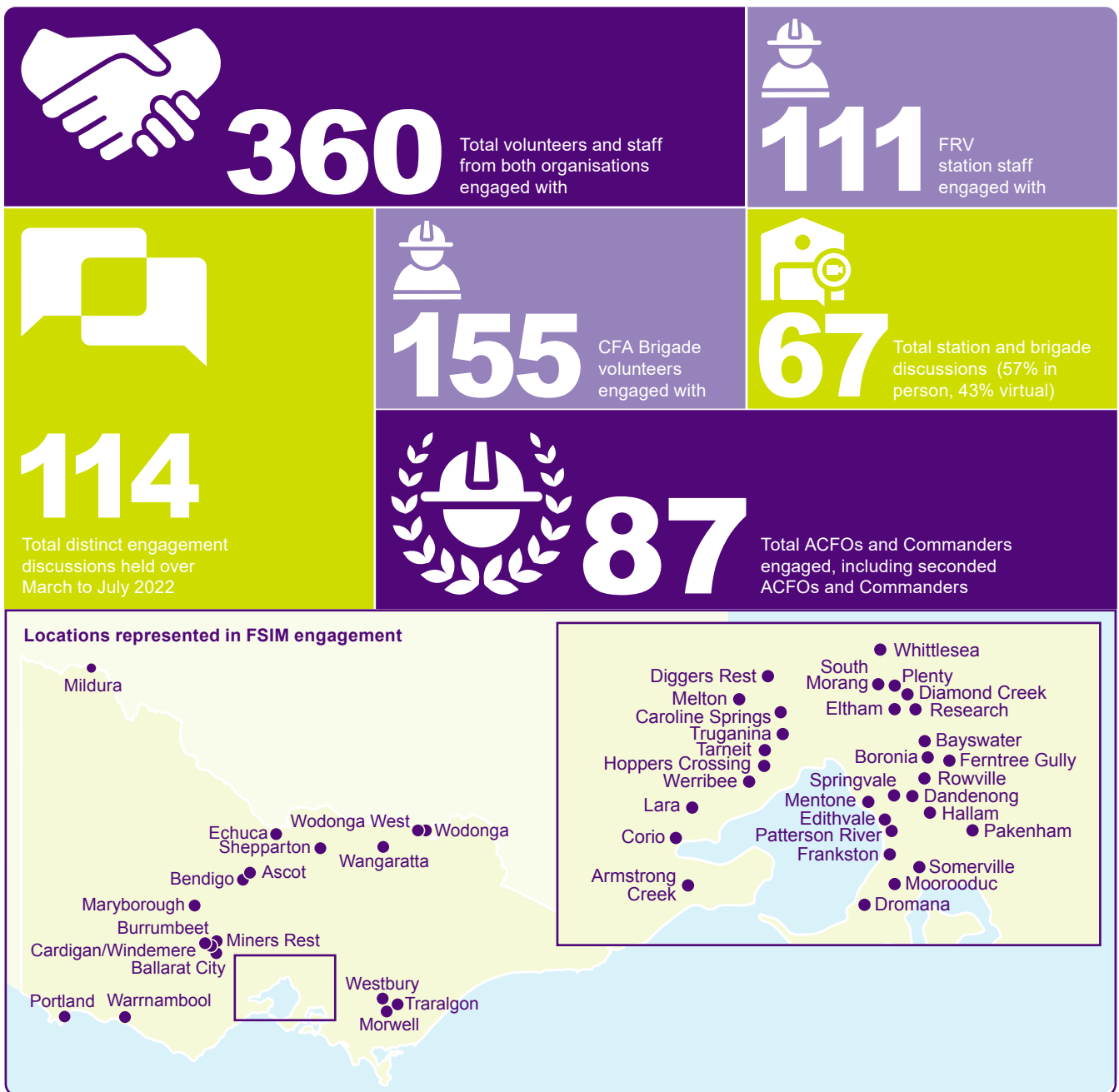
A summary of FSIM's stakeholder engagement activity across Victoria is outlined in Figure 4.

<sup>14</sup> Headcount current as of Country Fire Authority, 2021, *CFA Annual Report 2020–21*, pg 15.

<sup>15</sup> Headcount current as of Fire Rescue Victoria, 2021, *FRV Annual Report 2020–21*, pg 32.

## Stakeholder engagement (continued)

Figure 4: Summary of FSIM Engagement Activity



## Stakeholder engagement (continued)

### Engagement undertaken at a specific point in time

FSIM engaged with fire services staff and volunteers throughout FY 2021–22, with the majority of site visits taking place between April and June 2022. FSIM acknowledges that feedback was provided at a specific point in time and that the relevant agency/ies may have since addressed or partially addressed concerns raised by individuals. FSIM has included anecdotal commentary where multiple accounts of the same issue were received or where FSIM considers an issue should be conveyed to an agency/ies for consideration.

### Engagement approaches

FSIM conducted interviews, provided questionnaires, and ran focus groups with corporate and operational staff. FSIM was invited by CFA to attend its post-season ACFOs/Manager Community Safety/District Planning Committee Chair Forum, where FSIM conducted a workshop with ACFOs to understand key reform related opportunities and challenges as identified by ACFOs. CFA also invited FSIM to attend other CFA events to speak confidentially to volunteers and staff, including the Co-Located Brigades Forum and the CFA/VFBV State Championships.

### Co-located station and brigade engagement and station visits

Discussions at co-located stations and with brigades co-located with or adjacent to FRV response areas were divided into cohorts, with separate discussions being offered to ACFOs and Commanders, FRV station staff and CFA members. FSIM accommodated requests for individual meetings where possible. Open-ended engagement questions were developed to guide conversations and were provided to the

coordinators from both agencies ahead of the discussions. Questions prompted participants to reflect on areas such as:

- how roles and responsibilities had changed since the reform commenced
- whether there was evidence of operational impacts resulting from the changes
- whether improvements or risks to service delivery could be identified
- how the working relationship between FRV and CFA had changed
- what participants considered was needed for the reform to be successful.

At the start of each engagement session FSIM provided a verbal overview of how participants' privacy and anonymity would be protected. This guidance was also stated on the optional questionnaires provided to participants. FSIM advised all participants that, following the engagement activities, de-identified information collected through the engagement activities may be made public.

Equitable timing was provided for discussions with each cohort, with discussions taking place both inside ordinary working hours<sup>16</sup> and outside ordinary working hours to accommodate both staff and members schedules. Where an incident at station required the discussion to stop, FSIM offered opportunities to reschedule. Following discussions, copies of the questionnaire were left with station staff, senior leadership and CFA members and were emailed to the coordinators to provide to others who may have wanted to provide their reflections but were not able to attend on the day.

CFA members and FRV staff were also able to contact FSIM directly through the [engagement@fsim.vic.gov.au](mailto:engagement@fsim.vic.gov.au) email (published on the FSIM website) to provide information or request a confidential discussion (for example, without having to disclose this request or information to other staff or members).<sup>17</sup>

### Focus groups, forums and workshops

FSIM ran dedicated focus group discussions on several issues within FSIM's key focus areas. These included discussions focused on key areas of reform activity such as what principles were guiding decision-making and how delivery of some services was impacted by the current (and largely unfinalised) arrangements. These focus groups invited participants to identify demonstrable impacts to staff, volunteers and the community, and took place with both agencies individually.

FSIM ran a targeted workshop session at the CFA-led ACFO/Manager Community Safety/District Planning Committee Chair Forum where ACFOs were invited to provide their insights on benefits and challenges in seven areas addressed by a number of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions:

1. quality of service to community
2. volunteer and staff safety
3. accessibility and quality of resources
4. capability impacts
5. volunteer and staff engagement
6. culture and diversity
7. collaboration between CFA and FRV on the fireground and at station.

<sup>16</sup> The Fair Work Ombudsman defines ordinary working hours as an employee's normal and regular hours of work, which do not attract overtime rates.

<sup>17</sup> Individuals who engaged with FSIM via this channel were also advised that FSIM cannot resolve individual issues, provide personal advice and support, or address complaints about services provided by government organisations or fire services agencies.

## Stakeholder engagement (continued)

Participants were provided time to discuss topics at their tables. FSIM staff then consolidated these benefits and issues, and participants were invited to review each area and vote on benefits and challenges they agreed with. These benefits and challenges are summarised below, and are referenced throughout this report, in different contexts.

The top challenges identified by ACFOs through this activity were vacancies impacting ACFO capacity to engage meaningfully with staff and volunteers and ACFOs working under two doctrines. The top improvements identified by ACFOs through this activity were improved provision of resources and increase in secondees and improvements to the resource model.

FSIM's supporting staff also made themselves available at the CFA ACFO/Manager Community Safety/District Planning Committee Chair Forum to confidentially engage with participants for one on one or group discussions, as determined by the participants. FSIM and supporting staff were also invited to attend the CFA's Co-Located Brigades Forum and the CFA/VFBV State Championships and made themselves available for individual or group discussions, as determined by the participants. These discussions were guided by the same format, questions and principles as the co-located stations engagement activities.

## Factors influencing FSIM's year two approach

### Timeframe for delivery of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions

This annual report covers the second year of a 10-year reform program. Reform is still at a relatively early stage, with many Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions to be embedded over the life of the reform program. In some instances, it is too early to determine whether these actions are effective, noting the scale and complexity of reform.

Of the 29 actions assessed through the key focus areas, two were completed within the year two reporting period and these two actions are assessed for effectiveness against their objectives. For the remaining 27 actions, FSIM identified opportunities and challenges for agencies in delivering actions to meet their respective, overarching Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action objectives.

### Need for agreed performance measures directly linked to action objectives

As part of its year two information request process to CFA, DJCS and FRV, FSIM requested that agencies identify relevant performance indicators for assessed actions. While agencies did provide performance

metrics, FSIM seeks confirmation from the agencies on which metrics they are using to demonstrate effectiveness towards a Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective. Agencies may find it beneficial to identify and confirm performance measures for actions as they progress implementation, to support demonstrating effectiveness of an action.

### Reference to confidential information

Under section 138 of the FRV Act, FSIM must not use or disclose confidential information obtained or received in the course of, or as a result of, the performance of FSIM's functions, except as permitted by the FRV Act. Where findings may relate to confidential information provided to FSIM, or has the possibility of identifying an individual, FSIM has provided more generalised commentary and general reference to issues.



## Report structure

Section five of this report contains a status update of all 41 Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions as reported to the Minister, via the reporting process coordinated by DJCS.

Sections six to ten of this report contain a summary assessment of each key focus area and an assessment against each of the lines of inquiry that sit within the key focus area.

Each key focus area provides:

- a summary of contextual information FSIM considers important to frame the assessment
- a summary of the broad issues FSIM considers are impacting delivery across all actions under the lines of inquiry
- key findings, where relevant.

- Each line of inquiry incorporates:
- a summary of progress to date for each action
- FSIM's assessment of the effectiveness of agencies in delivering actions to meet their Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective (for completed actions 5.5 and 5.6)
- key opportunities and challenges in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives as identified by FSIM (for actions that are still in progress)
- FSIM's recommendations to address key risks, improve practices, or adopt a more strategic approach.

Section eleven of this report outlines FSIM's concluding remarks for this year two report.

## Assurance principles

FSIM's assurance activities are guided internally by an adapted set of assurance principles, outlined in Table 4 below.

FSIM adapted the principles outlined in the *Assurance Framework for Emergency Management*<sup>18</sup> to incorporate two additional principles of independence and transparency that reflect FSIM's functions. These principles guide FSIM's approach in delivering a consistent and coordinated assessment of CFA's, DJCS's and FRV's implementation of the fire services reform program. As part of its commitment to these principles, FSIM has used this year two annual report to identify potential opportunities and challenges early and communicate them to agencies to support continuous improvement and progress towards Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.

Table 4 provides an overview of the assurance principles FSIM applied to its assessment approach in preparing this report.

<sup>18</sup> FSIM's assurance principles are adapted from Inspector-General for Emergency Management, 2019, *Assurance Framework for Emergency Management*.

## Assurance principles (continued)

Table 4: FSIM assurance principles

Principles	How FSIM applies assurance principles in its approach
Continuous improvement	FSIM appreciates and considers the complexity of the fire services in a rapidly changing context when assessing actions. FSIM places value on CFA and FRV in continuing to work together to deliver modern and sustainable fire services and keep Victorians safe
Collaboration	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.

## Recommendations

FSIM makes recommendations in this report under section 133(d)(ii) of the FRV Act. This requires FSIM to provide written or oral advice to the Minister about corrective action by an agency that FSIM considers necessary to address a concern in relation to a Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action. FSIM makes recommendations when multiple findings and observations identify an opportunity to improve practice, address key risks or adopt a more strategic approach. FSIM considers recommendations made in this report should support agencies to realise the objectives of the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan and Victoria's 10-year fire service reform program more broadly.

# 4.0

## **Structural elements influencing reform implementation**

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Context

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Secondment model

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Consultation requirements

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### Context

The progress and effectiveness of agencies in delivering actions against the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan must be considered in the context of key structural elements. Specifically, FSIM has observed two fundamental elements that impact both how agencies each operate as an organisation and how the agencies operate effectively within the reformed fire services model. These elements include the implementation of the secondment model and industrial consultation requirements, and a summary is outlined below to provide context for the reader.

### Secondment model

The fire services reform fundamentally changed fire services provision through establishing FRV to bring together MFB and CFA career firefighters whilst reverting CFA to a volunteer firefighting organisation.<sup>19</sup> The essential element of reform was that career firefighters would be located within FRV and volunteer firefighters in CFA, and that CFA volunteer firefighters would have operational management and support provided by FRV operational leaders (ACFO/Commanders) seconded to CFA.

An initial requirement of reform was for CFA and FRV to establish a secondment agreement. On 31 October 2020, CFA and FRV executed the Secondment Agreement, enabling FRV to make operational staff available to CFA to provide operational and management support to volunteer brigades. Under the Secondment Agreement, five classifications of FRV operational staff were seconded to CFA:

- ACFOs
- Commanders
- Instructors
- PAD<sup>20</sup> Supervisors
- PAD<sup>21</sup> Operators.

The secondment model is such that secondees are employed by FRV and wear an FRV uniform, but when seconded to CFA are under the command and control of the CFA Chief Officer (CO). Secondees are governed by the employment conditions of their relevant Enterprise Bargaining

Agreement (EBA). Further, secondees navigate two operating environments and organisational cultures with formal line management coming from FRV while delivering outcomes for the CFA.

Since the commencement of the Secondment Agreement, both CFA and FRV have raised concerns at the brigade, station, and corporate levels regarding secondment arrangements including:

#### Management of vacancies and relief positions

- CFA has experienced ongoing vacant Commander, Commander reliever and ACFO positions with a shortage of people adequately qualified for roles and the loss of flexibility to easily backfill vacant positions. In some cases, this has led to operational gaps in CFA's service delivery and addressing vacancies and relief has been listed by CFA on the HoA agenda each week for the duration of year two's assessment period. FSIM notes that CFA experienced ongoing Commander and ACFO vacancy and relief issues prior to reform; however, these issues are yet to be resolved. It is important to note that while the reform does not have a specific outcome to resolve vacancy and relief issues, the increased pool of potential resources following reform could provide an avenue for some resolution
- FRV has experienced challenges in appointing staff into some seconded positions, particularly in regional locations.

<sup>19</sup> Victorian Government, 2017, *Fire Services Statement*, pg 5.

<sup>20</sup> Practice Area for Drills (PAD)

<sup>21</sup> Practice Area for Drills (PAD)

## Secondment model (continued)

### Operational visibility of seconded staff

- CFA does not have clear line of sight of significant disciplinary and occupational health and safety (OH&S) issues with secondees as, despite those employees working in a CFA work environment, they are governed by the employment conditions of their relevant EBAs. Moreover, CFA is not able to investigate or resolve matters concerning the conduct of secondees but must rather refer the matter to the FRV Commissioner for resolution
- FRV experienced challenges in not having direct line of sight or control of secondee costs such as overtime and allowances, which impacted FRV’s ability to identify costs at the outset of reform.

### Managing arrangements, processes and systems across agencies

- CFA noted that the number of supplementary instruments to the Secondment Agreement (ten) is in itself evidence of a process that was not well defined, articulated and executed
- FRV experienced challenges with limited data availability at the commencement of reform. Due to delays in the transfer of the Division B payroll system, FRV relied on extracts to spreadsheets and manual processing of information rather than a single source of truth.

At the time of reporting, FRV was establishing a Secondment Management Team to provide support to seconded staff that may address many of the concerns raised by CFA, FRV and through FSIM engagement.

The secondment model is a fundamental element of reform and must work effectively for the government to realise its vision for modern, integrated and sustainable fire services that keep Victorians safe.

### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions relating to secondment

There are five Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions that relate to secondment, outlined below. Of these actions, two are reported as significantly delayed, two have reported minor delays and one is yet to commence. FSIM acknowledges the complexity of implementing the secondment model and that it will take time to ensure effective policies and processes are in place to support its operationalisation.

**Action 3.8: CFA, in collaboration with FRV, to develop protocols to ensure all FRV seconded training staff satisfy CFA’s Registered Training Organisation (RTO) obligations and requirements.**

**Action objective: CFA’s RTO obligations and requirements are satisfied by FRV training staff secondment protocols.**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Significant delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

**Action 4.1: Appoint the Firefighters Registration Board (FRB).**

**Action objective: The secondment model is collaboratively supported and regulated by an independent entity.**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	DJCS with CFA and FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Significant delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Rolled over from Year One Plan

**Action 4.2: Establish capability standards to support the secondment arrangements, the firefighters register, application processes and transparent appeals processes.**

**Action objective: FRB provides for and maintains a transparent and fit for purpose registration of FRV staff suitable for secondment to CFA.**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	FRB
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2023
<b>Reported Status</b>	Not yet commenced
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Rolled over from Year One Plan

## Secondment model (continued)

<b>Action 5.1: CFA in consultation with FRV develops and maintain a secondment strategy that details CFA’s capability and capacity needs for those resources sourced from FRV.</b>	
<b>Action objective: The capability and capacity needs of CFA are clearly understood by FRV and the FRB. FRV’s strategic workforce planning enables the provision of secondees that meet the operational needs and capability requirements of CFA.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

<b>Action 5.4: Develop a Strategic Workforce Plan for operations with a strong focus on regional and remote delivery of services.</b>	
<b>Action objective: FRV has the workforce capacity, capability and culture required to deliver on community expectations, including secondment obligations to CFA.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

## Consultation requirements

CFA and FRV each have formal consultation obligations and both agencies seek to appropriately engage with their respective stakeholders. However, the nature and impact of these obligations are very different in the two agencies. For CFA, the Volunteer Charter requires the State of Victoria and CFA<sup>22</sup> to consult with volunteers on all matters which might reasonably be expected to affect volunteers. CFA also has obligations to consult with staff representatives. For FRV, there are requirements, under section 16.5.1 of the *Fire Rescue Victoria Operational Employees Interim Enterprise Agreement 2020* (FRV Operational Employees EBA), to secure consensus from FRV’s industrial partner via the Consultative Committee process prior to implementing any matter or change relating to the employment relationship of FRV employees. The FRV Operational Employees EBA is mandated under federal law and is therefore not directly within the control of the Minister, DJCS or fire agencies to amend.

In practice, the consultation requirements under the FRV Operational Employees EBA mean that, for decisions where CFA and FRV settle on a position which impacts FRV employees, FRV must subsequently consult and achieve consensus with its industrial partner. This consultation process has contributed to delays in finalising arrangements as positions may require re-negotiation between agencies following industrial consultation.

<sup>22</sup> Volunteer Charter accessed via: Country Fire Authority, 2022, Act and Regulations, <<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/about-us/who-we-are/governance-and-regulations/act-and-regulations>>

# 5.0

## Monitoring year 2 actions

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Context

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Year Two to Five Implementation  
Plan action status

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## Context

The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan sets out 41 actions to be delivered during the period November 2021 to 30 June 2025 across five priority areas to guide a 10-year reform program and achieve fire service modernisation to keep Victorians safe. Some multi-year activities and complex strategic actions from the Year One Plan have been reframed in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan to focus on the remaining work required to fully achieve their intended outcomes. Appendix A of the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan provides an overview of the status of actions from the Year One Plan and how they align to reform priorities for the next four years.<sup>23</sup> The 41 actions were determined by the relevant fire service agency and DJCS and approved by the Minister.

## Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action status

Table 5 below provides the status of the 41 actions in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan based on progress updates from CFA, DJCS and FRV. Table 5 lists definitions for each status. The status provided is as per the status noted by the Minister on Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions at the end of the reporting period.

FSIM notes that two actions are complete, nine are on track, with a further 26 actions experiencing minor or significant delays. Of these, 13 actions did not meet their set or completion date outlined in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan.

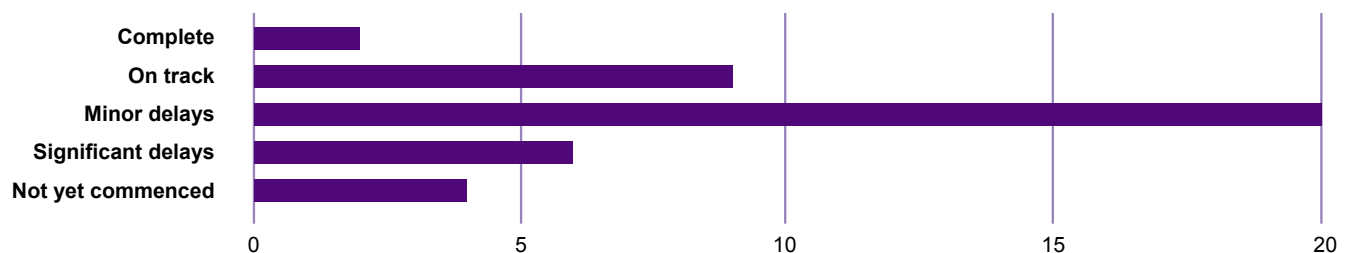
As at 30 June 2022, change requests and updated completion timelines for these actions were being prepared for approval by the Minister. FSIM will report on any timelines for actions that were amended as part of this process in its year three report.

Figure 5 provides the status of the 41 Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions<sup>24</sup>, as at 30 June 2022.

Table 5: Year Two to Five Implementation Plan status definitions<sup>25</sup>

Status	Status definition
<b>Complete</b>	Action was implemented within the planned timelines and met the objectives outlined in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan
<b>On track</b>	Action is in progress and on track to meet the planned implementation timelines
<b>Minor delays</b>	Action is in progress with minor delays to the planned implementation timelines
<b>Significant delays</b>	Action is in progress with significant delays to the planned implementation timelines
<b>Not yet commenced</b>	Work against action has not yet commenced.

Figure 5: Status of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions



<sup>23</sup> Victorian Government, 2021, *Year Two to Five Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan*, Parliament of Victoria <<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/assembly/abled-documents/search-tabled-documents-database/details/3/11055>>, 32-44.

<sup>24</sup> Year Two to Five Implementation Plan status report as at 30 June 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Status definitions as per Year Two to Five Implementation Plan status report as at 30 June 2022.

## 5.0 Monitoring year 2 actions

### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action status (continued)

FSIM identified 29 actions, outlined in Table 6, that are critical to be addressed at this stage of reform to ensure success. These actions are assessed in further detail under the relevant lines of inquiry within this report.

Agencies continue to demonstrate commitment to implementing reform actions, noting there are a significant number of activities for the fire services to progress over the life of the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan.

FSIM considers there is a significant degree of interdependency between these actions which could impact their delivery. This issue is explored specifically in the Fire Services Sustainability key focus area.

Table 6: Status of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions, reported by agencies and noted by the Minister as at 30 June 2022  
Note: FSIM's 29 year two assessed actions are shaded yellow in the below table.

Ref	Action Description	Lead	Due date	Reported status
1.1	Develop and implement CFA's Engagement Framework and Volunteer Engagement Plan incorporating a monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement process	CFA	Jun 2025	In progress Significant delays
1.2	Complete delivery of the Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Program	CFA	Jun 2025	In progress On track
1.3	Complete delivery of the \$22.7m Volunteer Support Package (VSP)	CFA	Jun 2024	In progress Minor delays
1.4	Complete delivery of the \$3.3m crew and strike team leader project	CFA	Jun 2024	In progress Minor delays
1.5	Complete delivery of the connected brigades project (part of \$3.6 million program to enhance critical volunteer facing ICT systems)	CFA	Jun 2022	In progress Minor delays
1.6	Complete delivery of the \$7.65m Enhancing Training Capacity for New Volunteers project	CFA	Jun 2025	In progress Minor delays
1.7	Review CFA's brigade operating model to ensure brigades are appropriately structured and provided with the required capabilities to deliver contemporary services that meet community expectations and needs	CFA	Jun 2025	In progress On track
2.1	Commence Phase Two of the operational communications rollout, including upgrades to station turn out equipment in FRV stations	FRV	Jun 2023	In progress On track
2.2	Explore the operational and service delivery benefits of accreditation for FRV within the Victorian emergency management response model, and provide options to government on the accreditation process	FRV	Jun 2023	In progress On track
2.3	Develop and implement a contemporary Health Model, which establishes state-wide comprehensive organisational health standards, policies and support mechanisms that are designed to proactively manage and mitigate health risks whilst improving the effectiveness and quality of care provided to our firefighters and corporate staff	FRV	Jun 2023	In progress On track

## 5.0 Monitoring year 2 actions

### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action status (continued)

Ref	Action Description	Lead	Due date	Reported status
2.4	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	FRV	Jun 2022	In progress Minor delays
3.1	Develop and implement FRV Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy, ICT Roadmap and Target Future Operating Model	FRV	Jun 2025	In progress On track
3.2	Complete delivery of the \$48.2 million fire station and firefighting fleet replacement program	CFA	Jun 2025	In progress Minor delays
3.3	Finalise the transfer of property, assets, liabilities, rights and obligations from CFA to FRV	CFA	Jun 2022	In progress Minor delays
3.4	FRV, in consultation with CFA, deliver agreed capital works to enable and enhance service delivery by co-located brigades	FRV	Jun 2025	In progress Minor delays
3.5	CFA to complete delivery of agreed capital works projects on behalf of FRV	CFA	Jun 2023	In progress Minor delays
3.6	Rollout of the FRV Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) ensembles as part of the PPC project	FRV	Jun 2023	In progress Minor delays
3.7	Agencies mature existing joint governance arrangements that support the implementation of the program and ongoing development of interoperability procedures and arrangements	CFA & FRV	Jun 2022	In progress Minor delays
3.8	CFA, in collaboration with FRV, to develop protocols to ensure all FRV seconded training staff satisfy CFA's Registered Training Organisation (RTO) obligations and June 2022 requirements	CFA	Jun 2022	In progress Significant delays
3.9	Where practical and appropriate, finalise harmonisation of procedures, including service level procedures between CFA and FRV and any related party to ensure the agreements support effective operations	CFA & FRV	Jun 2022	In progress Significant delays
3.10	Where practical and appropriate, finalise any delegation authorisations between CFA and FRV to support the operationalisation of the Service Level Deeds of Agreement (SLDA) and schedules	CFA	Jun 2022	In progress Minor delays
3.11	CFA to ensure internal policies and procedures support the arrangements outlined in the SLDA and schedules	CFA	Jun 2023	In progress Significant delays
3.12	Finalise a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to formalise ongoing support service requirements	CFA & FRV	Jun 2025	In progress Minor delays
4.1	Appoint the Firefighters Registration Board (FRB)	DJCS with CFA & FRV	Jun 2022	In progress Significant delays

## 5.0 Monitoring year 2 actions

### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action status (continued)

Ref	Action Description	Lead	Due date	Reported status
4.2	Establish capability standards to support the secondment arrangements, the firefighters register, application processes and transparent appeals processes	FRB	Jun 2023	Not yet commenced
4.3	Complete delivery of the volunteer's health and safety initiatives program; specifically, the wildfire respiratory protection trial, the firefighter safety compliance initiatives and the wildfire PPC project	CFA	Jun 2024	In progress Significant delays
4.4	Define FRV values and culture and deliver supporting programs of work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop FRV values</li> <li>• Strategy to embed FRV values</li> <li>• Leadership development and capability</li> </ul>	FRV	Jun 2022	In progress Minor delays
4.5	Continue delivering the following cultural and diversity change programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CFA behavioural standards program</li> <li>• CFA child safety compliance plan</li> <li>• Inclusion and diversity strategy and supporting action plans</li> <li>• Fire Services Statement funded Initiatives</li> </ul>	CFA	Jun 2024	In progress On track
4.6	Develop and continue delivering on inclusion and diversity initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity and Inclusion Framework, Strategy and Action Plan</li> <li>• Gender Equity Action Plan</li> <li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation Action Plan</li> </ul>	FRV	Jun 2022	In progress Minor delays
4.7	Develop a scope for leadership roles that reflect contemporary brigade and group models	CFA	Jun 2023	In progress Minor delays
4.8	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)	CFA & FRV	Jun 2023	In progress On track
4.9	Demonstrate progress towards reaching the government's commitment of 400 women career firefighters in FRV	FRV	Dec 2025	In progress On track
4.10	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	CFA	Jun 2025	In progress Minor delays
5.1	CFA in consultation with FRV develops and maintain a secondment strategy that details CFA's capability and capacity needs for those resources sourced from FRV	CFA	Jun 2022	In progress Minor delays
5.2	Undertake a review of operational capability and capacity requirements to meet the future needs of fire services across Victoria to inform future funding plans	DJCS with CFA & FRV	Jun 2023	Not yet commenced

## 5.0 Monitoring year 2 actions

### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action status (continued)

Ref	Action Description	Lead	Due date	Reported status
5.3	Develop an FRV Strategy	FRV	Jun 2022	In progress Minor delays
5.4	Develop a Strategic Workforce Plan for operations with a strong focus on regional and remote delivery of services	FRV	Jun 2022	In progress Minor delays
5.5	Conduct an initial financial sustainability assessment of FRV and CFA	DJCS with CFA & FRV	Dec 2021	Completed
5.6	Develop an initial funding plan that addresses high priority funding requirements for CFA and FRV in years three and four of the Fire Services Reform and addresses the impact of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>transfers of functions, resources and assets between CFA and FRV</li> <li>the change to the FRV fire district upon the fire services property levy revenue base after the commencing day</li> <li>any changes to the differential rates of the fire services property levy after the commencing day</li> </ul>	DJCS with CFA & FRV	Dec 2021	Completed
5.7	Conduct a financial sustainability assessment update of FRV and CFA, based on three years operation of the new fire services model	DJCS with CFA & FRV	Dec 2023	Not yet commenced
5.8	Develop a long-term funding plan for CFA and FRV for Year five and beyond	DJCS with CFA & FRV	Dec 2023	Not yet commenced

# 6.0

**Assessment of progress  
and effectiveness**

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### Context

FSIM's year two assessment focused on whether actions to embed the fire services model have progressed from year one and are operational, and if activity is aligned to the intended Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives and reform outcomes stated by government. This is an important step in reform implementation – if the fundamentals of reform delivery are not agreed and embedded, long-term systemic problems will inevitably result, impacting the fire services efficiency and effectiveness.

The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan aims to embed government's commitment to the reform through:

- strengthening both the CFA and FRV, giving them the resources they need to perform their roles and together keep the community safe
- implementing a cultural shift, with a strong focus on valuing people and building a safe and respectful sector
- setting a long-term vision, focused on the future sustainability of complementary fire services and the safety of the community".<sup>26</sup>

FSIM's year two assessment focused on five key focus areas comprising complementary fire services, culture and diversity, fire services sustainability, governance and service provision as FSIM considers these are the key building blocks of a successful reform implementation program.<sup>27</sup>

To enable a more targeted assessment, FSIM further categorised key focus areas into lines of inquiry. FSIM identified 29 actions, that align with the lines of inquiry, for assessment of progress and effectiveness.

Each line of inquiry assessed both the progress of actions and identified key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives. For actions that were completed in year two, FSIM includes an assessment of effectiveness for the action in meeting its objective.

The following sections (seven to ten) provide an assessment against each key focus area followed by detailed supporting information and assessment under each line of inquiry.

FSIM notes that a number of issues are referenced repeatedly through this report. These issues impede the successful progress of the reform and are referenced numerous times to demonstrate the impact they have on a range of areas of reform implementation.

<sup>26</sup> Victorian Government, 2021, *Year Two to Five Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan*, Parliament of Victoria <<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/assembly/tables-documents/search-tabled-documents-database/details/3/11055>>, pg. 5.

<sup>27</sup> The service provision key focus area was a mechanism to assess progress and effectiveness of agencies in delivering against related actions and is captured in the various lines of inquiry.



# 7.0

## FSIM Key Focus Area: Complementary fire services



### FSIM Lines of inquiry

### Scope of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

#### Agreements



- 3.9 Finalise harmonisation of procedures, including service level procedures
- 3.10 Finalise delegation authorisations to support the operationalisation of the SLDA and supporting schedules
- 3.11 Ensure internal policies and procedures support SLDA arrangements
- 3.12 Finalise the MoU to support ongoing support service requirements

#### Engaged and safe



- 1.1 Develop and implement CFA's Engagement Framework and Volunteer Engagement Plan
- 2.3 Develop and implement a contemporary Health Model for FRV
- 2.4 Finalise relevant enterprise bargaining agreements

#### Capability and capacity



- 4.1 Appoint the Firefighters Registration Board
- 4.2 Establish capability standards to support the secondment arrangements, the firefighters register, application processes and transparent appeals processes
- 4.3 Complete delivery of the volunteer's health and safety initiatives program

#### Assets and capital works



- 1.7 Review CFA's brigade operating model
- 2.2 Explore the operational and service delivery benefits of accreditation for FRV

#### Service delivery approach



- 3.2 Complete delivery of the \$48.2 M fire station and firefighting fleet replacement program
- 3.3 Finalise the transfer of property, assets, liabilities, rights and obligations from CFA to FRV
- 3.4 FRV, in consultation with CFA, to deliver agreed capital works
- 3.5 CFA to complete delivery of agreed capital works projects on behalf of FRV

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

1

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

2

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

3

Plan and build for the future

4

Valuing our people

5

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Overview

The complementary fire services key focus area outlines progress and challenges for agencies towards achieving the government’s vision for a modern, integrated and sustainable system that keeps Victorians safe. Achieving this vision relies on the strength of both CFA and FRV as separate, yet interoperable and complementary, fire services.<sup>28</sup> The key focus area for year two is supported by five lines of inquiry that are underpinned by overarching objectives as outlined in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan:

- **Agreements:** agreements are finalised to support the objective of “an effective and productive working relationship across the fire services and other emergency service agencies, building on the principle of interoperability” (actions 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12)
- **Engaged and safe:** CFA engagement programs support the objective of “an engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision-making and feels safe and respected” (action 1.1). FRV’s health and EBA programs support the objective of “an engaged workforce that feels safe and respected” (actions 2.3, 2.4)
- **Capability and capacity:** Agencies deliver programs to support the objective that “firefighters have the right skills and access to training and support” (actions 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)
- **Service delivery approach:** CFA’s Operating Model supports the objective “an engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision-making and feels safe and respected” (action 1.7). FRV’s work on accreditation supports

the objective of “strong links with the community which enable it to provide a tailored service that reflects community risks” (action 2.2)

- **Asset transfer and capital works:** The transfer of assets and delivery of capital works support the objective that “firefighters have access to the right resources to do their job and keep them safe” (actions 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5).

These lines of inquiry provide a snapshot of progress against the actions assessed by FSIM in year two and outline opportunities and challenges for each agency, identified by FSIM as part of its year two assessment, towards meeting action and overarching objectives.

### Key finding

CFA and FRV are making strong progress towards providing more modern fire services however they face significant challenges in implementing a complementary approach to fire services delivery. FSIM identified **three systemic issues** that currently constrain delivery against key Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions and need to be addressed to successfully progress reform. They are:

1. no agreed, shared definition of complementary fire services that is supported by documented and consistent principles
2. ineffective collaboration between CFA and FRV at times
3. absence of an overarching, empowered, strategic governance body.

## Progressing towards modern fire services

The Year two to Five Implementation Plan sets out a vision for what modern fire services mean for CFA and FRV respectively. For CFA, this means it has the capability and capacity to deliver contemporary, high-quality services that cover the spectrum of prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. For FRV, it means a continuous improvement culture that oversees delivery of world’s best incident management practice, supported by highly skilled firefighters using modern, well-maintained equipment.<sup>29</sup> FSIM saw considerable evidence from both CFA and FRV to demonstrate that they are committed to, and effective in, modernising their respective agencies.

### Applying internationally recognised standards

CFA’s Engagement Framework and development approach is based on authoritative best practice as outlined by the Victorian Public Engagement Framework,<sup>30</sup> building on values and standards established by International Association of Public Participation.

FRV is investigating the benefits of accreditation under the Centre for Public Service Excellence Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) as an emergency management response model. The accreditation process uses benchmarks to measure and drive service delivery improvements to the community. Accreditation may support transparency of an agency’s effectiveness in fostering a continuous improvement culture that is community and outcome focused, data-driven, strategic-minded, well organised, and

<sup>28</sup> Victorian Government, 2021, *Year Two to Five Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan*, Parliament of Victoria <<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/assembly/tailed-documents/search-tabled-documents-database/details/3/11055>>, pg. 6-7.

<sup>29</sup> Victorian Government, 2021, *Year Two to Five Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan*, Parliament of Victoria <<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/assembly/tailed-documents/search-tabled-documents-database/details/3/11055>>, pg. 18, 20.

<sup>30</sup> Victorian Government, 2021, *Public Engagement Framework 2021-2025*, Victorian Government <<https://www.vic.gov.au/public-engagement-framework-2021-2025>>

## Overview (continued)

manages its resources effectively and efficiently. FSIM notes that the scope of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action 2.2 is limited to identification of options and that government approval is required prior to FRV progressing this work beyond this options phase.

### Improving health and safety

CFA volunteer's health and safety initiative provides a comprehensive suite of programs to address volunteer safety. The program's focus is on key and emerging risks to volunteer safety and are informed by an assessment of best practice. In addition, CFA's current 'safe working from heights' program is an important addition to the agency's OH&S system.

FRV is working to implement a Health Model which focuses on employee health and safety and is informed by the principles of continuous improvement. FRV reports this Model is the first of its kind in an Australian emergency services context and adopts a modern health and safety approach that has the potential to improve health, safety and wellbeing outcomes for FRV staff across Victoria.

### Strategic review of service delivery approaches

CFA and FRV are both undertaking a strategic review of their respective service delivery approaches following reform (CFA, through its operating model review and FRV, through the assessment of options for accreditation). These are critical pieces of work. Although FSIM received reports that there had been pre-reform implementation planning, the scale and pace at which reform was implemented meant that agencies were focused on immediate operational service delivery.

The requirement for both agencies to understand their respective community risk profiles and align their service delivery approach to address those risks through reviewing their service delivery approaches is a positive step in driving the best outcomes for the community.

### Strengthening joint operational governance arrangements

CFA and FRV established the HoA to oversee and support implementation of key reform activities at the most senior levels of the organisation. Participating executives from both CFA and FRV have demonstrated constructive participation in this forum and ongoing, high-risk operational issues are tabled for discussion, monitored and actioned. FSIM is a standing observer at HoA meetings. Fire Services Operational Committee (FSOC), reporting to HoA, aims to identify and promote opportunities for collaboration and joint interoperability and progresses an annual work plan that supports a collaborative approach to key Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions. FSOC has appropriate governance structures in place to raise key operational issues to HoA where agreement cannot be reached or where a decision by HoA, rather than FSOC, is needed.

### Moving towards outcomes-based performance assessment

As per legislated requirements in the FRV Act, CFA and FRV published their outcomes frameworks<sup>31</sup> and submit quarterly outcomes framework updates to FSIM who publishes quarterly reports. This reporting provides a level of transparency on organisational priorities and accountability for

organisational performance, providing some insights on trends of service provision.<sup>32</sup>

### Resourcing FRV Division B firefighters

Some Division B staff who engaged with FSIM believe that, since reform, they are better supported when equipment needs to be serviced, repaired or replaced. They believe the responsiveness and access to equipment and resources through step-up<sup>33</sup> provisions has improved since reform. For example, some Division B staff engaged by FSIM advised that step-up provisions enable them to respond to incidents knowing that other incidents, or regional management issues, will be actioned by other stations that have stepped-up under the provisions. The provisions also enable them to adequately prepare, such as clean equipment, before responding to subsequent incidents.

In addition, as noted in the Methodology section of this report, FSIM ran a targeted workshop session at CFA's-regular ACFO/Manager Community Safety/District Planning Committee Chair Forum where ACFOs were invited to provide their insights on benefits and challenges in areas addressed by several Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions. The top two responses relating to benefits were "improved provision of resources and increase in secondees" and "improvements to the resource model". Although anecdotal, improved access to resources was a regular theme occurring throughout FSIM's engagement with the targeted cohort of Division B staff at co-located and peri-urban stations.

<sup>31</sup> Country Fire Authority, 2021, *CFA Outcomes Framework Year Two 2021-22*.

Fire Rescue Victoria, 2021, *Outcomes Framework*, Fire Rescue Victoria <<https://www.frv.vic.gov.au/outcomes-framework>>

<sup>32</sup> Fire Services Implementation Monitor, 2021, *Fire Services Outcomes Framework Progress Report*, Victorian Government <<https://www.vic.gov.au/fsim-publications>>

<sup>33</sup> The term "step-up" refers to occurrences when FRV staff are called to an incident in regional Victoria and replacement support then comes from another FRV station or district.

## Overview (continued)

Further detail on some of the challenges with step-up provisions are outlined in the Agreements line of inquiry. While ACFOs did identify that the increase in secondees was a benefit of the reform, the ability to allocate this pool of secondees has proved challenging, with vacancies and relief continuing to be an issue raised at weekly HoA meetings.

### **Progress towards harmonised career firefighters' workforce agreements**

Currently, all operational FRV staff fall under the FRV Operational Employees EBA<sup>34</sup> that was ratified by the Fair Work Commission on 26 August 2020. The FRV Operational Employees EBA has brought together two separate pre-reform agreements into a single document, capturing both Division A (former MFB) and Division B (former CFA) employees. FRV is working to harmonise Division A and Division B firefighter provisions under the FRV Operational Employees EBA where possible, noting this will be both a long-term and iterative process.

### **Standardising response practices in FRV response areas**

As at 30 June 2022, FRV had migrated 13 of the 38 former CFA stations to its Greater Alarm Response System (GARS) response model and was preparing a project plan to guide the implementation of GARS to the remaining 25 stations. While there have been implementation challenges (as identified in the Agreements line of inquiry), GARS provides a standardised, formal, transparent and process-based response to incidents.

### **Goodwill and commitment of staff and volunteers**

As FSIM observed in FY 2020–21, issues within the reformed fire services continue to be managed by the goodwill and dedication of those committed to providing a quality service for their communities. CFA staff and volunteers and FRV staff continue to find practical (albeit interim) solutions to complex and multi-faceted issues. As with many aspects of reform implementation, much of the progress on local issues to date has been achieved through the personal endeavours of individuals and relationships between staff and members who have resolved to develop workable, on-the-ground approaches to deliver outcomes for their communities, in the absence of finalised or formalised agreements.

### **Complementary fire services challenges**

The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan's vision for the fire services is a modern, integrated and sustainable system that keeps Victorians safe. The vision recognises the strength of both CFA and FRV as separate, yet interoperable and complementary fire services to achieve this vision. The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan includes a series of actions that support the agencies in progressing towards the vision of modern, integrated and sustainable fire services. Many of these actions are relevant to and assessed by FSIM through its key focus areas.

In year one, FSIM found that “finalisation of SLDA variations and CFA delegations is critical to confirm roles and responsibilities in the new service delivery model and that CFA and FRV must agree on the finalisation, authorisation and endorsement environment on issues requiring joint action”.<sup>35</sup> In assessing year two progress, FSIM noted that many SLDA schedules and delegations remained outstanding and that, in some cases, there was no viable and agreed pathway forward to progress some schedules or delegations. FSIM reviewed available drafts of agreements, schedules, SLDAs and delegation instruments and consulted with both CFA and FRV, but could not discern clarity on the agreed principles underlying the SLDA schedules beyond an allocation of activity to one organisation or the other. FSIM received conflicting information from CFA and FRV and was not able to establish a clear statement or principle that guided the allocation of functions specified in the SLDAs.

FSIM acknowledges that, given the scale of reform and the pace at which it was implemented, decisions may have been made in the absence of any agreed principles, or that assumptions may have been made about agency agreement on principles. However, as at 30 June 2022, of the 13 SLDA schedules, none had been finalised and two of seven delegations were completed. There are a range of reasons for the various delays such as a lack of agreed underpinning principles, legislative restrictions, and consultation requirements that impact agencies' ability to progress many of these pieces of work.

<sup>34</sup> *Fire Rescue Victoria Operational Employees Interim Enterprise Agreement 2020*

<sup>35</sup> Fire Services Implementation Monitor, 2021, *Fire Services Implementation Monitor Annual Report 2020-21: Setting the foundations*, Victorian Government < <https://www.vic.gov.au/fire-services-implementation-monitor-annual-report-2020-21> >.



## Overview (continued)

However, FSIM considers finalisation of SLDA schedules, delegations, and supplementary instruments to the secondment agreement (as noted in the “Structural elements influencing reform implementation” section) a fundamental step in ensuring complementary fire services.

In undertaking year two engagement, FSIM heard anecdotal accounts from both agencies that the nearest and most appropriate appliance had not been deployed in some instances. This issue was also raised by the agencies themselves at HoA. This is a serious matter and FSIM sought further information from CFA and FRV. Following this request, FSIM received conflicting information that indicated the two agencies had different interpretations of what constitutes ‘most appropriate’ appliance. FSIM sees a need for agencies to agree on this definition so that the government, community and FSIM are clear on why a nearby appliance may or may not be called to respond to an incident.

Noting the possible service delivery impacts of these two examples, FSIM observes there is no escalation pathway where matters cannot be resolved successfully between the agencies and acknowledges that the Minister has limited directional powers in relation to operational matters under legislation. Without such a pathway, FSIM considers there to be considerable risk to the delivery of key Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions.

In the context of the issues highlighted above, FSIM identified three systemic issues that constrain the successful delivery of key actions within the complementary fire services key focus area in meeting their objectives. They are:

### **1. No agreed, shared definition of complementary fire services that is supported by documented and consistent principles**

FSIM has not seen evidence of an agreed, shared or communicated definition of complementary fire services and how this translates to individual agency service provision to deliver the best outcome for the community. Further, FSIM has not seen evidence of current, agreed and definitive principles to guide and underpin some service delivery arrangements and formal agreements to support a complementary fire services model.

Specifically, there is no clear rationale or guiding principles informing the delivery of services for those functions transferred as specified in the SLDAs. It appears the transfer of functions was driven by the number of staff to be transferred via reform, rather than a comprehensive assessment of functions being delivered and the resulting outcome for the community. As these principles are not established and due to FRV’s industrial consultation requirements, agencies continue to revisit agreement terms after they have been agreed in principle by fire services’ senior executives. This results in ongoing delays, re-negotiation and continued deliberation. FSIM has also noted through its year two engagement that some interim arrangements (for example, land use planning) have significantly impacted staff and/or volunteer morale, created inefficiencies (such as time spent processing applications and undertaking quality assurance) and resulted in poorer performance in the provision of services to the community and industry. For example, the average

completion days for land use planning in the CAoV increased from 10 to 21 days over the period Q3 FY 2018–19 to Q2, FY 2021–22.

### **2. Ineffective collaboration between CFA and FRV at times**

Throughout the year two assessment, FSIM witnessed and experienced successful collaboration between CFA and FRV in a variety of forums. CFA and FRV executive meet weekly at HoA to discuss joint reform and operational matters. CFA has invited FRV to participate in various events and likewise FRV has invited CFA to FRV events. FSIM has also heard multiple anecdotal accounts of effective collaboration between firefighters on the fireground and identified social media posts that referenced CFA and FRV working together at incidents.

However, FSIM notes there have been instances where ineffective collaboration or a lack of collaboration has the potential to undermine a constructive relationship between the two agencies. FSIM notes that there are processes in place (such as HoA and FSOC) which are not always effectively used to enable a clear and timely collaborative approach to understanding and resolving reform issues.

For example, FRV advised it would work with CFA to ensure all FRV secondees whose work includes direct contact with children be compliant with the Child Safety Standards. In May 2022, CFA raised the issue through HoA to put in place a more robust approach to progress and complete the action, noting that this issue had not been resolved.

## Overview (continued)

As at 30 June 2022, FRV had not received CFA's Child Safety Standards policies, procedures or training material to ensure compliance with Child Safety Standards, which had been sent by CFA to allow FRV to progress the commitment. CFA advised that, as at 30 June 2022, it had not yet received confirmation that all FRV secondees that may work with children held a valid and current Working with Children Check.

FSIM sought additional information and received conflicting responses from the agencies. FSIM observes that this is a serious matter and, as at 30 June 2022, it remained unresolved. This example is provided to demonstrate that while CFA and FRV are working collaboratively in many areas, there is an opportunity to improve the clarity and transparency of communication to support effective collaboration between the two agencies on significant issues.

### **3. Absence of an overarching, empowered, strategic governance body with the authority and resources to address key challenges to reform progress**

Given the two systemic issues noted above, FSIM observes that there is no independent body who has the authority and is resourced to address key challenges that are impeding reform progress, other than each agency individually approaching the Minister for a resolution.

FSIM notes that CFA and FRV rightly operate as separate entities with their own strategic priorities. Together, they developed an operational governance framework to oversee and support the implementation of key operational reform activities that includes

an executive forum, HoA, a joint interoperability operations forum, FSOC and six supporting sub-committees.

However, there is no strategic governance body with the appropriate authority to make strategic directives where Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions cannot be progressed within the current arrangements or to drive strategic discussions and manage interdependencies between actions. FSIM sees a need for agencies to define and agree on what constitutes complementary fire services and the principles to underpin service delivery arrangements; however, there is currently no dedicated forum with all relevant stakeholders empowered to drive these strategic discussions and make (or recommend) strategic decisions.

FSIM acknowledges that it will be no small feat to initiate, discuss and settle an agreed position on what a complementary model is and the principles to underpin this definition and that there are other factors (such as FRV's requirement to consult and agree with industrial partners, agencies' legislative accountabilities, CFA Board accountabilities, directional powers and existing governance escalation processes – for example, HoA's escalation processes which has not yet been accessed) that must be considered. FSIM further notes that agencies have each progressed work to deliver fire services and/or to establish principles to underpin specific service delivery arrangements. However, FSIM observes a need for an independent, empowered and resourced body to drive strategic discussions and make or recommend strategic decisions where agencies cannot agree. Without this, FSIM considers there to be a real risk that some SLDA schedules will remain outstanding at the end of the third year of reform and that other key pieces

of work, including service delivery approaches, will be impeded where there is no clear and agreed definition of complementary fire services.

### **Additional observations**

In addition to the three systemic issues to complementary fire services as identified above, FSIM has included here observations made during the year two assessment that provide further context to the limitations of both this report and the progress of year two reform.

### **Need for agreement on measures to monitor and communicate reform progress and effectiveness**

CFA and FRV's Outcomes Frameworks articulate their respective strategic priorities and provide a set of measures to demonstrate progress towards strategic goals. FSIM notes agencies continue to develop their outcomes frameworks, but it will take time for program measurement to provide an accurate story of outcome progress or impact, as data and analysis further matures. Separately, agencies report to DJCS on progress against Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions. There is an opportunity for CFA and FRV to identify and confirm relevant measures either in their outcomes frameworks or in agency reporting more broadly that demonstrate progress and effectiveness of individual Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions. Where possible, these measures should be used to link the action to outputs and outcomes. Without this clarity, FSIM sees ongoing challenges for agencies in clearly communicating to government, the community and FSIM, effective progress towards Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.

## Overview (continued)

### **The new model has not been strenuously tested**

Finally, FSIM observes that both day-to-day response and the ability to provide surge capacity to critical events will continue to test reform. CFA and FRV continue to respond to incidents with CFA responding to approximately 23,000 incidents per year and FRV responding to around 56,000 incidents per year. This level of response is a testament to their commitment to service delivery for the community.

Victoria has experienced two relatively mild summer seasons, largely resulting from below normal fire risk from persistent rainfall. As such, surge capacity activities under the new model are yet to be strenuously tested. FSIM notes that CFA highlighted the vacancy rate, relief rate and absence from brigade catchments of FRV seconded staff as cause for concern as part of its risk attestation process for the FY 2020–21 and FY 2021–22 High Risk Weather Seasons. FSIM will continue to monitor the DJCS-led annual attestation process to identify operational performance risks as raised by CFA or FRV that are potentially linked to reform.

### **Agencies continue to work through implementation issues**

The scale and complexity of reform, and its implementation coinciding with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, presented a significant challenge to CFA and FRV to implement and embed the new model. Put simply, reform is behind schedule, with ongoing delays to the delivery of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions, including many of the multi-year actions rolled over from the Year One Plan.

FSIM has also seen evidence of outstanding implementation issues that continue to impact staff, volunteer and community experience of reform. For example, information technology (IT) systems cause considerable frustration particularly for many seconded staff who engaged with FSIM. Many of the secondees that FSIM engaged with noted that they believed they needed to have two laptops to access both CFA and FRV systems – FRV corporate staff advised FSIM this was not the case; however, this had not been made clear to secondees, demonstrating an issue with effective communication with secondees.

Some FRV staff in regional areas that FSIM engaged with observed that the centralisation of procurement of FRV's ancillary services in some peri-urban and regional areas (for example, dry cleaning and uniform provision) impacted local communities, through loss of contracts and staff often experienced long delays in accessing PPC. FSIM cannot quantify the extent of this issue in all regional or peri-urban stations where FRV is located and FRV reports that other staff have noticed improvements in timeliness of receiving uniforms. However, there may be an opportunity for FRV to further explore issues in accessing personal protective clothing (PPC) if they are contributing to less efficient operations (for example, FSIM heard anecdotal evidence that stations were having to call in overtime support as staff on shift did not have sufficient access to replacement PPC, once they had attended an incident). Assessing the effectiveness of the methods FRV employs to distribute PPC is not a

focus for FSIM; however, as it was raised by FRV staff in regional stations attended by FSIM, it warrants raising as the staff who engaged with FSIM noted these issues were created by changes brought about by reform.



## Recommendations

Noting the above systemic issues and additional observations, FSIM considers the following three recommendations as fundamental to addressing key challenges to effective reform implementation.

Ref	Recommendations
1	The Minister, in consultation with CFA, DJCS and FRV should develop an agreed definition of complementary fire services, and how this translates to individual service delivery, that is underpinned by agreed principles to guide the finalisation of outstanding agreements
2	The Minister should nominate an appropriately authorised, representative and accountable strategic governance body that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• has authority to develop, endorse (and reinforce) detailed, definitive, strategic and foundational principles required to guide sector-wide reform progress in line with broader emergency management principles and outcomes to ensure the community is provided with efficient and effective fire services</li><li>• addresses issues where there are broader, strategic, whole-of-government barriers to implementation (that is, ability to drive legislative change to complete an outstanding service delivery agreement)</li><li>• oversees shared strategic programs of work or programs with significant implications for multiple agencies (for example, Health Model, Accreditation, or FRB) or where there are shared strategic accountabilities</li></ul>
3	CFA and FRV should confirm relevant and appropriate performance measures to demonstrate progress of their Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions towards their objectives.

7.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Complementary fire services

## 7.1 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Agreements



### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective

An effective and productive working relationship across the fire services and other emergency service agencies, building on the principle of inter-operability

### Scope of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

- 3.9 Finalise harmonisation of procedures, including service level procedures
- 3.10 Finalise delegation authorisations to support the operationalisation of the SLDA and supporting schedules
- 3.11 Ensure internal policies and procedures support SLDA arrangements
- 3.12 Finalise the MoU to support ongoing support service requirements

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

1

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

2

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

3

Plan and build for the future

4

Valuing our people

5

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The Agreements line of inquiry reviews four Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions (3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12) relating to agreements that have the shared objective of “an effective and productive working relationship across the fire services and other emergency service agencies, building on the principle of interoperability”.

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for each action
- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.

## Progress of actions

**Action 3.9: Where practical and appropriate, finalise harmonisation of procedures, including service level procedures between CFA and FRV and any related party to ensure the agreements support effective operations**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA, FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Significant delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Rolled over from Year One Plan

FSIM understands that this action comprises: the review and update by CFA and FRV of the interoperability procedures (IPs) as outlined in the Joint Operational Activities Memorandum of Understanding; the finalisation of the two SLDAs and the review and update of their respective schedules; the finalisation of the secondment agreement and supplementary instruments; and a review and update of relevant operational doctrine. Table 7, detailing the progress of various agreements, is included at the end of this section.

The status of the agreements under this action is as follows:

- CFA and FRV have agreed on two IPs: Mutual operational command support and Professional, Technical and Administrative (PTA)/Corporate staff support to CFA operations. A further ten IPs are to be reviewed and updated or abolished, where no longer required. Timelines for completion were not confirmed at the end of the reporting period and FSIM notes contributing factors such as legislative restrictions and consultation requirements significantly impact agencies' ability to set timelines for completion.
- CFA and FRV signed the Overarching Operational Services Agreement and their respective SLDAs on 30 June 2020. As at 30 June 2022, the Alarm Assessment schedule was replaced by a Letter of Agreement that is with FRV for review. The Fire Investigation Schedule was approved by members of HoA out of session to proceed to consultation in December 2021. Dangerous Goods, Land Use Planning and Building Inspection and Compliance schedules were drafted but not approved. The remaining four schedules are approved in principle and will be reviewed and updated as required. The Fire Services Communication Control schedule requires significant updating from the previously agreed version. The HoA monitoring document reported that all schedules are anticipated to be finalised by December 2022, noting the FRV Operational Employees EBA consultation requirements and their potential impact on timing.

- CFA and FRV signed the Secondment Agreement on 31 October 2020. Three supplementary instruments have been progressed with a further seven instruments requiring review and consultation. At the end of the reporting period, the HoA monitoring document reported that all supplementary instruments and schedules are anticipated to be finalised by December 2022, noting the FRV Operational Employees EBA consultation requirements and their potential impact on timing.

CFA and FRV continue to refine interim work instructions via FSOC where they are unable to agree on and implement a long-term solution.

**Action 3.10: Where practical and appropriate, finalise any delegation authorisations between CFA and FRV to support the operationalisation of the Service Level Deeds of Agreement (SLDA) and schedules.**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Rolled over from Year One Plan

Aspects of delegations for Fire Investigations and Dangerous Goods (specifically, access to lands, buildings and premises in the CAoV) were finalised in year two to the extent possible under current legislative requirements.

## Progress of actions (continued)

Delegations for the Building Act and Regulations are partially completed with the instrument for 41 FRV employees for the purposes of ascertaining and reporting to the CFA Chief Officer (CO)<sup>36</sup> under the Building Act and Regulations issued. CFA and FRV signed a Structural Fire Safety Services Deed of Indemnity in June 2022 which underpins future work on a formalised arrangement for FRV to provide end-to-end service delivery<sup>37</sup> of structural fire safety services in the CAoV, with a further instrument of delegation and authorisation under development for FRV employees to ensure they are able to provide end to end structural fire safety services. CFA is progressing work to determine whether all required delegations to enable end-to-end service delivery for Dangerous Goods and Caravan Parks can be delegated. CFA and FRV are yet to agree on a position regarding land use planning service provision.

CFA and FRV agreed on an alternative, workable pathway through resolving to take individual responsibility for alarm assessment and prepared a letter of agreement to formalise this arrangement. Table 8, detailing the status of delegations, is included at the end of this section.

<b>Action 3.11: CFA to ensure internal policies and procedures support the arrangements outlined in the SLDA / schedules.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2023
<b>Reported Status</b>	Significant delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Rolled over from Year One Plan

Action 3.11 is interdependent on action 3.9 and CFA is unable to progress at this stage until the arrangements outlined in the SLDA/schedules are finalised.

<b>Action 3.12: Finalise a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to formalise ongoing support service requirements.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA, FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2025
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Rolled over from Year One Plan

The Corporate Services MOU was established to document the transition of specified functions between CFA and FRV on and from 1 July 2020. A draft MOU was progressed through

FRV's consultation process in December 2020, with the Operations Consultative Committee approving the MOU in March 2021. CFA and FRV subsequently agreed to extend the expiry date of the document to 31 December 2021; however, the Corporate Services MOU was never formally executed.

CFA and FRV discussed the MOU at HoA in December 2021. CFA noted that many items were out of date and proposed that an audit be undertaken to see what items or appendices could be acquitted and what items should be included in a revised MOU. In March 2022, CFA tabled a summary paper at HoA outlining key recommendations of the audit, including that: three appendices (that is, payroll and human resources (HR), property services, and information and communications technology (ICT)) should be captured in specific SLAs; three appendices (that is, information exchange, employee support services and finance) should be included in an ongoing MOU; and the remaining ten appendices acquitted. The summary paper also noted that the agencies should work together collaboratively to resolve issues with particular regard to media and communications, legal services, freedom of information, and risks and assurance information exchange.

As at 30 June 2022, the recommendations were pending FRV approval. Table 9, detailing the status of the Corporate Services MoU, is included at the end of this section.

<sup>36</sup> The instrument authorises nominated employees under s228D of the *Building Act 1993* (VIC) to enter building or land in CAoV for the purpose of carrying out an inspection authorised or required by the Building Act or Regulations of a) the building or land ;(b) a place of public entertainment; (c) any equipment, installation, service, records or reports relating to the building or to the place of public entertainment; or (d) building work or plumbing work – only for the purposes of ascertaining and reporting to the CO/delegate matters in relation to that Act and those Regulations. The instrument also authorises nominated employees under s229 of the *Building Act 1993* (VIC) to require a person at the building or land (under 228D) (a) to give information to the Authorised Person, orally or in writing; and (b) to give reasonable assistance to the Authorised Person, to the extent that it is reasonably necessary to determine compliance with the Building Act or Regulations.– only for the purposes of ascertaining and reporting to the CO/delegate matters in relation to that Act and those Regulations.

<sup>37</sup> Services include inspecting safety installations, equipment and records in a building or place of public entertainment; providing reports to municipal building surveyors as the basis for issuing permits; and consenting to applications for building or occupancy permits.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective

Of the four Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions in this line of inquiry, two are reported as experiencing minor delays and two are experiencing significant delays. FSIM observes that there are considerable barriers to CFA and FRV completing these actions and achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of “an effective and productive working relationship across the fire services and other emergency service agencies, building on the principle of interoperability”. Without intervention, there is a risk that this objective will not be achieved and that actions will not be finalised.

CFA and FRV continue to progress work to finalise agreements where possible, refine interim approaches and identify alternative, workable pathways to implement arrangements where agreement cannot be reached. However, there are a considerable number of outstanding procedures, schedules to the SLDA, supplementary instruments to the secondment agreement and appendices to the MOU that need to be finalised to define service delivery and expectations. Some arrangements are not workable in their current form (and may require legislative change in order to be implemented). The FRV Operational Employees EBA consultation obligations are a contributing factor to a protracted process to finalise agreements and can mean that decisions made by CFA and FRV can be overturned following industrial consultation. This affects the agencies’ ability to deliver on their accountabilities and ongoing vacancy and non-relief of Commanders and ACFOs continues to be problematic for CFA.

As noted in the Complementary fire services key focus area, there is a need for the Minister, in consultation with CFA, DJCS and FRV to set out what constitutes complementary fire services and the principles to underpin a complementary model, as a pre-requisite to addressing some of the key challenges to finalising agreements.

### Opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### Some key agreements have been finalised

In FY 2021–22, CFA and FRV continued to progress work to finalise agreements, refine interim approaches where final agreement could not be reached and identify alternative, workable pathways to finalise some arrangements.

In June 2022, CFA and FRV signed a Structural Fire Safety Services Deed of Indemnity which underpins future work on a formalised agreement for FRV to provide end-to-end service delivery of structural fire safety services in the CAoV on behalf of CFA. As a result of this Deed of Indemnity, the delegations for Fire Investigations were updated and delegations for Fire Investigations were finalised by CFA and delegations for the Building Act 1993 (VIC) (and Regulations) were partially completed with an instrument issued to 41 FRV employees for the purposes of ascertaining and reporting to the CO. CFA and FRV also signed the Tenancy Agreement (action 3.3) in May 2022 and circulated a joint communique on 7 June 2022 to inform staff and volunteers.

CFA and FRV continue to refine interim work instructions via FSOC as a practical means of supporting service delivery, while they seek formal agreement on long-term solutions.

#### HoA is addressing and resolving some significant barriers

The governance framework, outlined in the Governance line of inquiry, provides an avenue for key operational reform matters to be jointly discussed by CFA and FRV. HoA has at times successfully resolved operational matters that were at an impasse. As an example, the HoA facilitated a pragmatic approach to reviewing the Corporate Services MOU to acquit appendices that were completed or no longer required, enabling greater focus on those activities requiring ongoing management.

#### Some stations have been migrated to GARS in FRV’s response area

FRV’s response to incidents is graded on a scale of 1 to 5, using the GARS response model. FRV uses GARS to dispatch appliances and resources to an incident. CFA currently uses response tables, which can incorporate local response details, to dispatch appliances.

As at 30 June 2022, FRV had migrated 13 of the 38 stations transferred from CFA to GARS. At the end of the reporting period, FRV was preparing a project plan to guide the implementation of GARS to the remaining 25 stations with an intention to rollout GARS to Western District 3 in 2023 and a full regional rollout completed in 2024. In addition, FRV has incorporated a new grass and

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

scrub response model, based on CFA's response approach, to request CFA tankers in GARS. While there have been some implementation challenges associated with GARS (outlined in the Challenges section below), GARS does provide a formal, transparent and process-based response approach to incidents with some flexibility to adapt the system to a local context and enhance interoperability.

### The commitment and goodwill of staff is a significant factor in progressing agreements

CFA and FRV staff continue to demonstrate significant commitment and goodwill in striving to find practical solutions to complex and multi-faceted issues. Much of the progress to date has been achieved through the personal endeavours of individuals and relationships between staff and members who have resolved to develop workable, on-the-ground approaches in the absence of final agreement.

### Challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### No agreed, formal understanding of complementary fire services

As noted in the Complementary fire services key focus area, there is no formal, agreed understanding of 'complementary fire services' and how that translates to individual agency service provision to ensure the best outcome for the community. As a result, there is a lack of agreed, definitive principles to underpin some arrangements. For example, SLDA and related schedules set out the allocation

of functions to CFA and FRV. Sections of FRV have advised FSIM that the allocation of functions is based on the principle that FRV is responsible for the built environment services across Victoria and CFA is responsible for bushfires. CFA has advised it does not agree with this principle.<sup>38</sup> Further, this view of allocation of functions contradicts some of the legislative responsibilities of each agency and some agreements which define services that FRV provides on CFA's behalf. While some of the schedules reflect the principle outlined by FRV,<sup>39</sup> there is no formal evidence to demonstrate that this principle was agreed between the parties prior to the transfer of functions. There is evidence to indicate that the allocation of functions was primarily driven by the number and type of staff directed to be transferred from CFA to FRV during the reform transition in 2020.

#### Absence of agreed principles is impacting finalisation of arrangements

The effectiveness of HoA and FSOC (and its six sub-committees) is constrained by a lack of definition of 'complementary fire services'. This would help provide a strong foundation where differences arise. It is further constrained by the FRV Operational Employees EBA obligations which can see matters agreed in principle by the two agencies unable to be progressed. Decisions need to be based on an agreed set of complementary fire service principles to underpin ongoing arrangements.

In the absence of principles, there is currently no agreed, viable pathway to finalise some arrangements (specifically land use planning,

dangerous goods, and caravan parks). In addition, some schedules do not align with the SLDA. For example, the initial intent for land use planning was that CFA would retain the function where fire safety referrals occurred within a bushfire management overlay area.<sup>40</sup> However, the primary resources (Fire Safety Officers) responsible for this function were transferred to FRV as part of the transfer of staff on 1 July 2020. The responsibility currently resides with FRV under an interim and expired agreement for FRV to undertake the work on behalf of CFA. CFA has determined to undertake a quality assurance role as, legislatively, the function remains with CFA. At the time of reporting, CFA had advised it does not have the resources to undertake this function (as the resources were transferred to FRV when the reforms were implemented) and FRV had advised it was seeking to cease the support arrangements, noting the interim agreement expired on 1 July 2021.

Land-use planning issues were the subject of an Emergency Management Victoria (EMV)-led review in July 2021 (in consultation with the relevant Working Group) which considered various options; however, a new resourcing model is yet to be agreed. Agencies have an opportunity to agree on principles to guide next steps that are focused on community outcomes.

With regard to dangerous goods, CFA facilitated instruments of delegation for FRV employees to have access to land, building and premises for the purposes of ascertaining and reporting back to CFA on the contravention of law for specified legislation and regulations.<sup>41</sup> However, CFA is not

<sup>38</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>39</sup> For example, Dangerous Goods and Building Inspection and Compliance.

<sup>40</sup> And where CFA conditions in relation to vegetation management, bushfire attack level and access and water supply considerations are required.

<sup>41</sup> *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017* (VIC); *Dangerous Goods Act 1985* (VIC); *Dangerous Goods (Explosives) Interim Regulations 2021* (VIC); and *Dangerous Goods (Storage and Handling) Regulations 2012* (VIC).



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

able to provide FRV with delegations/authorisations to allow FRV to provide end-to-end delivery of this service as this requires legislative change that is yet to be put into effect. This means that CFA remains accountable for sign off and undertakes quality assurance which is leading to duplications in the workstream. Similarly, CFA is unable to provide delegation or authorisation to FRV to undertake work associated with caravan parks and moveable dwellings in the CAoV.

### Interim administrative arrangements are impacting the community and personnel

In the absence of formalised, executed, and communicated agreements, CFA and FRV have developed interim arrangements to ensure continuity of service delivery.<sup>42</sup> However, interim arrangements have now been in place for two years in some instances and are impacting service provision standards. For example, compliance with response timeframes for land use planning declined from 95 per cent in Q3, FY 2018–19 to 85 per cent in Q2, FY 2021–22 with the average number of completion days increasing from 10 to 21 during this time. FSIM notes that the number of referrals received for land use planning increased from 1,592 to 1,815 during this time which is a potential contributing factor to declining results. However, both CFA and FRV have advised FSIM that the current allocation of resources does not support effective service delivery. The current process for land use planning does not have clear lines of accountability and is causing confusion among staff delivering the services,

those doing quality assurance checks, and external stakeholders, although FRV advises that it has been working with local government to create awareness of FRV's role with the work undertaken by FRV on behalf of CFA. For stakeholders, it is often unclear what the process is, who to contact, and which agency is ultimately responsible.

FSIM also heard several accounts from staff at both CFA and FRV that the interim arrangements are significantly impacting staff morale. Inefficiencies leading to increased workload, duplicative processes, inability to effectively plan and the reputational impact of interim, unclear and convoluted arrangements are causing frustration.

Staff frustration with interim corporate arrangements was further exacerbated by confusion about IT. Many seconded staff who engaged with FSIM believed they needed to have two laptops to access both CFA and FRV systems. FRV's corporate area noted this was not the case and FRV staff on secondment to CFA could log into FRV systems using their FRV credentials on the laptop which CFA provides. At the time of reporting, FRV was establishing a Secondment Management Team to address these types of issues.

Some Division B staff who engaged with FSIM have also experienced delayed payment of salaries where staff have been acting in higher duties or qualified for higher ranks, noting that FRV advised that this issue had affected both Division A and Division B. In some instances, Division B

staff had reverted from electronic to manual, paper-based processes to approve allowances, leading to backlogs of up to five months. FSIM observes that the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan includes actions for CFA and FRV to upgrade their respective ICT capabilities.<sup>43</sup>

### Vacancy and non-relief issues have not been resolved

Vacancies and non-relief are complex issues, noting that the reform established a pool of seconded ACFO/Commander roles as defined under the Secondment Agreement. FSIM has focused on the issues relating to vacancy and non-relief with regard to those ACFO/Commander positions as defined under the Secondment Agreement and the mechanisms to fill those positions when the incumbent staff is not operating in that role.

FSIM notes that vacancies and non-relief have been long-standing issues for CFA and existed pre-reform. Relief and vacancy management is outlined in a draft supplementary instrument to the Secondment Agreement. Since the implementation of reform, FRV has undertaken a significant program of work aimed at addressing ongoing vacancy issues. For example, FRV implemented processes to promote individuals into seconded roles, with 32 FRV staff promoted to Commander positions (seconded to CFA) and 16 FRV staff promoted to ACFOs (seconded to CFA). FRV notes that it supported ACFOs and Commanders to undertake Qualifications (such as Public Safety Training Package),

<sup>42</sup> Refer to *Fire Services Implementation Monitor Annual Report 2020-21: Setting the foundations* for further information relating to interim arrangements.

<sup>43</sup> Victorian Government, 2021, Year Two to Five Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan: CFA Action 1.5: Complete delivery of the connected brigades project (part of \$3.6 million program to enhance critical volunteer facing ICT systems); FRV Action 3.1: Develop and implement FRV Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy, ICT Roadmap and Target Future Operating Model.



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

to ensure they are prepared and adequately trained for their respective roles. A Commander promotional program typically consists of a 12-week full-time commitment, which FRV facilitates and provides backfill coverage into CFA for all participants. In addition, FRV obtained agreement between CFA and FRV’s industrial partner to establish and implement five ACFO State Duty Officer roles based at Mt Helen (Ballarat), noting these are currently fixed-term roles.

More broadly, FRV advises that it has developed and implemented a higher duties list for the provision of relief to Commander positions seconded to CFA, provided information sessions to FRV operational staff to encourage

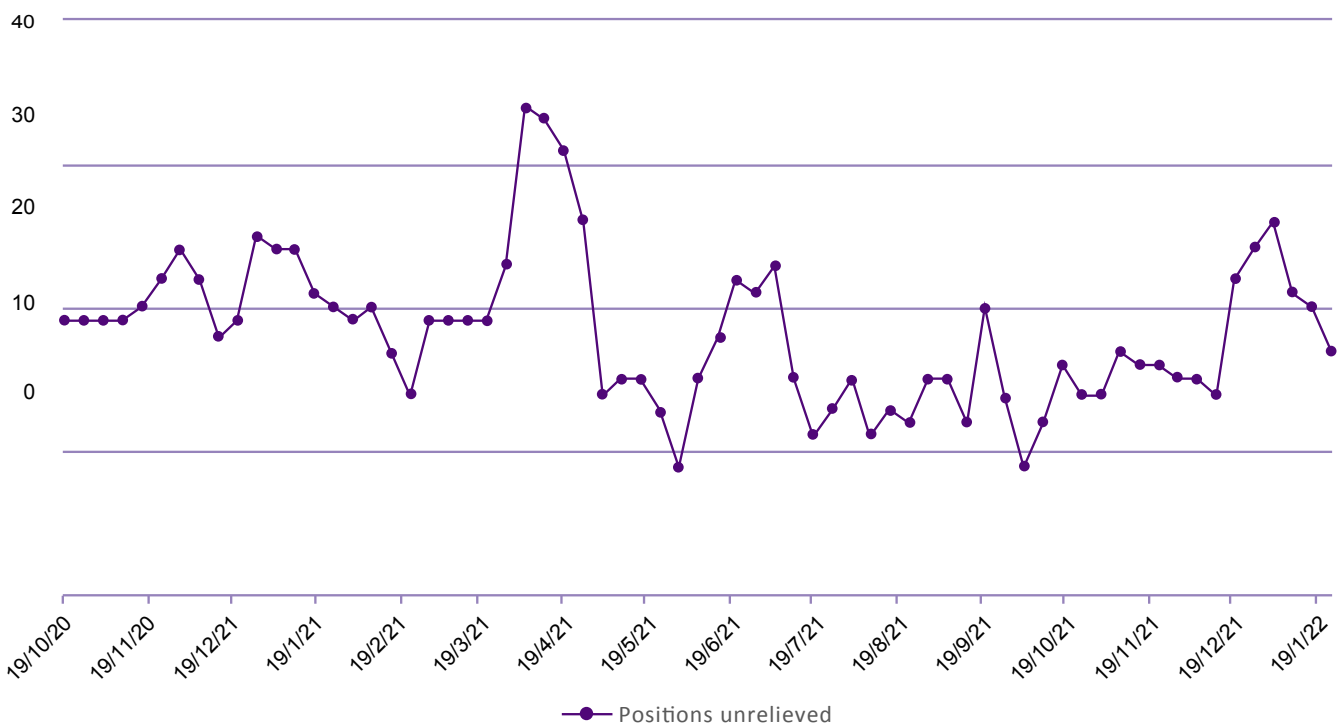
interest in positions seconded to CFA, and developed initiatives to attract applicants into difficult to fill locations in an effort to address vacancy issues.

However, throughout FY 2021–22, CFA experienced an average of 16 ACFO/Commander positions (11.3 per cent of all ACFO/Commander roles) remaining non-relieved. CFA continues to highlight vacancy and relief as a key risk to effective service delivery, noting this issue existed pre-reform, but has been exacerbated by reform. In addition, CFA highlighted the vacancy rate, relief rate and absence from brigade catchments of FRV seconded staff as cause for concern as part of its risk attestation process for the FY 2020–21 and FY

2021–22 High Risk Seasons. The risk attestation noted that EMV was working with CFA and FRV to address shortfalls; however, this issue had not been comprehensively addressed at the time of reporting and vacancy and relief issues continue to be included as a standing item on the weekly HoA agenda for ongoing oversight on a district-by-district, and role-by-role basis.

Figure 6 provides a summary of ACFO & Commander positions unrelieved from October 2020 to January 2022.

Figure 6: ACFO and Commander Positions Unrelieved (Oct 2020 – Jan 2022)



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### Seconded staff need to know two sets of doctrine

Through FSIM's FY 2021–22 engagement process, seconded staff consistently raised the issue of harmonisation as a key challenge to successful implementation of the new model. Seconded staff have noted they are required to navigate between two separate and continually evolving sets of doctrine which they advise is causing frustration, confusion and angst.<sup>44</sup>

### Applying FRV's service delivery model to regional and peri-urban areas

FRV's response area is primarily greater Melbourne; however, it also includes some larger regional cities (for example, Geelong, Bendigo, and Wangaratta) and peri-urban suburbs (for example, Caroline Springs and Sunbury). In undertaking year two engagement, FSIM repeatedly heard Division B staff use the terms 'MFB model' or 'Melbourne centric approach' when referring to FRV's operating model. A common reference heard by FSIM was that firefighters were promised that reform would embrace 'the best of both worlds' but 'that was not what was delivered'. FSIM understands this 'MFB' or 'Melbourne centric' terminology can refer interchangeably to corporate matters (for example, the delivery of most training sessions in metropolitan Melbourne) and operational service provision. Regarding operational service provision, the term was used to describe a method of response or service delivery that reflects the resources, distance and services that are available in metropolitan Melbourne to respond to an incident or day-to-day operations. This model is not as easily or efficiently translated to peri-urban or regional areas where time, distance and resources are not the same as in metropolitan Melbourne.

### Step-up provisions

FSIM heard anecdotal evidence from both CFA volunteers and FRV staff that step-up provisions are an example of where FRV's service delivery model may not be working as effectively in peri-urban and regional areas. While many Division B staff noted that they felt better supported through step-up provisions, some expressed concern that the provisions left areas exposed at times without sufficient support. For example, when FRV staff are called to an incident in regional Victoria, replacement support then comes from another FRV station or district. The amount of time it takes these crews to reach a regional centre (in some cases, hours) leaves a gap in services, should another incident occur. This also has flow on effects, as crews are then required to 'step-up' from nearby stations or even metropolitan stations, creating a ripple-effect of step-ups. There is an opportunity for CFA and FRV to consider what is most effective and efficient for regional districts, including support arrangements from CFA. FSIM notes that an update of Joint Standard Operating Procedures (JSOPs) / IPs is an action in the FSOC work plan and that JSOPs 10.2.9 and 10.2.10 address CFA and FRV step-ups procedures respectively.

To date, FSIM has not seen evidence that would suggest this approach has had a radical impact on service provision to the community; however, FSIM engagement identified potential issues with an efficient use of

resources. Specifically, FRV staff advised FSIM that FRV response in regional and peri-urban Victoria may not adequately consider resources, time and distance constraints and the availability of closer, appropriate CFA appliances and support. Further, volunteers have observed FRV appliances passing regional CFA brigades. FSIM notes that CFA data shows a significant decrease in utilisation of co-located brigade volunteers. In 2019, volunteers in integrated stations attended over 18,600 incidents compared to volunteers at co-located stations attending just over 7,200 incidents for FY 2021–22.

FRV advises that, at the commencement of fire services reform, FRV's Policy and Planning Department sought representatives from across Division A and Division B to provide a balanced view when developing doctrine. The Consultation Committee, which consists of Division A and Division B, reviews and endorses the doctrine prior to implementation. In addition, some FRV staff at peri-urban stations where GARS had been rolled out advised that FRV had engaged with them directly to better understand local requirements and that FRV subsequently modified GARS requirements.

FSIM notes that CFA and FRV have committed to work to "develop an understanding of co-response model and GARS (state-wide)" in the FSOC work plan for FY 2021–22.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>45</sup> Fire Services Operations Committee Work Plan 21/22 – action 2.2.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### Absence of an overarching, strategic governance framework

There is currently no overarching, strategic governance framework that exists to overcome or address the fundamental challenges agencies face in finalising agreements. There are several agreements (for example, land use planning) that are at a stalemate. While potential solutions

have been identified and that there are possible legislative powers and policy coordination approaches that could be applied, there is no point of escalation or overarching body to make a decision on how to progress or resolve these issues.

## Summary of status of agreements

Table 7: Status of Agreements as at 30 June 2022 (Action 3.9)

Interoperability Procedures		
Ref	Name	Status
JSOP 10.2.5	Initial response and escalation for mutual aid	In progress - delayed
JSOP 10.2.6	Communications	In progress – delayed
JSOP 10.2.7	Command and control	In progress – delayed
JSOP 10.2.8	Liaison officers	In progress – delayed
JSOP 10.2.9	CFA step up / move to FRV stations	In progress – delayed
JSOP 10.2.10	FRV step up – move to CFA stations	In progress – delayed
JSOP 10.2.11	Strike team / task forces	In progress – delayed
JSOP 10.2.12	CFA/FRV pre-incident response plans	In progress – delayed
JSOP 10.2.14	Request and use of state fleet aircraft by FRV	In progress – delayed
JSOP 10.2.15	Request and use of state fleet and call when needed reconnaissance aircraft by FRV	In progress – delayed
IP 01/20	Mutual operational command support	Agreed CFA/FRV
IP 01/21	PTA/Corporate staff support to CFA operations	Agreed CFA/FRV

## 7.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Complementary fire services

### 7.1 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Agreements

## Summary of status of agreements (continued)

<b>Overarching Operational Services Agreement, Service Level Deed of Agreements and Schedules</b>				
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Revised due date</b>
-	Overarching Operational Services Agreement	-	Executed	-
-	Service Level Deed of Agreement – CFA	-	Executed	-
-	Service Level Deed of Agreement – FRV	-	Executed	-
<b>FRV 1</b>	Alarm assessment	Position agreed in principle by CFA and FRV. FRV to review/ approve letter of agreement	In progress – delayed	30/10/2022
<b>FRV 2</b>	Structural Fire Investigation	Work instruction issued. Position agreed in principle by CFA and FRV. Approved for consultation at HoA	In progress – delayed	30/10/2022
<b>FRV 3</b>	Bushfire Fire Investigation	Position agreed in principle by CFA and FRV. Approved for consultation at HoA	In progress – delayed	30/10/2022
<b>FRV 4 (CFA2)</b>	Fire Services Communications Controllers	CFA to review ongoing arrangements and provide to FRV for review/approval	In progress – delayed	30/12/2022
<b>FRV 5</b>	Dangerous goods	CFA unable to delegate some powers to FRV to perform end to end service delivery of dangerous goods in CAoV. CFA and FRV yet to agree on a position	In progress – delayed	30/11/2022
<b>FRV 6</b>	Building inspection and compliance (structural fire safety)	Deed of indemnity signed for structural fire safety services and instruments of delegation prepared. CFA and FRV yet to agree on a position regarding caravan parks and moveable dwellings	In progress – delayed	30/08/2022
<b>FRV 7</b>	Land use planning	CFA and FRV yet to agree on a position	In progress – delayed	30/11/2022
<b>FRV 8</b>	Communications technical services	Corporate Services MOU Communications technical services appendix to be acquitted. CFA and FRV to prepare a schedule including service delivery plan	In progress – delayed	30/12/2022
<b>CFA 1</b>	District mechanical officers	Corporate Services MOU mechanical services appendix to be acquitted. CFA and FRV to prepare a schedule including service delivery plan	In progress – delayed	30/10/2022
<b>CFA 2 (FRV4)</b>	Fire services communication control	CFA to review ongoing arrangements and provide to FRV for review/approval	In progress – delayed	30/12/2022
<b>CFA 3</b>	Protective equipment	Corporate Services MOU Protective equipment appendix to be acquitted. CFA and FRV to prepare a schedule including service delivery plan	In progress – delayed	30/11/2022
<b>CFA 4</b>	Specialist response instructors	CFA to outline service delivery requirements	In progress – delayed	30/12/2022
<b>CFA 5</b>	Tower overseer services	Corporate Services MOU Tower Overseer appendix to be acquitted. CFA and FRV to prepare a schedule including service delivery plan	In progress – delayed	30/12/2022

## Summary of status of agreements (continued)

<b>Secondment Agreement and Supplementary Instruments</b>				
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Revised due date</b>
-	<b>Secondment Agreement</b>	-	Executed	
1	<b>Leave management</b>	Drafted. With FRV for consultation	In progress	30/10/2022
2	<b>Performance and misconduct management</b>	Drafted. With FRV for consultation	In progress	30/10/2022
3	<b>Relief and vacancy management</b>	CFA and FRV are preparing guidelines to underpin instrument	In progress	30/11/2022
4	<b>Dispute and grievance resolution</b>	Work required to map instrument to create workflows to support instrument	In progress	30/12/2022
5	<b>OHS reporting and WorkSafe</b>	CFA and FRV to review current draft	In progress	30/11/2022
6	<b>Additional secondees positions</b>	Drafted. With FRV for consultation	In progress	30/11/2022
7	<b>Professional development</b>	CFA and FRV to establish guidelines and processes to support instrument	Not yet started	30/12/2022
8	<b>Authorisation of expense claims</b>	Identifying streamlining opportunities	In progress	30/12/2022
9	<b>Consultation process</b>	Workflow to be developed to support instrument	Not yet started	30/12/2022
10	<b>Tools of trade</b>	Guidance required on streamlining and ensuring a user-friendly approach	Not yet started	30/12/2022

**7.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Complementary fire services**

**7.1 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Agreements**

## Summary of status of agreements (continued)

Table 8: Status of Delegations as at 30 June 2022 (Action 3.10)

<b>Delegation / Authorisation</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Fire Investigations – s98 Country Fire Authority Act 1958</b>	FRV Fire Investigators have the appropriate delegations to perform structural fire investigations	Completed
<b>Dangerous Goods</b>	FRV employees have the appropriate delegations to access land, buildings, and premises in the CAOV. CFA to confirm whether all required delegations to enable end to end service delivery can be delegated	Completed
<b>Building Act and Regulations</b>	Instrument for 41 FRV employees for the purposes of ascertaining and reporting to the CO under the Building Act and Regulations completed. Deed of Indemnity executed. Instruments of delegation / authorisation with FRV for review/approval	In progress
<b>Structural Fire Safety – Building Act</b>	Deed of Indemnity executed. Instruments of delegation / authorisation with FRV for review/approval. FRV to provide end to end structural fire safety services on behalf of CFA in CAoV	In progress
<b>Structural Fire Safety – Building Regulations</b>	Deed of Indemnity executed. Instruments of delegation / authorisation with FRV for review/approval. FRV to provide end to end structural fire safety services on behalf of CFA in CAoV	In progress
<b>Caravan Parks</b>	CFA to confirm whether all required delegations to enable end to end service delivery can be delegated	In progress
<b>Land Use Planning</b>	CFA and FRV to agree on a position regarding LUP in CAoV	In progress

**7.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Complementary fire services**  
**7.1 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Agreements**

## Summary of status of agreements (continued)

Table 9: Status of Corporate Services MOU as at 30 June 2022 (Action 3.12)

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Agency agreed recommendation</b>	<b>Status</b>
	<b>MOU</b>	N/A	In progress
<b>1</b>	<b>Information exchange</b>	Information sharing protocol to be included in ongoing MOU	In progress
<b>2</b>	<b>Human resources and payroll</b>	Capture ICT requirements for hosting platforms in the SLA for ICT Services	In progress
<b>3</b>	<b>Workcover</b>	Acquit	To be acquitted
<b>4</b>	<b>Employee support services</b>	Include in an ongoing MOU	In progress
<b>5</b>	<b>Media &amp; communications</b>	Acquit	To be acquitted
<b>6</b>	<b>Workplace disputes &amp; grievances</b>	Acquit	To be acquitted
<b>7</b>	<b>Workplace behaviour &amp; public complaints</b>	Acquit	To be acquitted
<b>8</b>	<b>Finance</b>	Remain open – still in transitional phase	In progress
<b>9</b>	<b>Legal</b>	Acquit	To be acquitted
<b>10</b>	<b>Freedom of Information</b>	FRV to return original FoI documents to CFA	In progress
<b>11</b>	<b>Business assurance</b>	Acquit	To be acquitted
<b>12</b>	<b>District mechanical services</b>	Acquit	To be acquitted
<b>13</b>	<b>Communications services technical officers</b>	Acquit	To be acquitted
<b>14</b>	<b>Contracts &amp; procurement</b>	Acquit	To be acquitted
<b>15</b>	<b>Property services</b>	Capture requirements in an SLA for property services	In progress
<b>16</b>	<b>Information technology</b>	Capture requirements in an SLA for ICT Services	In progress



7.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Complementary fire services

## 7.2 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Engaged and safe



### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective

Engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision making and feels safe and respected

An engaged workforce that feels safe and respected

### Scope of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

- 1.1 Develop and implement CFA's Engagement Framework and Volunteer Engagement Plan
- 2.3 Develop and implement a contemporary Health Model for FRV
- 2.4 Finalise relevant enterprise bargaining agreements

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

1

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

2

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

3

Plan and build for the future

4

Valuing our people

5

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The Engaged and Safe line of inquiry reviews three Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions (1.1, 2.3, 2.4). This line of inquiry assessed the effectiveness of CFA in delivering action 1.1 towards the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of an “engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision-making and feels safe and respected.” This line of inquiry also assessed the effectiveness of FRV in delivering actions 2.3 and 2.4 towards the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of “an engaged workforce that feels safe and respected.”

This section also provides an overview of joint challenges and opportunities more broadly for CFA and FRV in achieving an “engaged and safe” work environment.

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for each action
- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.

FSIM notes that the size and scale of the agencies delivering engagement activities in this line of inquiry are significantly different. The concept of an “engaged and safe” cohort is significantly different for CFA, who, in addition to over 800 paid staff, have an additional approximately 52,000 volunteer cohort, compared to FRV’s approximately 4,300 paid staff.

## Progress of actions

**Action 1.1: Develop and implement CFA's Engagement Framework and Volunteer Engagement Plan incorporating a monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement process.**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2025
<b>Reported Status</b>	Significant delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

The CFA Engagement Framework is still in development. CFA produced an early draft of the Volunteer Engagement Plan and intends to publish the CFA Community Engagement Approach in FY 2022–23. Oversight of all remaining engagement approaches will be managed by a CFA steering committee. CFA has also undertaken consultation and research to inform the engagement plans and approaches.

While the development of the Volunteer Engagement Plan is underway, CFA has continued with a range of engagement activities including VFBV Joint Consultative Committees, the CFA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and CO Advisory Committee for Women and Advisory Committee for Young Adults, direct connection to VFBV Executive Leadership, District Planning Committees, establishing Regional Advisory Groups, Volunteer recruitment and retention teams, Championship planning, CFA Member's Online, COVID-19 related engagement, and a monthly volunteer forum.

**Action 2.3: Develop and implement a contemporary Health Model, which establishes state-wide comprehensive organisational health standards, policies and support mechanisms that are designed to proactively manage and mitigate health risks whilst improving the effectiveness and quality of care provided to our firefighters and corporate staff.**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2023
<b>Reported Status</b>	On track
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	New action

FRV is in the early stages of implementing a purpose-built workforce Health Model that considers the health, safety and wellbeing of all FRV employees. The FRV Health Model workforce medical services will supplant FRV's Brigade Medical Services contract, which expires in October 2022.

In FY 2021–22, FRV employed a Chief Medical Officer and initiated the procurement process to contract a Medical Services provider. Development of a continuous improvement process that monitors and evaluates the FRV Health Model's progress including health outcomes for FRV staff is underway and will continue into the FY 2022–23 project implementation phase. FRV plans to undertake a risk-based task analysis in FY 2022–23 to align health and safety policy and medical services to specific roles.

**Action 2.4: 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.**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Rolled over from Year One Plan

FRV Operational Employees Enterprise Agreement bargaining commenced in March 2022. FRV reports that the future FRV Operational Employees Enterprise Agreement will include three Divisions. Division one will bring together common terms of agreement between former MFB (Division A) and former CFA (Division B) employees. Division two will apply to Division A employees. Division three will apply to Division B employees. FRV has communicated its intention to FSIM to harmonise the two divisions in future FRV operational staff enterprise agreements.

The *FRV Professional, Technical and Administrative Staff Agreement* and the *FRV Corporate and Technical Staff Agreement* will be combined under one enterprise bargaining agreement. Bargaining commenced in early 2022; however, minor delays continue to be experienced with negotiations ongoing.

The *FRV Mechanical Engineering Workshops Agreement* has been executed and was reported in FSIM's FY 2020-21 Annual Report.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Fire Services Implementation Monitor, 2021, *Fire Services Implementation Monitor Annual Report 2020-21: Setting the foundations*, Victorian Government <<https://www.vic.gov.au/fire-services-implementation-monitor-annual-report-2020-21>>.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective

Of the three Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions in this line of inquiry, one is reported as experiencing significant delays, one is experiencing minor delays and one is reported as on track. FSIM observes that CFA is making strong progress towards the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of “an engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision-making and feels safe and respected” through the ongoing development of its engagement framework and subsequent workforce engagement plans. It is also engaging directly with those brigades most particularly affected by reform (such as through the Co-located Brigade Forum). However, CFA’s vision of the role of volunteers under the new model is not well-understood by some volunteers in co-located stations who engaged with FSIM and some CFA Brigades that provide response support to FRV in FRV fire districts. Adopting best practice and modern user-focused engagement initiatives is an opportunity for CFA to improve the way it engages with volunteers and has the potential to improve the volunteer experience.

FSIM further observes that FRV is making strong progress towards the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of “an engaged workforce that feels

safe and respected” through the development of its Health Model and finalisation of EBAs. FSIM notes there are opportunities for CFA and FRV to continue to collaborate to support engagement with seconded employees specifically and firefighters across the fire services more broadly. Although it is too early to demonstrate its impact on FRV’s workforce, the FRV Health Model uses modern methods, is evidence based and has the potential to inform good health (and safety) outcomes for FRV’s workforce. FRV is also progressing work to harmonise Division A and Division B entitlements under the FRV Operational Employees EBA.

### Assessment of CFA - An engaged volunteer workforce

Action 1.1 requires CFA to develop and implement an Engagement Framework and Volunteer Engagement Plan incorporating a monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement process.

In this section FSIM assesses CFA’s effectiveness in progressing work against action 1.1, development of an Engagement Framework and Volunteer Engagement Plan, to achieve the objective of an “engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision-making and feels safe and respected”.

### CFA opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### CFA is adopting a best practice approach to engagement

CFA’s Engagement Framework development is informed by authoritative best practice guidelines and modern program development approaches. The CFA Engagement Framework will be guided by the Victorian Public Engagement Framework,<sup>47</sup> building on values and standards established by the IAP2,<sup>48</sup> a leading engagement association and community of practice. The overarching engagement framework principles will inform the development of CFA engagement approaches for volunteers, staff and other stakeholders. CFA plans to develop stakeholder engagement approaches using modern user-focused program design methodologies.

CFA applied user-centred design methods<sup>49</sup> to develop its Community Engagement Approach.<sup>50</sup> The CFA Community Engagement Approach was informed by the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design (Stanford University) Design Thinking<sup>51</sup> model. CFA reports that the community engagement approach design methodology will be considered for use as a template for future plans and approaches to engage volunteers, staff and stakeholders.

<sup>47</sup> Victorian Government, 2021, *Public Engagement Framework 2021-2025* guides Victorian government departments and agencies to establish consistent implementation and monitoring and evaluation approaches to inform engagement programs.

<sup>48</sup> International Association for Public Participation (iap2.org)

<sup>49</sup> A user-centred design approach respects the needs of the end-user and provides opportunities to identify gaps and find solutions to problems before and during implementation.

<sup>50</sup> CFA advised this document will be published in FY 2022–23.

<sup>51</sup> Design thinking is a process for solving problems by prioritising the end user’s needs. It relies on observing, with empathy, how people interact with their environments, and employs an iterative, hands-on approach to creating innovative solutions

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### CFA is addressing volunteer engagement issues

CFA has acknowledged issues with its volunteer engagement practices and is actively working to improve CFA's volunteer experience. CFA commissioned an independent culture and issues management review of the organisation, discussed in further detail in the Culture and diversity key focus area.<sup>52</sup> CFA has acknowledged the issues raised and has accepted all ten recommendations.<sup>53</sup> CFA is also considering key findings from CFA commissioned volunteer surveys, workshops and online sessions which highlighted issues with:

- limited opportunities for volunteers to engage
- transparency in the use of volunteer feedback and follow up actions
- CFA's limited engagement scheduling flexibility given volunteer family and work commitments
- insufficient engagement to understand diversity of volunteer opinion and perspective
- limited visibility of leadership on the ground.

To address these issues, CFA embedded a suite of new engagement activities into business-as-usual practice such as monthly volunteer forums chaired by the CFA CO, CFA CEO and CO Advisory Committee for Women and CFA CEO and CO Advisory Committee for Young Adults

(18-30 years of age). Many volunteers responded positively to these new engagement initiatives. As stated in the *External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support Country Fire Authority of the Future* (Szoke Review), one volunteer said, "[i]n my 30-year career we've never had an opportunity for a volunteer to ask the Chief and CEO a question on any topic".<sup>54</sup> Improving CFA engagement is an ongoing process that will take time. FSIM acknowledges CFA's work in identifying and actively pursuing solutions to CFA workforce engagement issues.

### CFA is implementing a range of engagement activities

While CFA works to finalise its Volunteer Engagement Plan, it continued to implement a range of engagement activities including various localised engagement opportunities with volunteers as well as state-based engagement and consultative opportunities.

For example, CFA and VFBV meet regularly at state based VFBV Joint Consultative Committees to discuss areas of interest and impact to volunteers, with VFBV providing a feedback loop to their members via a monthly briefing.<sup>55</sup> CFA established the CEO and CO Advisory Committee for Women and Advisory Committee for Young Adults (18-30 years of age) in 2021 which provides an opportunity for the executive to hear directly from these volunteer cohorts. CFA continues

to run District Planning Committees to enable CFA management and Volunteer representatives to contribute to strategic planning and achievements of CFA values, objectives and priorities. CFA has established Regional Advisory Groups that comprise senior Regional CFA management and includes Volunteer representation via membership of the District Planning Committee Chairs across the specific region and provide further opportunities for volunteer representation in collaborative decision-making alongside the Regional Leadership Team. CFA has also established a monthly interactive volunteer forum that is convened in the evening and livestreams a panel discussion with the opportunity for volunteers to ask questions. Topics covered have included equipment, workwear, training, culture, the role of the district mechanical officers and an overview of the new training facility at Ballan.

### CFA is reporting improvements in volunteer engagement

The annual VFBV Welfare and Efficiency survey,<sup>56</sup> which FSIM notes is designed by and for volunteers, is an important tool that gives CFA direct feedback and insights from volunteers on the key issues affecting their welfare and efficiency. In FY 2020–21, CFA reported notable improvements in volunteer satisfaction in the survey themes of 'Respect and Professionalism', 'Cooperation across CFA', and 'Support from CFA'.

<sup>52</sup> Allen & Clarke Consulting, 2022, *External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support Country Fire Authority of the Future*, pg. 51-54.

<sup>53</sup> Country Fire Authority, 2022, *Joint statement from CFA Chair, CEO and Chief Officer*, Country Fire Authority <<https://news.cfa.vic.gov.au/news/joint-statement-from-cfa-chair-ceo-and-chief-officer>>

<sup>54</sup> Allen & Clarke Consulting (April 2022), *External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support Country Fire Authority of the Future*, pg. 51.

<sup>55</sup> CFA advises that, following a review in late 2021, a new refreshed Committee structure will be established, comprising committees relating to Equipment & Infrastructure, Volunteerism, Training, Community Safety, Communications and Technology, HR, Welfare and OH&S, and Operations. The CFA CEO and CO also continue to hold weekly meetings with VFBV Executive Leadership.

<sup>56</sup> Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, 2022, VFBV Quarterly Supplement June 2022

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

In particular, the result of 3.0<sup>57</sup> for the question, “Volunteers are effectively consulted and involved in decision making at my local District/Regional level” was a considerable improvement from the previous year’s result of 4.2. FSIM notes that a score over 2.0 in this survey indicates a critical gap between volunteer expectations and CFA delivery; however, these results suggest that CFA engagement with its volunteers has improved considerably, and that progress is being made to better engage with volunteers. This has also been confirmed by FSIM engagement with volunteers where some volunteers expressed approval in the CO’s advocacy for volunteer interests exemplified from CFA Volunteer Forums, CO engagement at CFA Championships and station visits.

### CFA challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### Volunteers in co-located brigades are often unclear of their role

CFA, FRV and other agencies where relevant, maintain Local Mutual Aid Plans that contain information, plans and procedures specific to the respective preparedness and response of the fire agencies for each region. The documents contain detail and direction regarding the boundaries of regions, roles and responsibilities across preparedness, readiness and response activities and investigations. Local Mutual Aid Plans are updated annually and are developed with the objective of agencies working together in an integrated approach to deliver

fire services across Victoria. FSIM acknowledges that Local Mutual Aid Plans provide direction and guidance on agency response. However, some volunteers who engaged with FSIM in peri-urban and regional areas were unclear on why they were not being called out (or called out and then turned back) in some instances and noted that they did not believe they were being used effectively when they did respond to some incidents.

For example, it was unclear to many volunteers who engaged with FSIM, predominantly from co-located brigades, what role they play in the new model. When FSIM asked volunteers to describe the role of a CFA volunteer, one volunteer from a major regional centre described their role as, “*bushfire patrol with some BA<sup>58</sup> thrown in*”, while another said, “*we don’t know what we are... [our role] doesn’t make sense*”.<sup>59</sup> While FSIM acknowledges that local tools, such as Local Mutual Aid Plans exist, some volunteers communicated to FSIM that they felt underutilised, confused, and unguided, which has impacted volunteer morale and motivation at multiple brigades, particularly those in co-located stations and those in close proximity to FRV response area. The captain of a brigade in close proximity to an FRV response area said that they were being “*usurped*”<sup>60</sup> by FRV. The captain cited boundary concerns, reduced call outs, and a reduction in CFA opportunity to perform community engagement functions as impacts from FRV ownership of the response area post reform. Other volunteers cited being given limited opportunities

to utilise their skills, capabilities and knowledge as a result of being turned back from incidents, being placed on standby, or not being able to contribute at incidents, in favour of FRV staff called through FRV step-up provisions.

FSIM acknowledges that step-up processes existed pre-reform; however, changes to ownership of stations and response areas have increased the coverage of where these step-up provisions apply. For example, FSIM was advised of instances where appliances had travelled from inner-city Melbourne to regional areas, sometimes driving hours to support regional FRV staff through step ups. Other volunteers have commented that they are often turned away from responses led by FRV which, anecdotally, has led to a decline in volunteers turning out. FSIM sought quantitative evidence to support this anecdotal decline in turnout and found that while total volunteer turnout has not noticeably declined in the 34 co-located stations since reform, the number of incidents volunteers responded to in these areas has significantly declined (approximately 60 per cent) and there has been a small net decline (approximately 7 per cent) in volunteer numbers across the 34 co-located brigades over the past two years (2021 and 2022).<sup>61</sup> Ongoing declines in volunteer numbers and less opportunity for volunteers to develop their skills and apply their experience may have ramifications for volunteer capability, with a longer-term implication that surge capacity may be diminished as a result.

<sup>57</sup> Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, 2021, VFBV Volunteer Survey uses a scoring system as follows: a high score is a sign that things are not working well, while a low score is a sign that things are working well. Any score over 2.0 indicates a large to critical gap is emerging.

<sup>58</sup> Breathing apparatus.

<sup>59</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>60</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>61</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 information request.



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### Legacy of CFA consultation with brigades in the lead up to the reform continues to impact volunteer morale in some instances

FSIM understands that negotiations of the reform were contentious. Volunteers at multiple co-located brigades who engaged with FSIM indicated that they felt misled by the then CFA leadership in the lead up to reform implementation. Meetings with CFA middle management prior to reform led some volunteers to believe that reform changes would be superficial. As one brigade Captain stated to FSIM, *“We were told changes would be as simple as changing a badge ... boy were they wrong”*.<sup>62</sup>

Some volunteers from co-located stations in both Melbourne’s peri-urban fringe and in major regional centres who engaged with FSIM advised that, upon reform implementation (1 July 2020) volunteers experienced being locked out of or unable to easily access some station areas such as communal areas and areas of substantial and significant brigade history, meaning, and ceremony such as CFA trophy rooms.<sup>63</sup> The names of respected CFA personnel were removed swiftly from previously owned CFA appliances. Volunteers stated that new station exit and entry points were allocated specifically for volunteers, imbuing mistrust.<sup>64</sup> Volunteers in a specific regional co-located station reported being allocated insufficient and ill-equipped turnout spaces for effective and safe turnout, which FSIM viewed during a site visit.<sup>65</sup> FSIM notes that at the time of reporting, CFA and FRV had agreed to investigate

securing an alternative site, including any scoping of works and funding options for government consideration, to secure a property that will enable the brigade to access appropriate supporting infrastructure. While this is not the experience of all co-located stations, FSIM notes that this issue is significant for the volunteers impacted by it and should be recognised and addressed by FRV in consultation with CFA and volunteers.

Some volunteers that FSIM engaged with believed that CFA’s communication to volunteers pre-reform was inadequate and that key reform changes such as the removal of the Officer in Charge (OIC) role, misalignment of CFA and FRV station and operational protocol, and the cessation of volunteer and career firefighter combined training opportunities were not clearly communicated or not communicated at all in the lead-up to the reform.<sup>66</sup> Although communication in the lead up to the reform cannot be changed, some CFA volunteers continue to reflect on the consequences of what they believe to be inadequate consultation, including reduced morale, motivation and numbers at some locations.

FSIM acknowledges the size and scale of CFA as an organisation with over 52,000 volunteers working across 1,200 brigades and the complexity of communicating and engaging effectively with volunteers. While the issues discussed above are historic, they are still being felt by a cohort of volunteers and should be considered in the ongoing implementation of CFA’s engagement activities.

### CFA consultation may not always respond to volunteer perspectives and experiences

Volunteers want to be heard and consulted. CFA uses various mechanisms to engage volunteers including, but not limited to, District Planning Committees, weekly meetings between CFA executive and VFBV, the inclusion of volunteer representatives on project teams and working groups, volunteer consultation in policy and operational development and review, and using communication channels to highlight activities and invite involvement.

Notwithstanding this, some volunteers that FSIM engaged with reported that CFA consultation was inadequate. A response to the 2021 CFA Volunteer Engagement Survey confirmed that, *“[w]hen CFA chooses to actively engage volunteers and listen to their voice then we have positive outcomes”*. However, some CFA volunteers reported that CFA (leadership and corporate) engagement can be ‘one-way’, and that ‘volunteers have no influence’. Other volunteers reported that results from volunteer feedback were not communicated with some volunteers. In FSIM station visits, multiple volunteers, including captains from co-located stations, reported not being sufficiently consulted on the Tenancy Agreement. CFA advises that, while it did engage with CFA volunteers, consultation on the Tenancy Agreement was defined and not all volunteers were involved as was appropriate given the circumstances.

<sup>62</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>63</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>64</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>65</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>66</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

FSIM observed that some volunteers feel that CFA's workforce engagement is not meaningful, neither is it concerned with issues important to them, nor does it lead to actions. It is too early to properly assess the effectiveness of CFA's post-reform volunteer engagement programs, including the engagement framework. However, FSIM notes CFA has implemented a range of activities (as outlined in the Opportunities section above) aimed at addressing many of the issues raised within this section.

### Assessment of FRV - An engaged and safe workforce

The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan includes the objective of "an engaged workforce that feels safe and respected". However, actions listed under this objective do not provide specific scope to effectively consider FRV engagement, as action 2.4 is limited to the progress of enterprise bargaining agreements. While related action 4.4 requires FRV to define its culture and values, there is no requirement for FRV to demonstrate effectiveness in engaging staff. While these actions are relevant to staff engagement, FRV has an opportunity to broaden the scope beyond what is outlined in the various EBAs and consider an FRV workforce engagement approach that guides the other, more targeted, engagement work. FRV's Strategic Advisory Committee could play a role in assisting FRV to consider if this type

of approach would be appropriate. FSIM has provided a short snapshot of some of FRV's workforce engagement activities beyond what is required in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan below, to provide some context to the Engaged and Safe line of inquiry.

### FRV opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### FRV workforce engagement activities

FRV has embedded workforce engagement practices at all levels of the organisation. FRV is a large organisation that operates out of multiple locations. Clear communication and engagement with its workforce are required to coordinate personnel and activities. FRV has established engagement and communications approaches. For example, FRV executive leadership participates in station site visits, operational meetings, workshops, and communicates through bulletins and newsletters emailed to employees.<sup>67</sup> Operational learnings and monthly ACFO updates are circulated via email. Doctrine and standard operating procedures are developed through consultation committees and specialist workshops, involving representatives from across the workforce. FSIM notes that some engagement activities (for example, Conversations in the Mess), were impacted by COVID-19 related restrictions, but saw increased activity in both Q3 and Q4 FY 2021–22.<sup>68</sup>

#### A modern approach to emergency services health and safety

FRV's Health Model is based on a clinical governance framework<sup>69</sup> which focuses on employee health and safety risk and is informed by the principles of continuous improvement. FRV reported it to be the first of its kind in an Australian emergency services context and report that its Health Model was developed considering EBA, regulatory, legislative and Australian health and safety standards compliance. FRV employed specialist expertise to oversee the ongoing implementation and continuous improvement of its Health Model, including a Chief Medical Officer. FRV's Health Model initiative is still in the early stages of implementation and not due for completion until 2023, but adopts a modern health and safety approach that has the potential to improve health, safety and wellbeing outcomes for FRV's staff across Victoria.

Central to FRV's Health Model is the management of workforce risk. FRV notes that a risk-based task analysis will be conducted in FY 2022–23. This approach will review role specific physical tasks across the organisation including tasks conducted by corporate staff, mechanical staff and firefighters. The task analysis will better inform FRV's understanding of its workforce risk profile providing opportunities to review and update FRV's work health and safety standards and doctrine to specific roles and functions.

<sup>67</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement

<sup>68</sup> Fire Services Implementation Monitor, 2021, *Fire Services Outcomes Framework Progress Report*, Victorian Government <<https://www.vic.gov.au/fsim-publications>>

<sup>69</sup> Clinical governance is an integrated component of corporate governance of health service organisations. It ensures that everyone – from frontline clinicians to managers and members of governing bodies, such as boards – is accountable to patients and the community for assuring the delivery of health services that are safe, effective, integrated, high quality and continuously improving.



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

FRV's Health Model incorporates voluntary and mandatory physical and psychological medical services for FRV's employees located in and in close proximity to FRV response areas. Medical services will include management of mandatory medical standard screening for FRV employment and promotion. Voluntary health services will be accessible to FRV staff, which includes, but is not limited to early detection of disease and cancer, patient history and physical examination, lifestyle health advice and education, psychological wellbeing, post incident screening. Although it is too early for FSIM to measure its effectiveness, FRV's Health Model and related medical services provide a holistic approach to employee health, safety and wellbeing and has the potential to improve health outcomes of employees.

### FRV challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### The Health Model has implications for staff seconded to CFA

FRV is obliged to provide medical services to seconded staff under the FRV Operational Employees EBA.<sup>70</sup> FRV advised that further work is required to understand Health Model impacts on staff seconded to CFA and at the time of reporting was yet to consult with CFA on implementation impacts for seconded staff. The ability of seconded staff outside of FRV response areas to access the same level of medical services needs to be further investigated. The FRV Health Model and related medical services are still in their early stages of

development and implementation. With rollout to commence in FY 2022–23, it is critical that FRV engages with CFA and seconded staff to understand and address Health Model access and implications in the CAoV.

#### Division A and B staff entitlements are yet to be harmonised under the FRV Operational Employees EBA

The terms 'Division A' and 'Division B' refer to the existing divisions in the FRV Operational Employees EBA. The FRV Operational Employees EBA, ratified by the Fair Work Commissioner combines two agreements: *Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board and United Firefighters Union Operational Staff Agreement 2016* and the *Country Fire Authority/United Firefighters Union of Australia Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement 2016*.<sup>71</sup> Although operational FRV staff are now managed under the one EBA, Division A and Division B entitlements are yet to be harmonised and include different workplace conditions such as, but are not limited to, various pay allowances and minimum crew numbers on certain appliances.

Some Division B staff in peri-urban and regional stations who engaged with FSIM noted that FRV's service delivery model, perceived as 'Melbourne centric', further highlighted the differences between the two divisions. For example, Division B staff reported instances of insufficient staffing with some responses failing to meet the FRV Operational Employees EBA 'seven to a fireground' condition,<sup>72</sup> and the way in which this provision impacts responses in regional Victoria – for example, changes to

deployment approaches for technical rescue capability in some regional areas. Although the concerns of Division B staff could be attributed to consequences of an ineffective transition to the new fire services model, there remain two divisions of fire fighters within the FRV Operational Employees EBA with differing conditions. This issue was also highlighted in the consultation FRV undertook to shape its Strategic Plan (action 5.4), with an independent report observing that FRV needs to forge its own unique workforce, provide the ability to let go of historical divides and ensure staff feel included.<sup>73</sup> FSIM understands that negotiations are underway to harmonise Division A and Division B firefighter roles and responsibilities under the FRV Operational Employees EBA.

#### Ensuring Division B staff feel supported

Some Division B staff who engaged with FSIM reported feeling unsupported by FRV in the reform transition. For example, Division B staff across Victoria indicated that they were not given pre-reform training. This was a problem for many Division B firefighters because they felt that they had to learn FRV doctrine 'overnight' and if they had a problem, they had to work it out themselves. Firefighters reported being unclear on FRV policy and/or unclear on who they were reporting to. Division B staff also reported that FRV's communication of doctrine, policy and procedure updates are overwhelming, and there was no comprehensive implementation plan to support them. FSIM notes that these issues may be addressed by the establishment of a work plan of FRV's Secondment Management Team.

<sup>70</sup> *Fire Rescue Victoria Operational Employees Interim Enterprise Agreement 2020*

<sup>71</sup> *Fire Rescue Victoria Operational Employees Interim Enterprise Agreement 2020*

<sup>72</sup> *Fire Rescue Victoria Operational Employees Interim Enterprise Agreement 2020* (Clause 43.2.7).

<sup>73</sup> FSIM 2021–22 information request

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### Joint assessment of CFA and FRV – Engaged and safe volunteers and staff

FSIM notes that the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan does not include joint actions under the “engaged workforce that feels safe and respected” objective. However, in this section, FSIM has highlighted potential shared opportunities and challenges for CFA and FRV in progressing towards the objective of engaged and safe workplaces, identified through its year two engagement program.

### Joint opportunities

#### Enhancing CFA and FRV engagement with seconded staff

FSIM engagement with seconded staff found that many felt unsupported. Some seconded staff believed the UFU provided more information than CFA and FRV through the dissemination of seconded staff email directives. One ACFO seconded to CFA said that, “We feel like the forgotten children”, while another noted “no one is talking to us about how this is going to work... we are second class citizens”.<sup>74</sup> The use of “second class citizen” was a strong theme running through the engagement discussions held by FSIM with seconded staff.

FSIM notes that both CFA and FRV have implemented initiatives to engage with seconded staff as outlined below. FSIM acknowledges that some of these programs may have been at an early stage at the time of FSIM engagement and that some of the challenges identified in this line of inquiry have since been resolved. There is an opportunity for CFA and FRV to agree on performance measures that specifically

demonstrate progress regarding seconded engagement as evidence of effectiveness of action for year three.

CFA initiated a range of activities to improve engagement with secondees, staff and volunteers including a Commander induction program, CFA CEO and CO Q&A sessions, monthly all staff forums, Regional Leadership Team meetings, and bi-annual ACFO/Manager Community Safety/District Planning Committee Forums. CFA has also coordinated executive staff engagement with secondees during regional visits.

FRV established a Secondment Management Team to support all positions seconded to CFA including managing staff welfare, administration, transfers and promotion. FSIM notes that, as at 30 June 2022, FRV was at the recruitment phase for this team and that further information relating to its progress will be provided in FY 2022–23.

### Joint challenges

#### The removal of the OIC role at co-located stations impacted CFA and FRV cohesion

CFA volunteer brigades at co-located stations now have a Volunteer Captain in Charge of the Volunteers at stations, rather than the OIC who previously commanded staff pre-reform. Co-located personnel (both staff and volunteers) who engaged with FSIM indicated that CFA and FRV cohesion was impacted by the removal of the OIC role. Although Catchment Commanders are in place who work with the Volunteer Captain in Charge, volunteers and staff both felt that their cohesion and engagement is impacted by FRV leadership (ACFO and Commander) turnover, ongoing

Commander and ACFO vacancies, and staff moving into roles with little to no regional knowledge or experience. For example, volunteers reported having to raise issues multiple times with multiple senior staff leading to delayed issues resolution or no resolution at all. One volunteer reported to FSIM that they had been waiting four months for a response to a complaint raised with an ACFO and, as at 30 June 2022, was still waiting for a response. Such incidents have been reported at multiple co-located stations and have led to volunteers indicating that they feel undervalued and not recognised.

The removal of the OIC role has had further consequences for FRV station staff. FRV station staff reported feeling confused about station management protocol when contradictory station management decisions are made by different Commanders and ACFOs. While FSIM is not aware of significant broader operational impacts this issue has had for the community, CFA volunteers and FRV station staff reported impacts on cohesion between the agencies, at the stations visited, noting the need for consistent station management decision making and personnel to maintain volunteer and station staff cohesion.

#### Lack of continuity of ACFO and Commander roles is impacting volunteer and staff coordination

ACFO and Commander continuity has been cited as an issue impacting volunteer and staff coordination. These cohorts have broad district responsibilities that include, but are not limited to, volunteer and career staff coordination at co-located stations. When ACFOs and Commanders are

<sup>74</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

transferred to other roles or districts, they are replaced by relievers or leadership from other districts, such as metropolitan Melbourne, sometimes with limited or no local knowledge.

Volunteers and staff who engaged with FSIM have reported that a decision made by one ACFO or Commander can be contradicted by another the next day. FSIM sought quantitative evidence to support these anecdotal turnover claims in areas where FSIM undertook engagement activities. These turnover claims are substantiated in many districts. In the most extreme cases, FSIM found that over the reporting period, in one CFA district, six substantive ACFOs and Commander positions had 34 relievers moved through the six roles. In another district, eight substantive ACFO and Commander positions had 23 relievers move through.

Given the number of relievers moving through these positions, there is evidence of a great deal of flexibility by FRV in providing relief. However, FSIM engagement found that new or relieving commanders were not always provided with station specific or local knowledge.

Many ACFOs and Commanders who engaged with FSIM in year two reported heavy workloads, with many advising that they are undertaking large amounts of overtime (which has an associated cost) and traveling large distances throughout the week. ACFOs and Commanders who are seconded to CFA are required to be across both CFA and FRV doctrine, legislation, and communication (for example, via emails). FRV advised that ACFOs and Commanders are expected to be familiar with the legislation they work under and have

received training on the legislation and what it means, having established a Training Project Team that worked to support seconded staff. However, FSIM has heard accounts from ACFOs and Commanders who reported not receiving any formal training in the interaction between the FRV Act and the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* (CFA Act) and corresponding regulations and legislation. FSIM notes that FRV established a Secondment Management Team in late FY 2021–22 which provides an avenue for FRV to facilitate formal training for staff seconded to CFA in year three and address some of the challenges regarding ACFO and Commander continuity.

### **Pre-reform relationships are an indicator of co-located station cohesion**

The state of pre-reform relationships is an indicator of the level of cohesion achieved at co-located stations. FSIM engagement with some co-located staff and volunteers in some regional and peri-urban areas of Victoria found that strong relationships between individual firefighters (volunteer and career) established prior to the reform has masked potential systemic gaps and policy misalignment between CFA and FRV at co-located sites. For example, at one peri-urban co-located station on the outskirts of Melbourne, a good working relationship between volunteers and station staff saw a collaborative allocation of resources during tenancy negotiations.<sup>75</sup>

At sites FSIM visited where relationships between volunteer and career firefighters are not as strong and, in some cases, fractured, the reform impacts are noticeable. This was evidenced in some major regional

co-located centres that FSIM attended, where FRV firefighters reported a loss of confidence in some volunteers on the fireground and some volunteers stated that they had been locked out of station areas and not being given enough opportunities to participate in incident response activities by some FRV Commanders.<sup>76</sup> CFA and FRV need to work towards establishing joint co-located policy arrangements that foster stronger relationships between volunteers and staff and reinforce expectations of their complementary workforce so that operational requirements are less reliant on the strength of personal relationships to meet objectives.

<sup>75</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>76</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

7.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Complementary fire services

## 7.3 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Capability and capacity



### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective

Firefighters have the right skills and access to training and support and ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

### Scope of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

- 4.1 Appoint the Firefighters Registration Board
- 4.2 Establish capability standards to support the secondment arrangements, the firefighters register, application processes and transparent appeals processes
- 4.3 Complete delivery of the volunteer’s health and safety initiatives program

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

<p><b>1</b></p> <p>Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Plan and build for the future</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>Valuing our people</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services</p>
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## Context

The Capability and Capacity line of inquiry reviews three Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions (4.1, 4.2, 4.3) relating to capability and capacity that have the shared objective that “firefighters have the right skills and access to training and support”.

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for each action
- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.

Ensuring capability and capacity is fit for purpose and reflects the changed operating environment for both CFA and FRV in peri-urban and regional areas is critical to reform success. There are several Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions that impact agency capability and capacity, some of which are covered here under the complementary fire services model, and some of which are assessed under the sustainability key focus area (actions 5.1, 5.2 and 5.4), owing to their alignment in the structure of the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan.

FSIM has included a progress update of action 4.3 (Complete delivery of the volunteer’s health and safety initiatives program) in this section as it shares the same overarching objective that firefighters have the right skills and access to training and support. However, FSIM notes that many of the key challenges discussed below relate primarily to the establishment of a firefighter’s registration board and do not relate specifically to this action.

## Progress of actions

<b>Action 4.1: Appoint the Firefighters Registration Board (FRB).</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	DJCS with CFA and FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Significant delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Rolled over from Year One Plan

In FY 2021–22, DJCS prepared and circulated a discussion paper outlining the key areas of focus DJCS proposed to address in the *Firefighters Registration Board Regulations 2021*. DJCS established a working group comprising representatives from CFA, DJCS and FRV and convened four meetings throughout FY 2021–22. DJCS subsequently prepared and circulated the draft regulations for comment, with regulations due to be made in September 2022.<sup>77</sup>

<b>Action 4.2: Establish capability standards to support the secondment arrangements, the firefighters register, application processes and transparent appeals processes.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	FRB
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2023
<b>Reported Status</b>	Not yet commenced
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Rolled over from Year One Plan

This action is reported as not yet commenced.

<b>Action 4.3: Complete delivery of the volunteer’s health and safety initiatives program; specifically, the wildfire respiratory protection trial, the firefighter safety compliance initiatives and the wildfire PPC project.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2024
<b>Reported Status</b>	Significant delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

### Firefighters Safety Compliance Initiatives

The objective of the Safety Compliance Project is to improve the health and safety of CFA firefighters by targeting identified areas of OH&S risk. CFA identified Low Voltage Fuse Removal, Safe Working at Heights, and Alternative Power Systems as the three focus areas. CFA experienced delays in delivering training due to COVID-19 restrictions and delays sourcing equipment resulting from supply chain issues. CFA anticipates all Fire Safety Compliance projects to be completed by 2024.

#### 1. Low Voltage Fuse Removal

This project aims to accredit, train and equip operational CFA members for Low Voltage Fuse Removal and general electrical safety. CFA advises the project is on track for completion and transition to business as usual mid-2024.

#### 2. Safe working at heights

This project aims to mitigate health and safety risks for CFA members working at heights by equipping

brigades with training and equipment, for activities such as specialist rope rescue and safety systems to manage falls from heights. Prior to this project, CFA was the only emergency service organisation in Victoria without a Safe Working at Heights system in place. This project aims to fill this gap and to meet OH&S Regulations. CFA advises that it has limited specialist capability to work safely at heights, which is a concern at incidents such as residential homes and small commercial buildings.

The program will be completed by June 2024. CFA is reliant on third-party agencies to deliver training and needs to build capacity to train volunteers internally.

#### 3. Alternative Power Systems

This project supports the rollout of training and equipment to nominated operational brigades. Firefighters attending structure fires with Alternative Power Systems such as solar panels need to ensure the flow of electricity is disconnected to mitigate risk of electric shock to firefighters and bystanders.

CFA is considering opportunities for collaboration between fire agency stakeholders to explore lessons learned on analogous Alternative Power Systems trials and is undertaking work to embed Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) interim guidance on electric vehicles into CFA doctrine. CFA appliances are equipped with guidelines for disconnecting power sources to electric vehicles. CFA is also considering establishing a working group on Alternative Power Systems technologies in collaboration with the VFBV.

<sup>77</sup> Year Two to Five Implementation Plan status report as at 30 June 2022.



## Progress of actions (continued)

### Wildfire Respiratory Protection

The Wildfire Respiratory Protection project aims to enhance wildfire protection for volunteers by reducing the occurrence of harmful smoke inhalation through the evaluation and implementation of respiratory equipment options and to provide recommendations on suitability of current wildfire respiratory protection practices.

CFA, in conjunction with DELWP, completed a literature review and surveyed firefighters from both Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVIC) and CFA on their experience in the use and training of wildfire respiratory protection devices. Work is underway to trial wildfire respiratory protection equipment.

### Wildfire PPC

The Wildfire PPC project aims to provide CFA operational volunteers with modern wildfire PPC to better protect them from radiant heat, fatigue and heat-related illness. In FY 2021–22, CFA commenced a tender process and identified a manufacturer. Delivery is planned to commence towards the end of 2022 and will progressively be rolled out over 12 months. The current wildfire PPC will continue to be supported during the roll out.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective

Of the three Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions in this line of inquiry, two are reported as experiencing significant delays and one has not yet commenced. FSIM observes that DJCS, together with CFA and FRV are facing challenges in progressing towards the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective that “firefighters have the right skills and access to training and support”, noting the delays in establishing the FRB.

The FRB’s functions, when established, are to administer the Firefighters Registration Scheme, set professional capabilities and standards, and provide advice to FRV, CFA and the Minister in accordance with the relevant FRV Act provisions. The Firefighters Registration Scheme, when established, will provide for the registration of officers and employees of FRV proposed to be made available to CFA under the Secondment Agreement and any other persons who wish to be employed by FRV in order to be made available to CFA under the Secondment Agreement. Work to finalise the regulations and to establish the FRB has been delayed. However, in the reporting period, FRV established an interim board which has registered all of FRV’s operational employees at their substantive ranks and has facilitated the provision of a pathway to support the secondment of Commanders into CFA. As at 30 June 2022, it is unclear if FRV’s interim board will continue to provide a pathway to support the secondment of Commanders into CFA once the FRB is established and, if so, whether

the processes established by FRV will interrelate or overlap with the functions of the FRB. FSIM considers that the establishment of the FRB and its subsequent work may support FRV and CFA to improve Commander and ACFO vacancy and relief issues but notes there may be potential for duplicative or conflicting registration processes between the FRB and the FRV-led process that could be confusing or burdensome, should these issues not be considered.

There are broader challenges to capability development that cannot be addressed through these actions, but need to be resolved. These include:

- FRV service delivery model being applied to training that may not be suitable for peri-urban and regional Victoria stations
- training backlogs arising from a range of factors in both agencies (including COVID-19 related restrictions)
- accessibility of training
- the cessation of joint training at some co-located stations.

The completion of actions in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan’s Priority Five fire services sustainability workstream, including action 5.1 (CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy), action 5.2 (review of CFA and FRV operational capability needs) and action 5.4 (FRV’s Strategic Workforce Plan) may address some of these broader, reform related challenges to capability development.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### Opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### The FRB will provide greater clarity of requirements for staff to be seconded to CFA

As per section 154(1) of the FRV Act, the core functions of the FRB are to administer the Firefighters Registration Scheme, perform registration functions prescribed by the regulations, and set professional capability and standards, noting section 154(2) requires the FRB to have regard to any relevant standards relating to qualifications and competencies that are applicable to firefighting and emergency services when performing its functions. When established, FRV firefighters seconded to CFA will be registered by the FRB. DJCS has initiated the development of the regulations, with comment sought from both agencies. However, as of 30 June, the finalisation of the regulations and action to appoint the FRB had been delayed.

#### CFA is working to improve volunteer safety

CFA's volunteer's health and safety initiative provides a comprehensive suite of programs to address volunteer safety. The programs focus on key and emerging risks to volunteer safety and are informed by CFA's assessment of best practice. In addition, CFA's current 'safe working from heights' program is an important addition to its OH&S system. Given this action is not due for completion until 2024, FSIM sees an opportunity for CFA to consider developing measures to assess effectiveness of the initiatives.

### Challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### Multiple registration processes may cause confusion

In FY 2021–22, FRV established an interim internal board to provide a pathway to support the secondment of Commanders into CFA (noting this board has broader functions relating to the registration of all FRV operational employees). Given the time it has taken to initiate and negotiate the FRB parameters, the FRB may need to consider its policies and procedures in the context of the existing interim internal FRV approach and have regard to the applicable enterprise agreement provisions. It is unclear if the FRB and the FRV-led approach would interrelate and how any potential dual registration processes could operate in practice. FSIM notes there may be a risk of duplicative, overlapping or inconsistent registration functions and requirements and observes that agencies and stakeholders have not yet jointly resolved implications or mitigations.

Given the FRB is not yet established and noting FRV's current pathway to support secondment of Commanders, FSIM observes that CFA has no formal mechanism to require that secondees have certain competencies or skillsets beyond developing and maintaining a secondment strategy that details CFA's capability and capacity needs for those resources sourced from FRV (action 5.1). Potential areas of misalignment that CFA has identified include working with volunteers, and bushfire, grass and scrub firefighting. FSIM notes that FRV seconded staff undertake a four week long 'Commander Secondment Program', which incorporates content that provides additional skills CFA requires and CFA can request FRV to make alterations to the program. FSIM

notes that CFA's CO can also refuse a proposed secondee subject to clause 4.6 of the Secondment Agreement; however, CFA has no authority to require that certain competencies be met.

#### Broader challenges to firefighters having the right skills and access to training and support

FSIM's engagement with Division B staff to date has highlighted several key issues arising from the implementation of the new fire services model. The scope of the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions relating to this objective will not address the issues identified to ensure firefighters have the right skills and access to training and support and ensure the future sustainability of the fire services. However, FSIM has provided below a summary of the key issues identified through engagement that present a challenge to the overarching objective that firefighters have the right skills and access to training and support.

#### FRV's approach to training for regional staff

Some Division B staff who engaged with FSIM raised concerns about the scope of FRV training being predominantly focused on urban firefighting which may, therefore, not be wholly relevant to regional response requirement. FSIM notes that the scope of FRV's training approach is focused on risk and response requirements across the State. Regionally-based staff also highlighted the difficulties they face in attending training in Melbourne, particularly for extended periods of time. For example, many FRV firefighters from the targeted engagement cohort noted that they faced significant challenges in attending the 16-week FRV Stations Officer course in Melbourne, which they felt impeded their career



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

progression. Some staff also cited a resources impost on the station when staff do attend training, with a requirement to temporarily backfill positions, although FSIM notes this was the case pre-reform as well.

FSIM notes that FRV delivers a regional training program that covers a multitude of training courses that are made available at various sites across regional Victoria. Specifically, FRV delivered training relating to Skills Maintenance for Emergency Medical Response, Metropolitan Mobile Radio, Breathing apparatus (BA) Guidelines, and DEBRIS<sup>78</sup> to all FRV regional stations as part of its 2022 training program. FRV also delivered 17 course categories<sup>79</sup> to various regional sites across the year. FSIM acknowledges FRV's work to broaden training to regional areas and is supportive of future work to identify opportunities to reduce barriers for regional staff in attending FRV Stations Officer training.

FRV advises that it has also established a series of programs aimed at building capability across both Division A and Division B to address some staff concerns. For example, in May 2021 FRV commenced delivery of the CFA Commander Secondment Program. The program is a joint training initiative between FRV and CFA, with the aim to complement FRV's capacity to provide relief into Catchment Commander

positions within CFA and enhance interoperability between agencies. As at May 2022, 48 FRV staff members (of which 25 are Division B staff) had participated in the course. FRV also advises that ACFOs and Commanders have been supported to undertake Qualifications (such as Public Safety Training Package), to ensure they are prepared and adequately trained for their role. A Commander promotional program typically consists of a 12-week full-time commitment, of which FRV advises that it facilitates and provides backfill coverage into CFA for all participants.

### Training backlog

FSIM notes that FRV experienced a considerable backlog of specialist capability training for the initial 18 months of reform, primarily due to COVID-19 related restrictions impeding traditional face-to-face approaches to training.<sup>80</sup> In addition, Division B core maintenance training, although not captured in FRV reporting data for the first two years of reform,<sup>81</sup> was significantly delayed. To address the backlog of Division B core maintenance skills training, FRV commenced a program to deliver skills maintenance database training to 1,400 Division B staff across 38 stations. FRV reported that 1,071 Division B staff had received training by 30 June 2022.<sup>82</sup>

Division B staff have advised that the backlog of training had operational impacts. For example, driver training was regularly cited as a key issue at regional and peri-urban stations and that in some instances there was only one staff member on a shift trained to drive an appliance.<sup>83</sup> In addition, FSIM engagement identified delays in hazardous atmosphere training. In some instances, other firefighters were required to be brought in resulting in overtime payments, to address these skills gaps.<sup>84</sup> Division B staff who engaged with FSIM repeatedly raised both the backlog of, and accessibility to, training as a key capability and capacity issue.

FRV advised that the backlog of training is being addressed. For example, a new Driver Capability Framework is under development as well as a revised driver training delivery strategy. This is an important development that will help to address many of the concerns raised by staff who engaged with FSIM. These staff noted that, as they were the only staff member on shift trained to drive certain appliances, they were not getting opportunities to apply and practice their other skills. FRV noted that COVID-19 related restrictions significantly impacted its ability to deliver driver training and anticipates the backlog for this training will be eliminated by July 2023, if there are no further unforeseen impacts.

<sup>78</sup> The Decontamination, Exit, Breathing Apparatus Service Rehab and Staging (DEBRIS) model is a systematic five-step process that enables command personnel to capture and account for crews on the fire ground and manage contaminants.

<sup>79</sup> Courses covered were: Breathing Apparatus Service Stations, Brown Coal, Regional Airport Response Training, Hazmat Tech, Xam 8000, Radiac & LCD, Aerial Pumper, Bell 2017, MK V Pumper Tanker, Pumper 2020, Ladder platform, Driver Training, FS 76 Pumper Tanker, SEM Conversion, Transporter, Steep Angle Rescue, and High Angle Rescue.

<sup>80</sup> Fire Services Implementation Monitor, 2022, *2021-22 Quarter 4 Fire Services Outcome Framework Progress Report*, Victorian Government <<https://www.vic.gov.au/2021-22-quarter-4-fire-services-outcome-framework-progress-report>> pg 53.

<sup>81</sup> FRV has advised it intends to commence reporting on Division B data from 1 July 2022.

<sup>82</sup> Fire Services Implementation Monitor, 2022, *2021-22 Quarter 4 Fire Services Outcome Framework Progress Report*, Victorian Government <<https://www.vic.gov.au/2021-22-quarter-4-fire-services-outcome-framework-progress-report>>

<sup>83</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>84</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

FSIM year two engagement also highlighted that CFA experienced capacity issues regarding fire investigators and instructors.<sup>85</sup> In addition, the quality and effectiveness of fire crew leader training and controlled burning were raised as key issues for CFA.<sup>86</sup> FSIM may obtain further information relating to these risks in FY 2022–23 to better understand the impact on operational performance. FSIM notes that action 1.6 in the FSOC plan requires FSOC to outline roles and responsibilities and prepare an MOU for vegetation management.

### Accessibility of training for volunteers

CFA currently reports on three training indicators in its quarterly outcomes framework reports which relate to overall training satisfaction, digital learning satisfaction and the number of courses completed. In Q4 FY 2021–22, CFA met the baseline for overall training satisfaction and was within its 5 per cent variance tolerance for digital learning satisfaction. CFA reported a below baseline result for Q4 for the indicator for number of courses completed primarily due to the impact of COVID-19 related restrictions on conducting courses.<sup>87</sup> The VFBV Welfare and Efficiency Survey provides further insights on training, looking at whether CFA provides good leadership training for volunteers, whether training is available and provided within a reasonable distance from a brigade, and whether CFA provides enough training opportunities in formats, at times and locations that make it easy for volunteers to participate. The results for FY 2021–22 noted a critical gap relating to training.

being available and provided in enough formats to support participation. Although accessibility of training remains an issue, CFA reporting provides a level of transparency to enable ongoing monitoring of this issue.

### The cessation of joint training has impacted capability and interoperability

Engagement with career and volunteer firefighters at co-located stations consistently flagged that, at most co-located stations, joint training sessions ceased post-reform. Prior to reform, CFA career firefighters and volunteers participated in regular joint training sessions which not only boosted capability, but often increased trust and understanding between the two cohorts who developed a better understanding of their counterparts' capabilities. FSIM understands that neither CFA nor FRV have issued a formal directive to cease joint training; however, FSIM engagement with the targeted cohort made it clear that there is an assumption on the part of both CFA volunteers and FRV staff that joint training is no longer appropriate. Following engagement activities and FSIM raising this issue at HoA, CFA and FRV agreed that there was no directive that joint training was meant to cease. FSIM notes there is an action in the FSOC workplan<sup>88</sup> for Joint Exercising to be made explicit between CFA and FRV in line with intent and expectations set by the FRV Commissioner and CO. FSIM notes that at the time of reporting, both agencies were considering communications to clarify this assumption and where feasible, resume joint training.

<sup>85</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

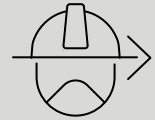
<sup>86</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>87</sup> Fire Services Implementation Monitor, 2022, *2021-22 Quarter 4 Fire Services Outcome Framework Progress Report*, Victorian Government <<https://www.vic.gov.au/2021-22-quarter-4-fire-services-outcome-framework-progress-report>>

<sup>88</sup> FSOC work plan FY 2021–22, action 2.6.

7.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Complementary fire services

## 7.4 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Service delivery approach



### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective

Engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision making and feels safe and respected

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

### Scope of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

- 1.7 Review CFA's brigade operating model
- 2.2 Explore the operational and service delivery benefits of accreditation for FRV

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

1

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

2

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

3

Plan and build for the future

4

Valuing our people

5

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The Service Delivery Approach line of inquiry reviews two Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions (1.7, 2.2). This line of inquiry assessed the effectiveness of CFA in delivering action 1.7 towards the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of an “engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision-making and feels safe and respected”. This line of inquiry also assessed the effectiveness of FRV in delivering action 2.2 towards the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of “strong links with the community which enable it to provide a tailored service that reflects community risks”.

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for each action
- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.

## Progress of actions

**Action 1.7: Review CFA's brigade operating model to ensure brigades are appropriately structured and provided with the required capabilities to deliver contemporary services that meet community expectations and needs.**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2025
<b>Reported Status</b>	On track
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

Originally described as a review of the brigade operating model, CFA has since broadened the scope of this action to encompass a more holistic review of CFA's operating model given the broad range of services delivered by CFA<sup>89</sup> and that not all services are delivered through brigades. The model will consider how services are delivered end-to-end and identify key enablers (for example fleet, training etc). The work will also incorporate 'deep dives' into districts (covering both urbanised districts and remote or rural districts) and will take into consideration relevant environmental factors.

In FY 2021–22, CFA commenced a program of work that comprises an initial assessment of CFA's current business model, engagement relating to identified pressure points, development of a blueprint operating model and preparation of a roadmap for implementation,

including initiatives. CFA anticipates this phase of work will be completed by September 2022. As at 30 June 2022, CFA had commenced the engagement phase of the project.

CFA has appointed a Project Manager and Sponsor and established a Project Reference Group. The Project Manager reports to the Executive on the status of the project. CFA has identified a range of stakeholders including fire services agencies, intra-state counterparts and municipalities.

**Action 2.2: Explore the operational and service delivery benefits of accreditation for FRV within the Victorian emergency management response model and provide options to government on the accreditation process.**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2023
<b>Reported Status</b>	On track
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

Fire services accreditation provides an assessment process for whole of agency practices and response models. FRV has explored the service delivery benefits of accreditation through the CFAI as their preferred model; however, FSIM has not received evidence of a formal options paper provided to government outlining possible options.

FRV advises that CFAI, based in the United States of America, is a fire and rescue services accreditation model that has accredited 301 fire services internationally and include countries in North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. The types of fire services with CFAI accreditation vary in size and scope and include county, local, defence and industrial fire services. The CFAI accreditation process includes an agency self-assessment, peer review, onsite assessment, and public hearing with a panel of international fire services experts. Fire services agencies are assessed in their ability to meet CFAI criteria under a range of strategic planning themes.<sup>90</sup> CFAI is purported to be embedded in a framework of continuous improvement. Accreditation under CFAI is valid for five years and there is a requirement to undertake an annual assessment.

Under the CFAI accreditation model fire services agencies would be required to tailor a self-assessment considering local and community risk profiles, which would inform the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective that FRV has "strong links with the community which enable it to provide a tailored service that reflects community risks".

<sup>89</sup> CFA estimates it delivers approximately 90 service types FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>90</sup> CFAI strategic planning themes include governance and administration, assessment and planning, goals and objectives, financial resources, community risk reduction program, physical resources, HR, training and competency, essential resources, external system relationship, and OH&S. FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective

Of the two Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions in this line of inquiry, both are reported as on track. FSIM observes that CFA is progressing well towards the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective for action 1.7 of “an engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision-making and feels safe and respected” through its work to establish a CFA Operating Model.

FSIM further observes that there are potential challenges for FRV in achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective for action 2.2 of “strong links with the community which enable it to provide a tailored service that reflects community risks”, as FRV have progressed work on accreditation beyond what is currently reflected in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action scope. Defining complementary fire services and what that means for individual service provision would further support work on agencies’ service delivery approaches.

The requirement for agencies to develop a service delivery approach provides a mechanism for CFA and FRV to define and communicate their respective service delivery models to their workforce and the community. One of the primary mechanisms CFA is using to progress this is its Operating Model project. FRV is investigating options for securing international accreditation, which would provide further insights as to whether FRV’s service provision is meeting community needs. There is a need for government to set out what constitutes complementary fire services, and how this translates to individual agency service provision, so that CFA and FRV can finalise their respective approaches.

### Opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### **CFA’s Operating Model is an opportunity to confirm and clarify CFA’s vision with volunteers post reform**

The review of CFA’s Operating Model is a significant opportunity for CFA to clarify the role, purpose and function for its members and the wider community. The initial phase is focused on defining current products, services and key dependencies and articulating any limitations in the current operating model. Having regard to CFA’s future environment, the project will seek to define CFA’s required products and services (and associated standards) and consider the required enablers and capabilities to support a future operating model.

The project has governance structures and reporting mechanisms and aims to adopt a planned and thorough approach to stakeholder engagement. CFA is realistic in its timeframes, noting the scale and complexity of the program of work. CFA has access to a significant body of historical research and data to support this work through access to community and volunteer surveys and findings from multiple related inquiries and commissions.

#### **FRV has identified an internationally recognised accreditation model**

FRV has determined that pursuing an accreditation model is the best way to support the commitment to continuous improvement and best practice. FRV has identified an internationally recognised model through its analysis of the CFAI. The CFAI accreditation

process is comprehensive and includes agency self-assessment, peer review, onsite assessment and participation in a public hearing before a panel of the CFAI. The CFAI accreditation process provides a modern, internationally recognised framework that has the potential to provide greater transparency, via monitoring and reporting requirements and consideration of community risk profiles. Without the provision of options as outlined in the action scope, it will be difficult for government to determine if the CFAI program is an appropriate option for FRV to pursue.

#### **Opportunities to enhance change management**

FSIM engagement identified that there were considerable change management issues related to the transfer of personnel to FRV. Multiple Division B ACFOs who engaged with FSIM noted they had not had sufficient training regarding numerous FRV procedures and/or the FRV Act. As a result, they felt exposed due to a lack of training in FRV process.<sup>91</sup> More broadly, some Division B staff noted they felt the “rug was pulled out from under us in the early days of reform”<sup>92</sup> and that it took several months to understand processes around response, procurement, line management and communications. There is an opportunity to learn from this and apply change management planning (for example, through FRV’s Secondment Management Team), noting additional change may arise following the Fire District Review Panel (FDRP) review of the FRV fire district boundaries.

<sup>91</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>92</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### **An opportunity for CFA and FRV to strengthen the community's understanding of, and engagement with, the fire services**

In delivering against these actions, CFA and FRV have an opportunity to communicate their respective roles to the community, better understand community risk profiles, and clarify roles and responsibilities regarding community engagement. FSIM engagement to date has identified concerns over clarity of role regarding community engagement, particularly in peri-urban and regional areas. While CFA and FRV have prepared a draft Community Engagement Services and Brigade Local Activities MOU, the MOU remains in draft form. In addition, both CFA and FRV reported a decline in community engagement from July 2020 to December 2021 due to COVID-19 related restrictions.<sup>93</sup> FSIM is supportive of both CFA and FRV incorporating engagement with the community as a key element in the development of their respective service delivery approaches for the purpose of better understanding community risk profiles to meet service delivery needs. FSIM notes that both CFA and FRV are undertaking work related to community engagement including CFA's Community Engagement Approach as outlined in the Engaged and Safe line of inquiry and the preparation of a draft Community Engagement Services and Brigade Local Activities MOU between CFA and FRV.

### **Challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective**

#### **Scope of action 2.2**

The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan notes that action 2.2 is to "Explore the operational and service delivery benefits of accreditation for FRV within the Victorian emergency management response model and provide options to government on the accreditation process". FSIM sought evidence of FRV's exploration of operational and service delivery benefits of accreditation and sought evidence of options being prepared to advise government on the accreditation process. Noting action 2.2 is not due for completion until June 2023, evidence received shows that FRV has progressed this work, identifying CFAI as the preferred model. FRV undertook desktop research, identifying one other international accreditation body relevant to fire services – the International Accreditation Service. FRV's research revealed that CFAI is referenced much more often than the International Accreditation Service and has prominence and recognition as an international accreditation organisation specific to fire services. FRV is undertaking initial work regarding the implementation of CFAI's accreditation approach. FSIM has not received evidence of a formal options paper

provided to government. Given FRV's work to date on CFAI accreditation and noting the possibility of associated costs with the model identified, there is a risk that FRV may not meet the objectives of the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action if the action is not delivered as intended and options are not provided to the Minister.

### **Work is progressing in the absence of definition of complementary fire services**

Noting FSIM's observations in the complementary fire services key focus area, there is a need now to define complementary fire services to support future work by both agencies in defining their respective service delivery approaches. This definition would set the parameters for service delivery and provide direction with regard to the ongoing functions for each agency.

### **No requirement in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan to collaborate in the development of service delivery approaches**

The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan does not require CFA and FRV to collaborate in the delivery of their respective interdependent actions. The current arrangements result in CFA and FRV individually progressing work and making decisions without having formed an agreed understanding of complementary fire

<sup>93</sup> Fire Services Implementation Monitor, 2022, 2021-22 Quarter 4 Fire Services Outcome Framework Progress Report, Victorian Government <<https://www.vic.gov.au/2021-22-quarter-4-fire-services-outcome-framework-progress-report>>

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

services and how this translates to individual agency service provision. For example, FRV's accreditation project may have implications for CFA, given that the secondment model has 228 FRV staff<sup>94</sup> seconded to CFA, CFA and FRV share co-located stations<sup>95</sup> and the agencies rely on each other for surge capacity. There is an opportunity for CFA and FRV to collaborate on any possible implications of the accreditation program to ensure effective progress of this Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action. Without effective collaboration, there is a risk that an agency may progress work that will impact the other resulting in delayed, impeded or ineffective implementation.

### **Agency ability to implement change can be impacted by third parties via the consultation process**

Both CFA and FRV have obligations to consult with their respective industrial bodies and other key stakeholder groups as part of the process to implement key changes to the workplace and operating models. There are potential additional consultation obligations for CFA when developing the operating model noting potential impacts on FRV employees seconded to CFA. CFA does not lead or participate in the consultation with FRV's industrial partner and decisions made by CFA may ultimately be overturned as part of this process. It is essential that FRV provides feedback to CFA on the agency agreed position presented to FRV's industrial partner and the industrial partner's response regarding both the operating model and accreditation.

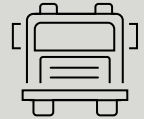
<sup>94</sup> Fire Rescue Victoria, *FRV Annual Report 2020–21*.

<sup>95</sup> FSIM notes that FRV presented the accreditation project to HoA in July 2022.



7.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Complementary fire services

## 7.5 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Assets and capital works



**Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective**

Firefighters have access to the right resources to do their job and keep them safe

**Scope of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions**

- 3.2 Complete delivery of the \$48.2 M fire station and firefighting fleet replacement program
- 3.3 Finalise the transfer of property, assets, liabilities, rights and obligations from CFA to FRV
- 3.4 FRV, in consultation with CFA, to deliver agreed capital works
- 3.5 CFA to complete delivery of agreed capital works projects on behalf of FRV

**Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities**

1

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

2

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

3

Plan and build for the future

4

Valuing our people

5

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The Assets and Capital Works line of inquiry reviews four Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions (3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5) relating to assets and capital works that have the shared objective that “firefighters have access to the right resources to do their job and keep them safe”.

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for each action
- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.

## Progress of actions

<b>Action 3.2: Complete delivery of the \$48.2 million fire station and firefighting fleet replacement program.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2025
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

The \$48.2 million fire station and firefighting fleet replacement program incorporates three projects; the projects and their respective status as at 30 June 2022 are outlined in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Status of fire station and firefighting fleet replacement program as at 30 June 2022

Project	Status	Notes
<b>15 Stations Replacement Program</b>	In progress	The project is reported as on track, although experienced some delays due to COVID-19 construction industry restrictions. The Minister confirmed that delivery of 10 station replacement projects will transfer from CFA to Community Safety Building Authority (CSBA)
<b>Clyde Volunteer Station</b>	In progress	Project experienced some delays due to COVID-19 construction industry restrictions and land acquisition issues
<b>Tanker Replacement (50 Firefighting Appliances)</b>	In progress	Due to manufacturing impacts resulting from global supply chain issues, the program is significantly delayed. At the end of the reporting period, six Heavy Tankers had been delivered with the remainder due to be delivered progressively through to November 2023.

In May 2022, the Minister confirmed with CFA and FRV that the delivery responsibilities for emergency services capital infrastructure projects would be consolidated under CSBA in FY 2022–23. The decision would enable an integrated approach to major capital works and addresses significant delivery challenges across the fire services infrastructure program, including station land acquisition, planning and the impact of the fire services reform program.

The Minister requested that CSBA undertake a health check on all relevant CFA and FRV capital projects and report back to government at the end of FY 2021–22, with recommendations to rectify and/or mitigate project delivery challenges and on establishing appropriate delivery metrics for future reporting.

In August 2022, the Minister confirmed that delivery of 20 fire services capital projects will transfer from CFA to CSBA, including 10 of the 15 Stations

Replacement Program. The Minister further informed CFA that CSBA will work with CFA to formalise an agreement that sets out the projects to be transitioned to CSBA for delivery, the project funding transfer and management arrangements, the respective accountabilities of CSBA and CFA, and the governance and reporting arrangements. At the time of reporting, CFA will retain responsibility for all other fire station builds, for asset maintenance and minor works and the procurement of appliances and other non-fixed assets.

## Progress of actions (continued)

**Action 3.3: Finalise the transfer of property, assets, liabilities, rights and obligations from CFA to FRV.**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Rolled over from Year One Plan

In FY 2020–21, DJCS prepared a Transfer Strategy, comprising five tranches, to transfer CFA’s property, rights, liabilities, and obligations to FRV to support the delivery of reform. Tranches one to three were completed in FY 2020–21, the status of tranches four and five is outlined below.

**Tranche Four: Tenancy Agreement and Schedules**

CFA and FRV finalised the Tenancy Agreement in May 2022. The Tenancy Agreement includes 30 executed station schedules, with further work required for the Melton, Dandenong, South Warrandyte and Geelong City station schedules. FSIM understands that FSOC will take carriage of finalising the remaining outstanding

schedules and report back to HoA on progress and final agreed arrangements. CFA and FRV are also working to resolve issues relating to the Engine Bays at Mildura. CFA and FRV circulated joint communications on 7 June 2022 to notify all personnel of the status of the Tenancy Agreement.

CFA worked with stakeholders to prepare Allocation Statement 4A. The scope of Allocation Statement 4A covers the transfer of PPC (excluding lockers, cages and containers) and personal protective equipment utilised by the Protective Equipment Technicians at the State Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing Business Unit in Corio.

CFA separated out the issues identified in Allocation Statement 4A to assist FRV to meet its commitments to the Fair Work Commissioner regarding progressing the transfer of the remaining Protective Equipment at co-located stations and the tools of trade utilised by the Protective Equipment Technicians. CFA will prepare a subsequent Allocation Statement 4B to address the transfer of the remaining assets.<sup>96</sup> As at 30 June 2022, the Allocation Statement 4A was awaiting Ministerial review.

**Tranche Five: Contingent liabilities**

CFA worked with stakeholders to develop and execute Allocation Statement 3 to transfer the property, rights, liabilities and obligations relating to section 102 of the FRV Act, transfer of CFA staff. Allocation Statement 3 was signed by the Minister on 29 March 2022.

CFA continued to work with stakeholders to develop for execution a Deed of Indemnity for the transfer of property and rights and indemnities for those liabilities and obligations relating to section 103 of the FRV Act, transfer of other CFA staff. As at 30 June 2022, CFA was working with DJCS and FRV to redraft the Deed of Agreement Indemnity, including indemnities for those property, rights, liabilities, and obligations relating to sections 102 and 103 transferred staff. As at 30 June 2022, CFA was working with DJCS and FRV to redraft the Deed of Indemnity.

<sup>96</sup> Remaining items to be addressed in a subsequent Allocation Statement/s comprise: PPC; Remaining personal protective equipment (including lockers, cages and containers); ICT Equipment and related equipment; Office equipment and furnishings; Remaining plant and equipment (including tools); Communications equipment; Training equipment; and Furniture, fixtures and equipment, loose furniture, small appliances and white goods.

## Progress of actions (continued)

<b>Action 3.4: FRV, in consultation with CFA, deliver agreed capital works to enable and enhance service delivery by co-located brigades.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2025
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

It is intended that responsibility for delivering agreed capital works will be transferred to CSBA in FY 2022–23 as per the arrangements for CFA as outlined in the action 3.2 summary. In August 2022, the Minister directed that delivery of 17 capital projects will transfer from FRV to CSBA. FRV notes that this directive is pending the outcome of a UFU dispute.

FRV's capital works program is managed under the 350 Firefighter Program – Capital Sub Program. This program comprises 10 remaining FRV-led projects; the projects and their respective status as at 30 June 2022 are outlined in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Status of FRV's capital works program under the 350 Firefighting Program -- Capital Sub Program

Project	Status	Work required
Frankston fire station	In progress	Land acquisition, design and construction
Bendigo permanent fire station	In progress	Design and construction
Ballarat City fire station	In progress	Scope to be approved
Corio fire station	In progress	Land acquisition, design and construction
Lara fire station	In progress	Land acquisition, design and construction
Latrobe West fire station (Moe)	In progress	Land acquisition (contract negotiations with identified land), design and construction
Mornington fire station	In progress	Phase 1 of modification complete, Phases 2 and 3 to be completed
Springvale fire station	In progress	Land acquisition, design and construction
Boronia fire station	In progress	Design work of modification (internal works to station)
37 transport vehicles	In progress	36 out of 37 complete, with 1 remaining.

## Progress of actions (continued)

<b>Action 3.5: CFA to complete delivery of agreed capital works projects on behalf of FRV.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2025
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

CFA's capital works program is managed under the 350 Firefighter Program – Capital Sub Program. This program incorporates delivery of five CFA led capital projects on behalf of FRV. The projects and their respective status as at 30 June 2022 are outlined in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Status of FRV's capital works program under the 350 Firefighting Program -- Capital Sub Program

Project	Status	Notes
<b>Heavy pumpers</b>	Complete	14 Heavy Pumpers were finalised and delivered
<b>Combined aerial rescue pumpers</b>	Complete	First Combined aerial rescue pumpers is at practical completion with some defects outstanding to be rectified. FRV has requested further changes to the design which are being discussed
<b>Melton fire station modifications</b>	Complete	Project has reached practical completion with handover to FRV to commence
<b>Morwell fire station project</b>	In progress	The main building works, installation of specialist doors and construction of the volunteer's brigade storage shed were completed by 30 June 2022. The car park work is scheduled to complete by the end of July 2022
<b>Bendigo temporary fire station</b>	In progress	Completion expected July 2022.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective

The four Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions in this line of inquiry are experiencing minor delays. FSIM observes that agencies are progressing towards the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective that “firefighters have access to the right resources to do their job and keep them safe”, noting that agencies have raised concerns regarding project management arrangements for some capital works projects.

CFA and FRV finalised many key components of the transfer of property, assets, liabilities, rights and obligations from CFA to FRV, with one outstanding tranche relating to contingent liabilities yet to be finalised. In May 2022, the Victorian Government issued a directive that responsibility for the construction component of delivery wof some elements of the capital works program (action 3.4) and station replacement program (part of action 3.2) will be transferred to CSBA in FY 2022–23. FSIM observed broader issues impacting firefighters’ access to resources such as tanker access and use, technical rescue equipment access and use and BA support. The FSOC workplan outlines programs of work to address these issues; it is imperative that they are addressed as part of the process to finalise key agreements such as SLDA schedules.

### Opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### Agencies have made progress on capital works programs

CFA and FRV have made progress towards the delivery of their respective capital works programs (actions 3.4 and 3.5) which are managed under the 350 Firefighter Program – Capital Sub Program. CFA is nearing completion of its suite of projects, with two outstanding projects as at 30 June 2022. FRV has 10 outstanding projects that are at various phases. Both CFA and FRV have established project plans and governance frameworks, including reporting processes for the delivery of projects.

#### An integrated approach to assets and capital works service delivery arrangements

In May 2022, the Minister directed responsibility for the construction component of a defined list of capital works be transferred to CSBA in FY 2022–23. Consolidating responsibility for projects under CSBA presents an opportunity for an integrated approach to delivering major capital works across the emergency services sector, including addressing land acquisition and planning issues, and consolidating processes around design and procurement to ensure government has appropriate oversight of major fire services infrastructure projects.

DJCS advises this arrangement aims to address the Fire Services Statement commitment under Priority Three (Planning and Building for the Future) to establish the Emergency Services Infrastructure Authority to ensure that Victoria’s emergency infrastructure remains world class.<sup>97</sup>

#### Tenancy Agreement (and majority of schedules) has been finalised

CFA and FRV signed the Tenancy Agreement (action 3.3) in May 2022 and circulated a joint communique on 7 June 2022 to inform staff and volunteers. The Tenancy Agreement includes 30 executed station schedules, with further work required for the Dandenong, Geelong City, Melton, and South Warrandyte station schedules and the resolution of issues relating to the Engine Bays at Mildura. Finalising the Tenancy Agreement provides clarity of access rights of CFA and FRV personnel at co-located stations to designated areas. In addition, the circulation of the joint communique between the (acting) CO and the FRV Commissioner was a positive step, and a good example of joint, clear and consistent communication to career and volunteer firefighters.

#### Agencies are progressing to finalise the transfer of equipment and assets associated with the transfer of the 38 stations (Allocation Statements 4A and 4B)

As noted above, as at 30 June 2022, Allocation Statement 4A was awaiting Ministerial review. Although further work is required to finalise the transfer of the remaining assets under Allocation Statement 4B, FSIM acknowledges the joint commitment and progress made to date with this work.

<sup>97</sup> Victorian Government, 2017, *Fire Services Statement*, pg 18.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### Challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### New arrangements have implications for agencies' project management

CFA and FRV expressed initial concerns regarding the proposed model for CSBA to project manage the delivery of fire services capital works, given the significant practical, financial, industrial, regulatory and risk-related implications. Both agencies expressed a preference for a service delivery model whereby CSBA delivers the services on behalf of CFA and FRV and that CFA and FRV should retain control of final decisions on land and planning conditions to ensure the end product is fit for purpose from a service delivery perspective and that service delivery standards, for which they are accountable, can be met. CFA further advised that retaining the necessary financial levers is important to ensure its requirements are being met during the life of the project.

FSIM notes that as at 30 June 2022 the details of responsibilities and accountabilities were being discussed. CFA was in the process of formalising these with CSBA in a MOU.

CFA and FRV both noted that government's decision to consolidate some major capital works with CSBA requires further consideration of the potential impacts on both agencies including implications for CFA's statutory powers, the formal role of CFA's Board and the financial implications.

CFA further noted government obligations in the Volunteer Charter to consult with volunteers on matters that might reasonably impact volunteers. Both agencies have staffing-related implications to work through, in a manner consistent with EBA provisions.

#### Volunteer access to facilities has been impacted at some sites by reform

Reform required the agencies to work through detailed changes to asset ownership and follow State Government requirements for the transfer of some assets. However, as a result of reform changes, volunteer access to changing areas and turnout facilities, access to multi-purpose rooms where memorabilia was displayed, and access to specific areas at some stations was impacted. For example, in one co-located station, swipe card access to certain areas and rooms was installed without constructive engagement with volunteers at the station. This excluded volunteers from areas they would have previously accessed prior to reform, such as main hallways that provide access to the station's main entrances. In this co-located station, volunteers recalled turning out to incidents in the early morning and being required to change in the station carpark as they could not access station facilities<sup>98</sup> and others noted that they were no longer allowed to use changerooms or wash vehicles and trucks on site following incident response.<sup>99</sup>

FSIM has not seen quantitative evidence that demonstrates an impact on operational service delivery; however, clarity on volunteer access may cause a potential challenge for agencies in meeting the overarching objective that firefighters have access

to the right resources to do their job (and keep them safe). As not all schedules to the Tenancy Agreement are completed, ongoing, open communication about the tenancy arrangements through established communication and operational governance processes would enable staff and volunteers to address these concerns.

#### Broader reform related resource challenges in accessing the right resources

FSIM engagement with Division B staff highlighted several key issues that cannot be directly addressed through the existing Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions relating to assets and capital works, but which present a challenge to firefighters having access to the right resources to do their job. FSIM observes that many of the issues outlined below need to be addressed through the actions relating to the Agreements line of inquiry. Moreover, an agreed definition of complementary fire services and how that translates to individual agency service provision is essential to resolving the below issues.

#### Reform changes have presented new issues for firefighters in accessing the right resources

Following reform implementation, FSIM year two engagement heard of instances where arrangements were not necessarily fit for purpose or where peri-urban and regional stations faced challenges in meeting FRV doctrine requirements. In operational practice, this translated to ineffective use of resources with examples identified by FSIM provided below.

<sup>98</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>99</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### Effective use of volunteer capacity

During the year two engagement program, FSIM heard anecdotal evidence from both CFA and FRV that, in some instances, the closest and most appropriate appliances had not been deployed. FSIM requested further information from the agencies and identified that CFA and FRV have differing interpretations of what constitutes 'most appropriate' appliance. The scope of this section is limited to the potential implications of ineffective use of volunteer capacity and does not consider broader impacts on response effectiveness.

Some volunteers who engaged with FSIM advised that they have been called back from incidents enroute and passed over on the fire ground in favour of FRV firefighters (who may be travelling significant distances from other districts to support regional centres) leading them to feel they are not valued or their skills effectively utilised. The potential risk of a disaffected volunteer cohort is that volunteers may not respond to calls if they think they will be turned back and may not have the opportunities to build their capability across the range of incidents they did prior to reform. As a result, volunteer retention may be impacted if their skills are not valued and utilised. As noted in the Engaged and Safe line of inquiry, there has been a decline of approximately 60 per cent in the number of incidents that volunteers have responded to and a decline of approximately 7 per cent in volunteer numbers across the 34 co-located brigades over the past two years (2021 and 2022). FSIM notes that the longer-term implication is that surge capacity for large scale incidents may be diminished; however, this cannot yet be quantified.

### Tanker access and use

In implementing reform, the Victorian Government, (on the advice of CFA, MFB, and the UFU), made a state-wide vehicle allocation decision to allocate pumper appliances to FRV, and heavy tanker appliances to CFA in what was then integrated or CFA career-only stations. Prior to reform, career firefighters in CFA had access to tankers which gave them immediate off-road capability to respond to grass and scrub fires. Many Division B staff stated that FRV pumpers and pumper tankers were not always fit for purpose in responding to grass and scrub fires. In FSIM's year two engagement, Division B staff frequently raised that from their perspective there are significant risks for peri-urban and regional areas where FRV firefighters do not have immediate access to tankers to respond to grass and scrub fire incidents and rely on CFA volunteers to attend with tankers when required. FSIM notes this issue has not been formally raised at a governance body as at 30 June 2022. There is an opportunity for CFA and FRV to collect further information on this issue and consider if there are risks to response efficiency, given these arrangements.

### Breathing apparatus support

BA support issues have been highlighted at some regional stations, even though access to refilling stations is covered by a Joint Operational Activities MOU. For example, during FSIM's engagement, CFA advised that its BA refilling station in a major regional centre was out of commission; however, CFA volunteers advised they were not authorised to access and refill their BA cylinders at the neighbouring FRV-owned refilling station. Prior to reform this station was owned by CFA and accessible to both career firefighters and volunteers. Following

reform and the transfer of the station to FRV, volunteers have stated they do not have access to this facility and are now required to drive over 30 minutes to refill their cylinders at the next closest CFA refill station. This arrangement puts the community at risk if CFA volunteers are responding to a regional incident and are not best equipped to protect themselves or the community.

FSIM notes that action 2.4 in the FSOC workplan requires FSOC to develop a draft roadmap for a BA operating model (including BA recharging plans) to enable FRV to meet obligations for maintaining and servicing under the SLDA and encourages the working group to meaningfully engage with both staff and volunteers to understand the problems and negotiate the best outcome for the volunteers, staff and community.

### PPC access and use for FRV staff

Some FRV Division B firefighters at some peri-urban and regional stations are experiencing extended turnaround times for their PPC to be returned to them from the agency's centralised Melbourne metropolitan facilities. This restricts Division B firefighters as they cannot attend an incident where their PPC has not been cleaned and they cannot access the PPC pool.

# 8.0

## FSIM Key Focus Area: Culture and diversity



### FSIM Lines of inquiry

Plans and programs



Diversity and inclusion targets



### Scope of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

- 1.3 Complete delivery of the \$22.7m Volunteer Support Package
- 4.4 Define FRV values and culture and deliver supporting programs of work
- 4.5 Continue delivering the following cultural and diversity change programs
- 4.6 Develop and continue delivering on inclusion and diversity initiatives
- 4.9 Demonstrate progress towards reaching 400 women career firefighters in FRV
- 4.10 Make progress towards increasing the number of women in brigade leadership roles to 15 per cent

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

**1**

Strengthen CFA  
as a volunteer  
firefighting agency

**2**

Strengthen  
FRV as a career  
firefighting agency

**3**

Plan and build  
for the future

**4**

Valuing  
our people

**5**

Ensure the future  
sustainability of the  
fire services

## Overview

The culture and diversity key focus area outlines progress and challenges for agencies towards achieving the government’s vision to implement a cultural shift in the fire services, with a strong focus on valuing people and building a safe and respectful sector. The key focus area for year two is supported by two lines of inquiry:

1. Plans and Programs (actions 1.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6)
2. Diversity and Inclusion Targets (actions 4.9 and 4.10).

These lines of inquiry provide a snapshot of progress against the actions assessed by FSIM in year two and outline opportunities and challenges for each agency, identified by FSIM as part of its year two assessment, towards meeting action and overarching objectives.

This key focus area section notes that FRV has made significant progress to develop and communicate its values and CFA is taking decisive action to transparently address cultural issues. However, there is work to do to clarify how secondees operate across the

agencies different operating contexts and cultures, as a result of the secondment agreement requirements.

Valuing the work of volunteers and staff is underpinned by each agency’s values and culture – and more importantly, how those values and cultures are reflected in service delivery.

### Key finding

Agencies have defined their individual values and cultures – it is appropriate they have their own individual identities, and FSIM notes that the values of both agencies are broadly aligned. However, the operating context and organisational cultures of how these values are demonstrated within agencies differs. The experience of the distinct cultures of the two organisations can bring challenges, particularly for those seconded staff operating within both agencies. There is an opportunity for both CFA and FRV to provide clarity to secondees who operate within both cultural and operational contexts.

## Progress

### Fire services agencies’ values and culture

Victoria’s fire services agencies have defined values which underpin their operation and service delivery, with FRV settling and presenting their final values package to staff in June 2022. As demonstrated in Table 7 below, CFA and FRV values are broadly aligned.

Clarity and confirmation of both agencies’ values (noting CFA Values have been settled for some time) provides both organisations with an understanding of what each considers important in how they work and deliver services to the community. This understanding provides a basis upon which agencies can collaborate and work together.

Table 13: Comparison of CFA and FRV values

CFA Values <sup>100</sup>	FRV Values <sup>101</sup>
We put SAFETY first	We serve the Community
We excel through TEAMWORK	We value Teamwork
We are dynamic and ADAPTABLE	We have Integrity
We act with INTEGRITY	We show Respect
We RESPECT each other	We are Accountable

<sup>100</sup> Country Fire Authority, 2021, *Our values and behaviours*, Country Fire Authority <<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-values-and-behaviours>>

<sup>101</sup> Fire Rescue Victoria, June 2022, *FRV Values Program Overview*.

## Progress (continued)

### External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support the CFA of the Future (Szoke Review)

While not a specific action in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan, CFA has transparently and publicly acknowledged the challenges it faces to improve organisational culture and strengthen diversity and inclusion through the commissioning and public release of the *External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support the CFA of the Future* (Szoke Review) in 2022 and of CFA's commitment to implement the recommendations. FSIM considers that the recommendations in this review will support CFA to successfully deliver actions in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan and as such, a short summary is included in this report.

The Szoke Review acknowledges that CFA has experienced significant change and upheaval in recent years including major fires and Royal Commissions and the biggest change in fire services in 70 years with the introduction of Fire Services Reform. The report identified 10 recommendations for CFA, providing a roadmap to building a more diverse, transparent, inclusive, safe and fair CFA for the future. CFA accepted all of the recommendations<sup>102</sup> and will develop a high-level implementation plan to deliver on the recommendations over the next three to five years, focused on:

- develop and implement a plan for organisational change to improve culture and issues management
- build on the value and standards of CFA

- ensure effective support to ACFOs, Commanders and Brigade Management Teams
- continue to improve the process for issues management
- increase the avenues for conflict resolution
- continue to improve the focus on health and well being
- increase diversity and inclusion across all levels
- increase measurement of cultural change
- increase collaboration across Victorian fire services, recommending that the strengthening of collaboration and partnerships between the Victorian firefighting organisations, their leaders and members is prioritised
- invest in best practice resource management system.

FSIM supports CFA's considerable steps to ensure the effective and efficient resolution of complaints and supports CFA implementing the recommendations outlined in the Szoke Review.

## Challenges

### Seconded working within two cultural and operational contexts

A lack of clarity around how each agencies' values apply in their cultural contexts for secondees has impacted a constructive approach to service delivery and negatively impacted some seconded staff's work experiences in some co-located stations. As noted in a number of the Complementary Fire Services lines of inquiry, FSIM heard the following examples of poor communication or impacted delivery in ACFO and Commander discussions, workshops and forums:

- seconded staff to CFA work across two different organisational systems from two different computers and navigate different corporate support systems
- evidence of significant delays by FRV in processing payments for higher duties for all staff
- the requirement under the FRV Operational Employees EBA<sup>103</sup> for FRV employees seconded to CFA to wear an FRV uniform while performing their duties in that secondment position has led to feelings of disrespect and confusion amongst some volunteers about who was making decisions on behalf of which organisation
- volunteers at specific co-located stations visited by FSIM felt undervalued as after reform, they were unable to access station areas like main hallways, had inappropriate turnout facilities, and limited or no access to meeting rooms and memorabilia.

<sup>102</sup> Country Fire Authority, 2022, *Joint statement from CFA Chair, CEO and Chief Officer*, Country Fire Authority <<https://news.cfa.vic.gov.au/news/joint-statement-from-cfa-chair-ceo-and-chief-officer>>

<sup>103</sup> Clauses 6 and 7, Schedule 26 Secondment to CFA, *Fire Rescue Victoria Operational Employee Interim Enterprise Agreement 2020*, pg 418.

## Challenges (continued)

- Each fire service agency necessarily defines its own values – this is important and appropriate. While the values of the two agencies are closely aligned, the operating context and culture of how these values are demonstrated in each agency differs. There remains a challenge for both agencies to ensure that while FRV staff are seconded to CFA, they are well-inducted and supported to work between the two cultures. The secondment arrangements do not allow CFA to fully manage every aspect of secondees (for example, performance management). Some issues concerning seconded staff are managed by FRV as the employer, in consultation with CFA and with reference to obligations outlined in relevant enterprise agreements. At the time of reporting, how secondees do their work within the context of the two organisational cultures had not been clearly and consistently defined.

Lack of clarity about how both agencies' values apply for secondees working between both could lead to risks such as inconsistencies in decision making in the same co-located stations when different secondees step into roles.

While FSIM has not been able to quantify the impact of this anecdotal evidence on service delivery, FSIM notes that at the time of reporting, a dedicated secondment support team was being established to assist in clarifying how secondees operate, recognising there are possible risks associated with the current approach. CFA and FRV have an opportunity to collaborate on how the individual values of each agency are reflected

in the operations of secondees and consider how they will each measure success for this cohort. This could be incorporated into FRV's secondment team's workplan, if appropriate.

More broadly, FRV plans to embed new organisational values into its policies, procedures and leadership behaviours but has not effectively consulted with CFA about how these organisational values will impact FRV staff seconded to CFA. A complementary fire services model (underpinned by constructive cultures) would necessitate that FRV's values should not be implemented without engagement with CFA, and vice versa, with specific regard to the seconded cohort, who must work between and balance these two cultures.

### **A lack of role clarity impacts the culture of the agency**

A lack of role clarity, particularly for those CFA brigades co-located with FRV, may impact how agencies achieve their desired organisational culture. FSIM notes that while there is a significant amount of operational doctrine, organisational processes and systems that support delivery of services, FSIM engagement with CFA volunteers at some co-located stations indicated that they lacked clear understanding of their changed roles and responsibilities since the implementation of the reform. Without a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, some brigades anecdotally reported negative impacts on brigade culture, including lower volunteer engagement and turnout, declining morale, and difficulty in retaining volunteers which could impact brigade capability.<sup>104</sup> CFA data, specifically for the 34 co-located areas shows a small net decline (approx. 7

per cent) in volunteers from the start of reform to the end of FY 2021–22, with a continuing downward trend quarter on quarter. FSIM also found that in FY 2020–21, 25 per cent of those leaving the co-located brigades over the last two years transferred to another (non-co-located) brigade while 13 per cent of those leaving co-located brigades in FY 2021–22 transferred to another (non-co-located) brigade.<sup>105</sup> FSIM cannot yet quantify the operational or service delivery impact these indicators may have for the community; however, CFA's various volunteer satisfactions surveys and engagement activities may provide some clarity in future years.

Brigades further indicated that there had been inadequate communication from CFA to assist them to develop or understand new roles and responsibilities and that they were investing significant energy in negotiating roles and responsibilities with FRV seconded leadership, which impacted productive working relationships and by extension, challenges each agencies cultural value of teamwork.

While CFA has implemented positive initiatives, including the monthly all-staff and volunteer member forums, FSIM's observations are consistent with many of the findings of the Szoke Review, where many members reported "experiencing deficiencies in communication channels" and emphasised the "importance of in-person communication".<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>105</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 information request.

<sup>106</sup> Allen & Clarke Consulting, 2022, *External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support Country Fire Authority of the Future*, pg. 52.



## Challenges (continued)

### Addressing complaints management in the fire services

Priority Four of the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan has a specific focus on valuing the people who volunteer and work within the fire services. For CFA, this means being a great place to work and volunteer, reflecting the diversity of the community and where people are safe and respected. For FRV, this means providing a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace, with a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community they serve to better meet the needs of all Victorians.

The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions do not explicitly require either agency to address discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and victimisation as part of their efforts to promote inclusion and diversity. However, fostering a safe environment where people are encouraged to raise concerns is a foundational aspect of both agencies' work on culture and diversity. Fostering this safe environment is particularly relevant, given bullying and harassment in the fire services has been of concern for some time and has been raised in numerous reviews.<sup>107</sup>

There is very clear evidence from CFA that progress is being made to better manage complaints and CFA has developed a pathway, via recommendations from the Szoke Review, to build a more diverse, inclusive, safe and fair place to work and volunteer.

FRV has a lack of transparent employee experience data to inform its identification and management of issues including bullying and harassment. This poses considerable risks to FRV's ability to implement defined values and programs, built on evidence, that support leadership, relationships, and the way it operates. However, FSIM is advised that FRV is in the process of rolling-out mandatory Workplace Behaviour Training to all employees. This training provides statements and expectations aimed at helping to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and victimisation. In addition, FSIM is advised that FRV also has plans to implement a number of strategies to address these matters via its Gender Equality Action Plan.

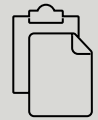
FSIM considers that aspects of several actions in Priority Four may help agencies to identify, reduce and effectively manage any incidents of bullying and harassment. These include FRV's values work, diversity and inclusion activities and leadership development capabilities, and CFA's behavioural standards and inclusion and diversity activities.

<sup>107</sup> Bullying and harassment were the subject of reviews: O'Byrne, 2015, *Report of the Victorian Fire Services Review — Drawing a line, building stronger services*; the 2016 Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Independent Equity and Diversity Review into CFA and MFB; Allen & Clarke Consulting, 2022, *External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support Country Fire Authority of the Future*. It must be noted that some of these reviews are historical and based on data and experiences within the CFA and MFB. In the absence of FRV data, they are the basis upon which this statement is made.



8.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Culture and diversity

## 8.1 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Plans and programs



### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective

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

Agencies recognise and value the work of their people and reflect the diversity of the Victorian community

### Scope of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

- 1.3 Complete delivery of the \$22.7m Volunteer Support Package (VSP)
- 4.4 Define FRV values and culture and deliver supporting programs of work
- 4.5 Continue delivering the following cultural and diversity change programs
- 4.6 Develop and continue delivering on inclusion and diversity initiatives

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

1

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

2

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

3

Plan and build for the future

4

Valuing our people

5

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The Plans and Programs line of inquiry reviews four Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions (1.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6) relating to plans and programs that (for action 1.3) support the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of “an engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision-making and feels safe and respected” and that (for actions 4.4, 4.5, 4.6) support the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective that “agencies recognise and value the work of their people and reflect the diversity of the Victorian community”.

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for each action
- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.

## Progress of actions

<b>Action 1.3: Complete delivery of the \$22.7m Volunteer Support Package (VSP).</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2024
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

CFA allocated \$11.45 million of the \$22.7 million Volunteer Support Package (VSP) to four projects: CFA Pocketbook; Brigade Capability Review; CFA Volunteer workwear; and Digital Stores. CFA volunteers were not directly engaged in the allocation decisions, but those projects funded were created as a result of feedback and suggestions from many volunteers.

<b>Action 4.4: Define FRV values and culture and deliver supporting programs of work: (a) Develop FRV values; (b) Strategy to embed FRV values; (c) Leadership development and capability.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	New action

FRV has undertaken a large-scale values project to develop its inaugural organisational values, developing its leaders to facilitate engagement with approximately 60 per cent of the organisation to finalise its values. The values have been drafted and the next stage of the project will commence in year three to embed the values into organisational policies, procedures, and systems. A significant risk to the values project is that FRV has not prioritised complaints management (data and reporting).

<b>Action 4.5: Continue delivering the following cultural and diversity change programs: (a) CFA behavioural standards program; (b) CFA child safety compliance plan; (c) Inclusion and diversity strategy and supporting action plans; (d) 2017 Fire Services Statement funded initiatives.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2024
<b>Reported Status</b>	On track
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

CFA has undertaken a 'Right Environment' Program to reduce the number of open complaints and engaged an independent consultancy to resolve legacy complaints, developed interim behavioural standards. CFA has also developed a Child Safety Compliance Plan and currently conducts several diversity and inclusion activities. CFA is yet to finalise its Diversity and Inclusion strategy. This will be critical to ensure a coordinated approach to diversity and inclusion that is outcomes focused and appropriately measured.

<b>Action 4.6: Develop and continue delivering on inclusion and diversity initiatives: (a) Diversity and Inclusion Framework, Strategy and Action Plan; (b) Gender Equity Action Plan; (c) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation Action Plan.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

FRV has developed a draft Diversity and Inclusion Framework, which is currently undergoing consultation, and is on track to finalise its Gender Equality Action Plan in accordance with the extension provided. In future reports, FSIM will confirm if the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation Action Plan has been completed. A significant risk to FRV's Diversity and Inclusion Framework is a lack of data, which was not historically kept by MFB. FRV has plans to improve diversity and inclusion data collection, which will need to be prioritised in order to measure the success of diversity and inclusion activities.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective

Of the four Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions in this line of inquiry, three are reported as experiencing minor delays and one is reported as on track. FSIM observes that there are some challenges to CFA and FRV in achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of “an engaged volunteer workforce that is involved in decision-making and feels safe and respected” and “agencies recognise and value the work of their people and reflect the diversity of the Victorian community”. However, significant work is underway by both agencies, which indicates these actions will be completed in line with their intent.

CFA and FRV both aim to promote cultural inclusiveness and diversity and inclusion through dedicated plans and programs. FRV aims to have defined values and programs that support leadership and relationships in the way that it operates. CFA aims to support volunteers in their endeavours to build capability, deliver services and have access to a range of practical support programs.

### Assessment of CFA - Plans and programs

#### CFA opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

##### CFA plans and programs

CFA has provided evidence of a range of activities, plans and programs that promote cultural inclusiveness and diversity and inclusion, including:

- Commissioning an external review into culture and issues management and publicly releasing its findings in June 2022

- a Strategic Framework that outlines the organisation’s values. CFA also has requirements to be met by all brigades, including occupational health and safety, regulatory checks, prerequisites to meet government policies and regulations<sup>108</sup>
- consultation to develop a Gender Equality Action Plan, supported by targeted and measurable actions that will embed gender equity as a cultural attribute at CFA, endorsed by CFA’s Board in February 2022. CFA intends to explore with the Gender Equality Commission how the principles underpinning the Gender Equality Action Plan (for staff) might also be applied to support increased diversity in the critical volunteer workforce
- a review of the Child Safety Compliance Plan that sets out a roadmap to ensure CFA is a child safe organisation
- the development and roll out of Behavioural Standards and Complaint Resolution Guidelines<sup>109</sup>
- several diversity and inclusion activities, including the commencement of a process for the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, continuing the Allies of Inclusion Network, Women’s Advisory Committee, Youth Advisory Committee, and Women’s Captains Network
- the introduction of monthly online staff and volunteer forums and the CFA CEO/CO regular discussion forums with work teams, State-wide Regional Leadership Team meetings to foster open communication and the Service

Delivery Mentor program whereby each executive is paired with a service delivery Deputy Chief Officer to strengthen connection across the State, and the regular visits by members of executive to regional, district and brigade level activities.

##### CFA volunteer support programs

CFA continued to implement the Volunteer Support Package, allocating \$11.45 million of the \$22.7 million to four projects:

- CFA Pocketbook, a project to create an Android and iOS phone application that allows CFA members to access important tools and information in real time (with or without access to the internet) to assist in administrative and operational duties including but not limited to Operational Standard Operating Procedures, Standing Orders, Brigade Management Manual, Operations Bulletins and Safety Bulletins
- Brigade Capability Review, a project intended to provide access to a comprehensive suite of data and processes to allow Brigades to understand current capability state, performance and projections, for future capability requirements
- CFA Volunteer workwear, to fund the design and delivery of workwear to be worn by volunteers when carrying out CFA-related duties that do not require PPC or dress uniforms, such as community education
- Digital Stores (\$2 million), is to expand the current digitisations to provide an end-to-end electronic ordering system for brigades, district mechanical officers and training grounds.

<sup>108</sup> Allen & Clarke Consulting, 2022, *External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support Country Fire Authority of the Future*.

<sup>109</sup> The Standards specifically define and prohibit bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, and victimisation. They also explicitly prohibit sexual or intimate relationships with those under 18 and other ‘inappropriate behaviour’ (Allen & Clarke Consulting, 2022, *External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support Country Fire Authority of the Future*)

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### Coordination and integration of diversity and inclusion plans and programs to achieve outcomes

As noted, CFA has a range of diversity and inclusion programs and is in the process of developing a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. The Strategy will be a key functional plan underneath the CFA Strategy and Outcomes Framework and will set out the key actions CFA will take to measure progress towards their Outcome Framework Goal 3.<sup>110</sup> FSIM considers that this Strategy should drive a coordinated approach to existing and future diversity and inclusion initiatives, and that these initiatives are outcome focused and measurable.

### Complaints management, policies, processes, and systems

CFA's new complaints management operating model and resolution guidelines provide a clear approach to managing conflict and CFA has taken significant steps to resolve outstanding complaints, addressing all legacy complaints during the reporting period. CFA endorsed a new complaints management operating model and complaint team structure and developed Interim Complaint Resolution Guidelines, which set out the approach to managing and resolving concerns and complaints that CFA receives about the behaviour of CFA Members, Officers, or contractors. The "Right Environment Program" aims to reduce the number of open complaints and engaged an independent consultancy to resolve legacy complaints.

Following significant efforts in the resolution of outstanding complaints and improvements in the complaints process, CFA has had several achievements, including:

- reduced outstanding complaints from 155 at the beginning of September 2020 to 23 at the end of January 2022 to closing all legacy complaints at the end of the reporting period.
- average duration of complaints reduced for new cases
- centralised access through system to current case information
- clearly defined triage process to determine informal and formal cases.

### External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support the CFA of the Future (Szoke Review)

While detail of the Szoke Review is provided in the "Progress" section of the Culture and Diversity key focus area summary above, this work is important to note in CFA's plans and program line of inquiry as this review provides a roadmap to building a more diverse, transparent, inclusive, safe and fair CFA for the future. While implementation of the Szoke recommendations is not required or referenced in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan, FSIM is strongly supportive of CFA's commitment to this work and the intention to implement all 10 recommendations made, and notes that CFA was developing an implementation plan at the time of reporting. This kind of cultural change

is a long-term proposition, illustrated by the fact that the implementation plan being developed to respond to the external review will have a five-year timeframe.

### CFA challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

While CFA has undertaken several activities to promote cultural inclusiveness and diversity and inclusion, and to provide support volunteers, several key risks could impact progress towards a more inclusive and diverse CFA.

### Engagement of volunteers in decisions that impact them about plans and programs

CFA uses a number of mechanisms to undertake consultation, noted above, and principally through the VFBV and CFA-VFBV Joint Consultative Committee. The work to formalise its Engagement Framework is expected to put more structure and focus into engagement with various cohorts of CFA people across the complexity of the organisation. Low levels of trust in CFA by some volunteers impact the level of engagement they may opt-in for, creating potential frustration and limiting the ability to harness good ideas and suggestions. At the end of the reporting period, CFA was developing an Engagement Framework to address these issues which FSIM considers will provide more robust approaches to engaging volunteers in decision-making that affects them.

<sup>110</sup> CFA intends that the actions in the CFA Strategy will provide a basis for measuring progress towards its outcomes framework goal 3: "We provide a great place to volunteer and work".

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### Historical perception of complaints management processes and systems

As noted above, CFA has acknowledged history of an ineffective and inefficient complaints management process<sup>111</sup> and has taken actions to address it. FSIM notes that some members with previous experience of the legacy process may be sceptical that the new approach will operate effectively. It will be important for CFA to actively manage this risk. CFA has indicated that actions including collecting information from people about their experience of the new process (to inform continuous improvement) and a commitment to develop and report to members de-identified information about the complaints process operation (such as on matters of timeliness) should assist to address this scepticism.

The Szoke Review also heard several concerns about the systems and processes in place to prevent and respond to bullying, harassment, and discrimination at CFA, relating to inconsistency, accountability, independence, communication, and transparency.

Given CFA's demonstrated commitment to improving complaints management and broader cultural issues, FSIM supports CFA's efforts to address these issues and communicate clearly, across all levels of the organisation.

### Assessment of FRV – Plans and programs

#### FRV opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

##### Activities to build the foundations for organisational diversity and inclusion

FRV has undertaken several activities to promote diversity and inclusion and to develop defined values and programs that support leadership, relationships, and the way it operates. FRV has developed inaugural organisational values via consultation with approximately 2,700 employees (approximately 65 per cent of the workforce), including with approximately 40 per cent of its staff cohort who are secondees to CFA. FRV plans to embed new organisational values in its policies and procedures and leadership behaviours and advised that CFA and VPS values were taken into consideration during the development of FRV's values. FSIM consider it important that FRV consult with CFA about their organisational values, as they may have implications for CFA, particularly with regard to seconded staff.

The values have been endorsed by the UFU and FRV advised that the next phase of the project will see the values embedded across the organisation, including in policies and procedures and leadership behaviours. As cultural artifacts like values can help signpost and encourage desired behaviours, FSIM considers the development of organisational values is an appropriate starting point for FRV.

Other plans and programs supporting FRV's diversity and inclusion include:

- upskilling leaders to facilitate sessions with employees to develop the organisation's values
- Diversity and Inclusion Framework, associated Strategy and four-year action plan – a draft has been supported in principle by the UFU and is currently being finalised with FRV, which includes 16 priorities and has an intersectional focus. FSIM notes that this package includes intention to provide resources and training to support a more inclusive workforce
- Gender Equality Action Plan – FRV has experienced some delays in the development of this Plan and were provided an extension to 20 June 2022. FRV advised that it is on track to comply with the legislation and FSIM notes the completion of the Gender Equality Action Plan is an important step in progressing FRV's commitment to diversity and inclusion
- development of FRV's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation Action Plan, one of FRV's key initiatives contained in their draft Diversity and Inclusion Framework, Strategy and Action Plan
- continued diversity and inclusion activities across the organisation including establishing six Multicultural Liaison Officers and a Cultural Advisor to provide advice about engaging with multicultural communities.

<sup>111</sup> Following the Fire Services Reform, the VFBV noted in the VFBV, December 2020, *Joint Community Safety Committee – 2 Minute Briefing* "an urgent need to improve the investigative process immediately which in VFBV's view is often cruel, punitive and drawn out, leaving volunteers distressed and feeling unwelcomed at their Brigade". The VFBV Quarterly Supplement of March 2021 identified that issues regarding timeliness, support of volunteers and communication with volunteers throughout the complaints process have been "major stumbling blocks for CFA and some volunteers have been left for months, even years without support, feedback or progress reports on their case."



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

FSIM notes that FRV's draft Strategic Workforce Plan (action 5.4) also highlights culture, inclusion and engagement as a focus area, linked to the delivery of the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. This draft Strategic Workforce Plan outlines FRV's aim to build a psychologically safe and inclusive organisation where people are comfortable to share their diversity of thought, experience, skill and perspective. The draft Strategic Plan articulates high-level initiatives, assigns responsible owners and specifies the outcomes the initiatives are seeking to achieve, which FSIM considers is a positive step towards shaping culture and diversity outcomes that are clear and the impacts of which are measurable.

### Commencement of complaints management strategies

FRV advised that an operational process for complaints management has been in place since its establishment. FRV has begun to consider how to manage complaints more effectively and efficiently and its Ethics team led a review of the organisation's Complaints Policy, which was developed in 2010 in MFB. The UFU endorsed new complaints management procedures relating to mechanical staff on 10 May 2022, corporate staff on 25 May 2022 and operational staff on 8 June 2022.

### FRV challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### Diversity and inclusion data to inform planning and programs

FRV has initiated a range of diversity and inclusion programs and plans that will need to be effectively integrated with broader workforce and organisational strategies to achieve intended outcomes. FRV advises that integrating diversity and inclusion planning will be a key focus in FY 2022–23.

Diversity and inclusion data continues to be a limitation for FRV. The lack of diversity and inclusion data limits FRV's ability to identify baselines, plan and set meaningful targets for diversity and inclusion. FRV advised FSIM that it intends to commence collection of diversity and inclusion data for Domain 3 (Organisational Excellence) under its outcome framework and performance indicators, which will include:

- workforce profile data, including datasets about operational/corporate by age and other diversity and inclusion indicators if available (proposed FY 2022–23)
- number of employees attended Aboriginal cultural safety training (proposed Q4 FY 2021–22)
- number of employees attending disability confidence awareness sessions, broken down by level (proposed FY 2022–23)
- number of employees attending LGBTIQ+ awareness sessions, broken down by level (proposed FY 2022–23).

Collection of this data will be critical to ensure effective and efficient future diversity and inclusion planning and to measure the success of diversity and inclusion activities. Further, transparency and accountability of survey results will be critical for FRV to build trusting relationships with staff and key stakeholders.

#### Data to inform plans and programs

FRV is considering how it can best manage complaints effectively, and FSIM notes that an operational process for complaints management was in place since its establishment. However, due to FRV's privacy arrangements, FSIM is not aware of, or privy to what data is available, historical or current, upon which FRV base its assessment of the drivers of poor behaviour or how the organisation responds to harmful conduct. FRV's absence of transparent employee experience data poses considerable risks for FRV's objective to have defined values and programs that support leadership, relationships, and the way it operates. Without transparent employee experience data, FRV cannot assess the efficiency and effectiveness of its complaints management processes and systems and how that links to the success of FRV's values projects. At Ambulance Victoria, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission found that there had been, "a loss of faith in leadership due to the gap between the organisation's espoused values and people's lived experience, particularly the failure of some leaders and managers to model respectful conduct and to hold individuals consistently to account for failing to adhere to expected standards."<sup>112</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2022, *Independent Review into Workplace Equality in Ambulance Victoria*. pg 9.



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

FRV can learn from this experience at Ambulance Victoria and should prioritise the development of key performance indicators and complaints data to ensure that its values are lived across the organisation.

In 2021, FRV reported to FSIM a significant increase in the number of complaints. FRV attributed this increase to improved education about complaints procedures based on anecdotal evidence; however, FRV was unable to provide quantifiable evidence supporting these claims.

In year two, FRV advised that it needs to develop performance indicators and analytics for complaints management to enable reporting on themes and trends, and that this work will be undertaken as part of FRV's culture planning in year three. A think tank comprising members from across the organisation was established for this purpose, which is a positive step.

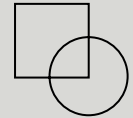
The importance of transparent complaints data is widely recognised. The *Australian Human Rights Commission's Guideline for Preventing and Responding to Workplace Sexual Harassment* states that employers must be "transparent about trends, patterns and lessons with workers, boards and key stakeholders and ensure they have confidence that sexual harassment is being eliminated in their workplace. This requires visibility of the steps employers take to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and information about the success or failure of those steps."<sup>113</sup> The absence of centrally coordinated and reported complaints management data at this stage of the reform presents a significant risk to FRV.

It is critical that FRV prioritises complaints data and reporting going forward to understand incidents and inform its response to addressing discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and victimisation, and to enable the organisation to comprehensively address any barriers to staff to make complaints.

<sup>113</sup> Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights, 2020, *Guideline – Preventing and Responding to Workplace Sexual Harassment*.

8.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Culture and diversity

## 8.2 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Diversity and inclusion targets



### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective

Agencies recognise and value the work of their people and reflect the diversity of the Victorian community

### Scope of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

- 4.9 Demonstrate progress towards reaching 400 women career firefighters in FRV
- 4.10 Make progress towards increasing the number of women in brigade leadership roles to 15 per cent

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

1

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

2

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

3

Plan and build for the future

4

Valuing our people

5

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The Diversity and Inclusion Targets line of inquiry reviews two Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions (4.9, 4.10) relating to diversity and inclusion that have the shared objective that “agencies recognise and value the work of their people and reflect the diversity of the Victorian community”.

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for each action
- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.

This line of inquiry focuses on the two actions relating to diversity targets. CFA has made significant progress against its commitment to increase women in brigade leadership roles, meeting its target in the reporting period. FRV have a significant challenge ahead to demonstrate meaningful progress towards the target of 400 women firefighters, which will require focused attention on recruitment and consider broader workforce planning activities.

## Progress of actions

<b>Action 4.9: Demonstrate progress towards reaching the government’s commitment of 400 women career firefighters in FRV.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Dec 2025
<b>Reported Status</b>	On track
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Rolled over from Year One Plan

FRV has recruited 28 women firefighters over an 18-month period. Based on the current performance trend, to achieve this target by 2025, FRV will need to recruit a further 211 women firefighters and have no resignations from women firefighters over a 2.5 year period.

<b>Action 4.10: 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.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2025
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Rolled over from Year One Plan

CFA has met its commitment to increase the number of women in brigade leadership roles to 15 per cent.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective

Of the two Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions in this line of inquiry, one is reported as on track and one experiencing minor delays. FSIM observes that CFA has met its target with relation to increase the number of women in brigade leadership roles and continues a significant program of work to develop its diversity and inclusion programs. FRV, while reporting action 4.9 as ‘on track’, has a significant challenge ahead to demonstrate progress towards the 400 women career firefighters by 2025, given their low turnover and evolving workforce planning approaches (explored further in action 5.4).

### Building foundations for organisational diversity

Both agencies are focused on strengthening diversity and inclusion. One very important aspect of this work is increasing the attraction and retention of women firefighters. In addition to the diversity and inclusion activities noted in the Plans and programs line of inquiry above, CFA’s expansion of leadership criteria has helped CFA meet its commitment to increase the number of women in brigade leadership roles. FRV continues to focus on recruitment of women career firefighters, with 28 people who identify as women recruited over an 18-month period. While these successes for both agencies are commendable, significant work remains. Both agencies have an opportunity to increase the participation of women in the fire services and to recognise and actively broaden the scope and reporting of inclusion and diversity activities beyond women.

While both agencies have a broad definition of diversity, including women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse people, people with a disability and, LGBTQIQ+ individuals, CFA has the added cohort of young people. Both agencies have an opportunity to build more comprehensive data and measures to shape programs and processes to deliver outcomes for these diverse groups. As noted in FSIM quarterly outcomes reporting, improvements to data and analysis are long-term propositions. Building data sets for diverse cohorts will take time and must be developed appropriately, in line with each agencies’ values. Undertaking this work will support both agencies to make evidence-based decisions on where to focus efforts to increase diversity.

### Assessment of CFA – Diversity and inclusion targets

#### CFA opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

##### Increasing female participation

FSIM notes that women make up the majority of CFA staff (59 per cent)<sup>114</sup> and women feature prominently in leadership roles including CEO, senior executive, CFA’s Board members and Deputy Chief Officers. The CFA Strategy and Outcomes Framework (Year 2) has a measure “to increase in volunteers under 40” which is a strong commitment of strategic intent. The Q4 FY 2021–22 outcome indicators to both increase female volunteers in operational roles and leadership roles are both in line with CFA’s baseline.

<sup>114</sup> Country Fire Authority, 2021, *CFA Annual Report 2020-21*, pg 13.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

In 2022, CFA met its commitment to increasing the number of women in brigade leadership roles to 15 per cent as per action 4.10. CFA has undertaken work to increase female participation at all levels, including:

- establishment of the CEO/CO Women's Advisory Committee to ensure the most senior leaders in the organisation heard the voices of women members and to ensure CFA takes action on issues raised through this forum
- operating nine Women's Networks/ Reference Groups across eight districts in four regions, and development of a Women's Network Toolkit to ensure a level of consistency while allowing districts to tailor their programs to suit local needs
- conducting International Women's Day activities at the local, district and State level, with coordination supported through the Women's Networks and Advisory Committee.

Further, section 5 of CFA's 2022 Szoke Review<sup>115</sup> provides a comprehensive overview of CFA's diversity challenges and opportunities and provides sound recommendations that will enable CFA build on its strong history and create and sustain a diverse, safe and productive work and volunteering environment.

### CFA challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### Ongoing challenges for female membership

Achieving brigade leadership targets for women will not, on its own, achieve the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of "Agencies recognise and value the work of their people and reflect the diversity of the Victorian community". CFA acknowledges the significant diversity challenges it has regarding female and youth membership. CFA's commissioning of the Szoke Review and committing to recommendation implementation is a positive step to addressing questions of diversity and inclusion.

Women make up 25 per cent of CFA's volunteer workforce, yet most are in support roles. There are more than five times more male volunteers than female volunteers in operational roles at CFA. While CFA has put initiatives in place to support more diverse recruitment, the Szoke Review found that solutions need to address flexible volunteering and work practices.<sup>116</sup> Based on the results of CFA's 2021 'People Matter Survey', which is completed by paid CFA staff, 30 per cent of women and 38 per cent of men agree that CFA makes fair recruitment and promotion decisions, based on merit and only 34 per cent of women and 36 per cent of men agree they have equal chance at promotion at CFA. CFA acknowledges that 'The People Matter' survey highlights an opportunity to strengthen its recruitment and promotion policy and practices.

### Assessment of FRV – Diversity and inclusion targets

#### FRV opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

##### Women firefighters recruited

FRV recruited 28 women firefighters over an 18-month period and has developed a draft Strategic Workforce Plan (Operations), which includes strategies to assist FRV to achieve the government's commitment of 400 women career firefighters in FRV. Further information on Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action 5.4 is outlined in the Fire services sustainability section of this report.

##### Progressing diversity initiatives

FRV notes that it is at a foundational stage of organisational maturity with respect to diversity and inclusion. Women make up 11 per cent of FRV's total workforce, with women representing 4.7 per cent of operational employees and over half (51.8 per cent) of FRV's corporate staff.<sup>117</sup> FRV developed a draft Diversity and Inclusion Framework, which, at the time of reporting is currently undergoing consultation, and is on track to finalise its Gender Equality Action Plan in accordance with the extension provided. A significant risk to FRV's Diversity and Inclusion Framework is a lack of data, which was not historically kept at MFB. FRV has plans to improve diversity and inclusion data collection, which will need to be prioritised in order to measure the success of diversity and inclusion activities.

<sup>115</sup> Allen & Clarke Consulting, 2022, *External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support Country Fire Authority of the Future*, pg. 46 – 96.

<sup>116</sup> Allen & Clarke Consulting, 2022, *External Review of Culture and Issues Management to Support Country Fire Authority of the Future*, pg. 89.

<sup>117</sup> Fire Rescue Victoria, 2021, *FRV Annual Report 2020–21*, pg. 64.

## **Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective** (continued)

### **FRV challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective**

#### **Targets do not recognise the practicalities of increasing women firefighter recruitment**

FRV has a specific target to demonstrate progress towards increasing the overall number of women firefighters to 400 women career firefighters target by 2025. To achieve this, FRV will need to recruit a further 211 women firefighters and have no resignations from women firefighters over a 2.5 year period. This will require a significant increase from the current recruitment rate of 1.5 women firefighters recruited per month to 5.9 women firefighters recruited per month. Given FRV's current recruitment approaches and turnover levels, reaching 400 women firefighters by 2025 is unachievable. FRV will need to substantially rethink its firefighting recruitment and retention strategies with a particular focus on women staff in order to drive the step-change in performance needed to meet the target. FSIM considers that setting out an approach to reach this aspirational target that incorporates evidence-based workforce planning and considering current recruitment and turnover data may be useful.

# 9.0

## FSIM Key Focus Area: Fire services sustainability



### FSIM Lines of inquiry

### Scope of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy



5.1 CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy

Fire services sector operational capacity and capability



5.2 Review of operational capacity and capability requirements for the fire services sector

FRV Strategy



5.3 Develop an FRV Strategy

FRV strategic workforce plan



5.4 Develop an FRV strategic workforce plan

Independent financial sustainability assessment of CFA and FRV



5.5 Conduct an initial financial sustainability assessment of CFA and FRV

Initial funding plan for CFA and FRV



5.6 Develop an initial funding plan for CFA and FRV

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

1

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

2

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

3

Plan and build for the future

4

Valuing our people

5

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services



## Overview

This focus area outlines progress and challenges for agencies towards achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan's Priority Five objective to ensure the future sustainability of the fire services, with a focus on:

- **force sustainability:** agencies having a shared understanding of risk, capability and capacity required to deliver services aligned to government and community expectations
- **financial sustainability:** agencies identifying and quantifying current service delivery drivers and their costs, as well as opportunities for improvements, and insights into ensuring CFA and FRV are viable and sustainable into the future.

The key focus area for year two is supported by six lines of inquiry:

1. CFA, FRB and FRV have a clear understanding of CFA's capability and capacity requirements for staff seconded from FRV (action 5.1)
2. DJCS, working with CFA and FRV, undertakes a review of operational capability and capacity to inform service delivery strategies, future capability needs and future funding requirements for the sector (action 5.2)

3. FRV develops an FRV Strategy that resonates with stakeholders and the authorising environment (action 5.3)
4. FRV develops a Strategic Workforce Plan for operations, that forecasts changing workforce requirements through to 2026 and meets community needs, including secondment obligations to CFA (action 5.4)
5. DJCS, working with CFA and FRV, conducts a financial sustainability assessment of CFA and FRV, ensuring the agencies have an agreed understanding of financial sustainability and how this may be achieved, with an evidence-based cost and performance baseline (action 5.5)
6. DJCS, working with CFA and FRV, develops funding plans that address high priority funding requirements for CFA and FRV in years three and four of the reform and impacts of legislative changes from the reform (action 5.6).

These lines of inquiry provide a snapshot of progress against the actions assessed by FSIM in year two and outline opportunities and challenges, identified by FSIM as part of its year two assessment, towards meeting action and overarching objectives.

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### Key findings

Work undertaken to deliver the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions to underpin sustainable fire services into the future is either underway or completed as at 30 June 2022, noting that a number of reform changes that impact the agencies' financial sustainability and workforce capabilities are yet to be fully quantified. In addition, implementation of actions for improvement from CFA's and FRV's respective initial funding plans for years three and four of the reform should be progressed as a priority. Both agencies have work to do to represent their cost drivers clearly and accurately, understand the service delivery risks resulting from funding decisions, and put in place the infrastructure, systems, and processes to forecast future costs and undertake effective long-term planning.

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## Progress

### Laying the foundations

Significant foundational work to inform understanding of the fire services financial sustainability has been undertaken by CFA, DJCS and FRV. The independent financial sustainability review of CFA and FRV (the Independent Review, action 5.5) and initial funding plans (action 5.6) are complete.

There is clear evidence of an agreed definition of financial sustainability and what actions need to be taken to better inform immediate and longer-term future funding requirements. The initial funding plans outline funding allocations for CFA and FRV in years three and four of reform. They are based on a no policy change basis, are informed by findings from the independent financial sustainability review of CFA and FRV and include analysis of available key cost drivers and emerging cost pressures. The initial funding plans were endorsed by the Minister and DJCS advised that they addressed high priority funding requirements. FSIM notes that the initial funding plans were constrained by insufficient data to conduct comprehensive cost modelling of emerging cost pressures. However, FSIM observes that the independent financial sustainability reviews conducted a number of key cost drivers' analyses and deep dive analyses on areas impacting key primary costs and financial sustainability for CFA and FRV.

FSIM considers there are key inputs which will inform the DJCS-led review of operational capability and capacity requirements (action 5.2) and the development of a long-term funding plan for CFA and FRV (action 5.8). These are (at a minimum):

- CFA's Capability Statement (delivered under action 5.1), currently underway, which outlines CFA's immediate competencies and skills needs to be provided through secondment arrangements with FRV
- FRV's Strategic Workforce Plan (action 5.4), currently underway, to address skills gaps, drive recruitment decisions, support key priorities for working with delivery partners (including secondment obligations to CFA) to build the capacity, capability and resilience of FRV's workforce
- the recommended actions in CFA's and FRV's initial funding plans, focused on improving financial management and planning.

Noting the issues of data availability and quality outlined below, FSIM also considers that delivering the recommended actions in CFA's and FRV's initial funding plans should also strengthen agencies' understanding of their financial sustainability and lay the foundations for DJCS, working with CFA and FRV to develop robust long-term funding plans (action 5.8).

It will take time to deliver the work to complete these actions and recommendations to improve financial information management and analysis. Given the complexity of the work required, comprehensive planning and mapped program deliverables with agreed timelines to complete these actions would support successful delivery.

## Challenges

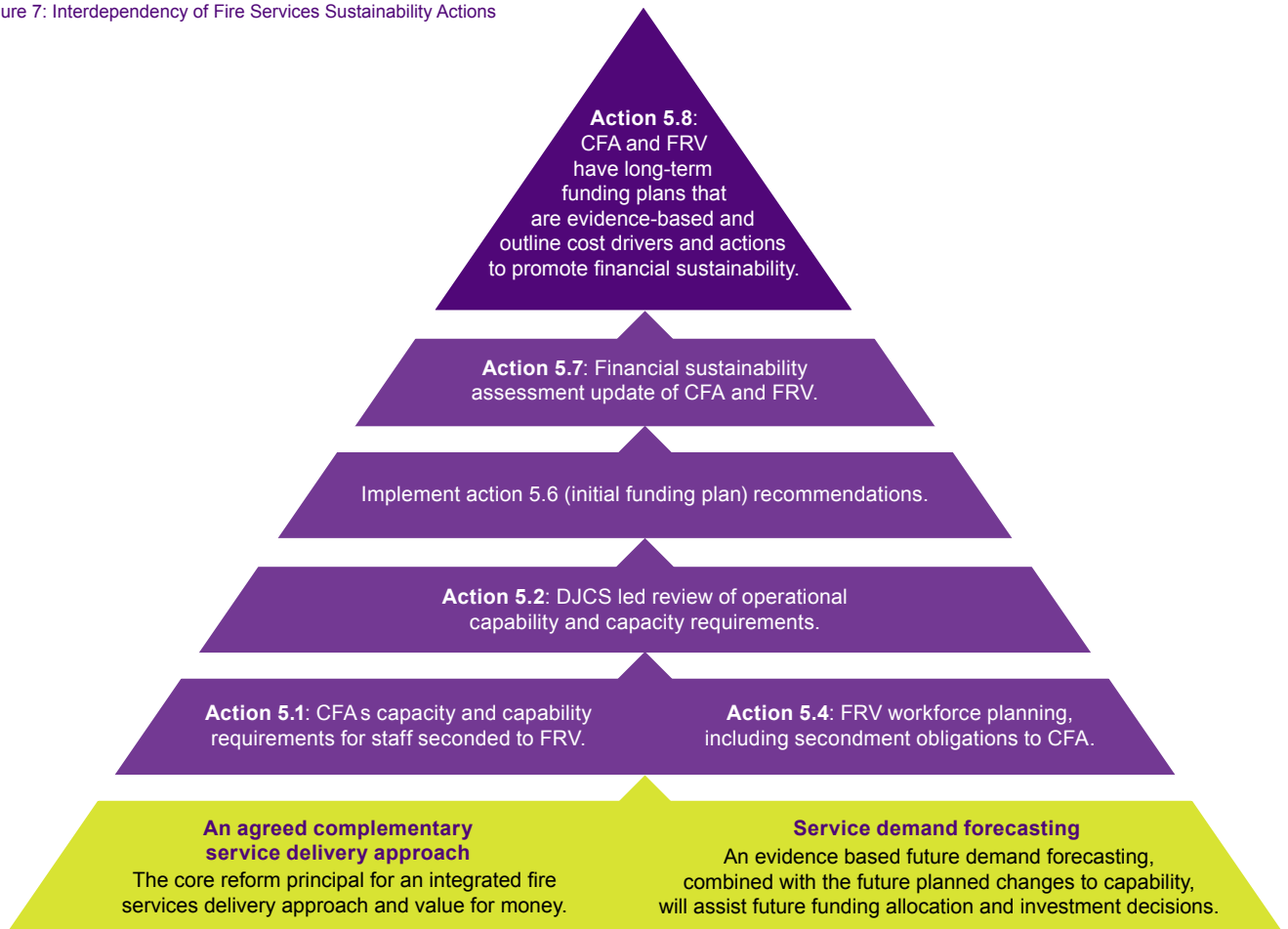
### Mapping interdependent deliverables for the future success

There are a number of activities in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan, particularly under Priority Five, which inform, rely on, relate to or impact other actions. FSIM notes a number of actions in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan have not met their completion date and delays may have consequences for interdependent actions. Actions 5.7 and 5.8 in particular, are reliant on data, information or progress from numerous Year Two to Five Implementation Plan activities.

FSIM notes that the initial funding plans were completed ahead of key inputs such as FRV's Strategic Workforce Plan (action 5.4), CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy (action 5.1), and CFA's Operating Model (action 1.7). These inputs are instrumental to understand the true cost of the new fire services model. FSIM notes that without these inputs, there may be a risk of potential cost exposures in years three and four of reform. However, further analysis would be required to confirm risks and ongoing impacts on financial sustainability. In the longer term, these inputs are critical to the successful delivery of action 5.8 in the future.

FSIM considers that it would be useful for CFA, DJCS and FRV to map out interdependent Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions and milestones that support delivery of actions 5.7 and 5.8, so that the evidence base to deliver these actions (for example, understanding of costs of service delivery, asset management planning and costs, and costs associated with workforce and volunteer capabilities and development) is comprehensive and as accurate as possible. Figure 7 provides a high-level overview of FSIM's observations on the interdependencies between fire services sustainability actions.

Figure 7: Interdependency of Fire Services Sustainability Actions



## Challenges (continued)

### Improving financial sustainability

Actions 5.5 and 5.6 assessments below note opportunities for CFA and FRV to improve their understanding of financially sustainable to inform long-term funding plans. Key activities include (but are not limited to):

- strengthening financial and asset management information and reporting mechanisms
- mapping revenue through to costs, outputs and outcomes
- addressing data gaps to support forward planning and better decision-making processes
- addressing ICT and infrastructure issues to improve data management and analysis.

FSIM considers that these programs of work are also fundamental to successfully delivering actions 5.7 and 5.8 in future.

## Recommendation

Ref	Recommendation
4	<p>The Minister should request CFA, DJCS and FRV to convene a financial sustainability governance body to develop and agree on a project plan that clearly maps interdependent activities and key inputs (for example, initial funding plan actions, strategic workforce plan, CFA operating model, CFA seconded workforce capability and capacity requirements) impacting immediate (year three and four) and long-term funding requirements for CFA and FRV. This mechanism should discuss strategic fire services sustainability issues at a high level (excluding confidential financial data relevant to each individual agency) to understand and resolve strategic interdependent issues and identify opportunity for efficiencies.</p> <p>This plan could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• delivery milestones and timeframes for completion of interdependent actions</li> <li>• identifying what agency is responsible for delivery</li> <li>• oversight that enables monitoring of deliverables.</li> </ul> <p>Bringing together these aspects (at a minimum) may provide an opportunity to identify opportunities for funding synergies across the fire services.</p>

9.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Fire services sustainability



# 9.1 FSIM Line of Inquiry: CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy

**Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective**

The capacity and capability needs of CFA are clearly understood by FRV and the FRB. FRV’s strategic workforce planning enables the provision of secondees that meet the operational needs and capability requirements of CFA

**Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions**

**5.1** CFA in consultation with FRV develops and maintain a secondment strategy that details CFA’s capability and capacity needs for those resources sourced from FRV.

**Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities**

**1**

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

**2**

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

**3**

Plan and build for the future

**4**

Valuing our people

**5**

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy line of inquiry reviews Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action 5.1, against the objective that “the capacity and capability needs of CFA are clearly understood by FRV and the FRB. FRV’s strategic workforce planning enables the provision of secondees that meet the operational needs and capability requirements of CFA”.

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for the action
- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.
- The capacity and capability of FRV’s seconded workforce to CFA is a fundamental aspect of reform and as such, FSIM considers that this action has interdependencies with six other actions under the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan:
  - 1.7 (CFA’s Operating Model)
  - 4.5 (CFA cultural and diversity programs)
  - 5.2 (Fire Services Sector operational capacity and capability requirements)
  - 5.4 (FRV’s Strategic Workforce Plan)
  - 5.5 (Independent financial sustainability reviews of CFA and FRV)
  - 5.6 (Initial funding plans for years three and four of the reform for CFA and FRV)
  - 5.8 (Long-term funding plans for CFA and FRV for year five and beyond).

## Progress of actions

**Action 5.1: CFA in consultation with FRV develops and maintain a secondment strategy that details CFA’s capability and capacity needs for those resources sourced from FRV.**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

The draft CFA Capability Statement detailed the immediate capability and capacity needs of CFA and established specific competencies or skillsets FRV seconded staff must have to meet CFA’s operational needs as a volunteer organisation.

CFA completed the draft CFA Capability Statement in June 2022. While outside the reporting period, FSIM notes that CFA provided it to DJCS and FRV in July 2022. At the end of the reporting period, FRV’s Executive Leadership Team (FRV ELT) was seeking endorsement from its industrial partner with the CFA Capability Statement requirements.

This action is reported as experiencing minor delays. FSIM observes that CFA has made significant progress towards achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective that “the capability and capacity needs of CFA are clearly understood by FRV and the FRB”.

The reform intends (via the secondment arrangements) that CFA should be able to access appropriately skilled secondees who meet the CFA Capability Statement requirements. Without access to appropriately skilled secondees, there is a risk that CFA’s service delivery, and ultimately community safety, could be impacted. CFA defined its immediate capability and capacity requirements and completed the draft CFA Capacity Statement in June 2022 and provided it to DJCS and FRV in July 2022. This positive step gives FRV clarity on what skills and capabilities current and potential secondees must meet to acquit its secondment obligations to CFA, and identifies future training needs to develop a pool of staff suitable for secondment or to provide relief to CFA. Providing these requirements to FRV also enables CFA and FRV to collaborate and harmonise approaches, and work towards building capability for a modern and complementary Victorian fire services.

This action objective also intends that “FRV’s strategic workforce planning enables the provision of secondees that meet the operational needs and capability requirements of CFA”. FSIM notes that FRV must consult with its industrial partner on CFA’s capability and capacity requirements as part of EBA requirements. At the end of the reporting period, FRV was consulting with its industrial partner on CFA’s capability requirements

for staff seconded to CFA. Until this consultation is complete, FRV cannot confidently incorporate CFA’s capacity and capability requirements into its strategic workforce planning (action 5.4). FSIM notes that there is also a risk that if this consultation process challenges CFA’s expectations for secondees, this will likely delay the finalisation and communication of the capability requirements to secondees.

### Opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### Clarity of requirements for staff to be seconded to CFA

The draft CFA Capability Statement specifies CFA’s initial operational capacity and capability requirements, limited to the most current and immediate needs to be provided through existing secondment arrangements with FRV. The draft CFA Capability Statement includes technical skills requirements for the seconded positions of CFA Instructors, Commanders, and ACFOs, and CFA’s behaviour standards and child safety compliance requirements (action 4.5).

The draft CFA Capability Statement is not based upon an updated CFA’s Operating Model (action 1.7), as the model is expected to be completed by June 2025. CFA acknowledged the interdependency and FSIM notes that CFA will review its seconded staff capability requirements annually to ensure capacity and capability requirements remain current and that brigades are provided with the required capabilities to deliver services that meet community needs. FSIM would expect to see evidence of these updates being shared and discussed with FRV as they occur.



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

FSIM would also expect the annual reviews would consider impacts from other strategic reviews, including the development of CFA's Operating Model (action 1.7) and broader emergency management reform programs, as relevant.

Clarity of CFA's capability requirements provides an opportunity for FRV to address any existing capability gaps of staff seconded from FRV, including working with volunteers, and bush and scrub firefighting (as outlined in the Capability and Capacity line of inquiry). Clarity on CFA capability requirements is also critical in addressing the ongoing issues of seconded Commander and ACFO vacancies which are having a significant impact on collaboration in co-located and regional centres (as indicated in the Engaged and Safe line of inquiry).

### **CFA's capability requirements have implications for FRV's workforce planning and financial sustainability**

FSIM considers it essential that FRV can forecast its changing workforce needs through to 2026, including incorporating CFA's specific workforce capability and capacity requirements for seconded staff. FRV also must be able to understand, quantify, and address the cost pressures arising from staff seconded to CFA (for example, overtime costs accrued by FRV for seconded staff), as this has an impact on FRV's financial sustainability and is a key input to longer-term funding requirements for FRV (action 5.8).

At the end of the reporting period, FRV advised FSIM that training may be required to ensure the seconded staff meet CFA's draft Capability Statement requirements, which may have a cost impact to FRV. Given the draft CFA Capability Statement was shared with FRV towards the end of the financial year and consultation was continuing, FSIM understands that FRV is not yet able to quantify any associated costs.

FSIM considers that data and costs associated with delivering on CFA Capability Statement will be a key input for the development of FRV's future funding requirements.

### **Work on CFA's capability requirements informs the development of the FRB's capability standards**

Once established, the FRB will set professional capabilities and standards including the recognition of qualifications and accredited courses of training and provide a mechanism to determine qualifications to satisfy the requirements of a position under the secondment arrangement (action 4.2).<sup>118</sup> With the establishment of FRB's capability standards, FRV employees who are recruited to a position at CFA under the secondment arrangement must meet the registration requirements specified by the FRB.<sup>119</sup> FSIM anticipates that the ongoing work to outline CFA capability requirements will inform the development of the FRB's capability standards to support secondment arrangements.

### **Challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective**

#### **Industrial consultation may impact CFA's ability to provide services**

At the end of the reporting period, FSIM was advised that FRV has started to consult with its industrial partner on the requirements outlined in the draft CFA Capability Statement. FSIM considers that there is a real risk that if industrial consultation results in proposed changes to CFA's requirements, lengthy negotiation delays will occur (such as those experienced in finalising various SLDAs and associated schedules) and FRV may not meet the operational needs and capability requirements of CFA, as intended by this action. While this risk cannot yet be quantified as the draft statement was completed at the end of the reporting period, FSIM considers that CFA collecting data on the impacts of any delay or service delivery impacts would be useful to inform future iterations of the CFA Capability Statement.

<sup>118</sup> The specific roles and functions of the FRB are outlined in sections 148 and 154 of the FRV Act.

<sup>119</sup> Secondment Agreement, section 4.6(g)

9.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Fire services sustainability

## 9.2 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Fire services sector operational capacity and capability



### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective

Ensure that current and future changes to Victoria’s fire risk profile and the expectations of our communities inform service delivery strategies and future capability needs while acting as a key input into the future funding requirements for the sector

### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

5.2 Undertake a review of operational capability and capacity requirements to meet the future needs of fire services across Victoria to inform future funding plans

#### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

1

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

2

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

3

Plan and build for the future

4

Valuing our people

5

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The Fire Services Sector Operational Capacity and Capability line of inquiry reviews Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action 5.2 which has the objective to “ensure that current and future changes to Victoria’s fire risk profile and the expectations of our communities inform service delivery strategies and future capability needs while acting as a key input into the future funding requirements for the sector”.

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- A summary of progress to date for the action
- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.

FSIM considers that this action has interdependencies with four key actions under the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan:

- 1.7 (CFA’s Operating Model)
- 5.1 (CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy)
- 5.4 (FRV’s Strategic Workforce Plan)
- 5.8 (Long-term funding plans for CFA and FRV for year five and beyond).

## Progress of action

<b>Action 5.2: Undertake a review of operational capability and capacity requirements to meet the future needs of fire services across Victoria to inform future funding plans.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	DJCS with CFA, FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2023
<b>Reported Status</b>	Not yet commenced
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	New action

FSIM notes that work on action 5.2 had not commenced as at 30 June 2022. This action is due to be completed by June 2023 and notes that the CFA draft Capability Statement will be both a useful and important input into this action.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective

FSIM considers it useful to outline the various interdependencies and contributing work required to ensure successful delivery of this action, given work on this action has not yet started. The review of future operational capability and capacity requirements informs how Victoria's fire services meet community expectations to effectively deliver services to the community and contributes to an understanding of the future funding requirements for the sector.

### Opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### Agency inputs impact ability to define future fire services operational capability and capacity needs for complementary fire service delivery

To meet this action objective, DJCS, with support from CFA and FRV, will need to demonstrate how changes to Victoria's fire risk profile and expectations from Victorian communities inform service delivery strategies and future capability needs. DJCS, with input from CFA and FRV will also need to demonstrate how the review of the fire services' operational capability and capacity is used as an input into developing future funding requirements for the sector.

FSIM considers that to effectively deliver on this action objective, CFA's Operating Model (action 1.7), CFA Capability Statement (action 5.1, provided to DJCS and FRV in July 2022) and FRV's Strategic Workforce Plan (action 5.4) are all critical inputs into a comprehensive review of the fire services' operational capability and capacity requirements.

FSIM observes there is a risk that the review of the fire services' capability and capacity requirements (due June 2023) may not reflect the full capability and capacity needs of CFA given the completion on CFA's Operating Model (action 1.7) is not due to be completed until June 2025.

It is essential that CFA and FRV define, quantify and communicate their capability and capacity requirements to DJCS. This would help identify efficiency, gaps, or duplications between CFA and FRV service provision and will also act as a key input into the future funding requirements for the sector.

#### The importance of strong governance to oversee the development and review of fire services operational capacity and capability needs

Noting work on this action has not yet started, FSIM considers that a clear project plan or methodology that specifies project inputs, timing, engagement parameters and stakeholders would be useful to assist DJCS, as the lead agency working with CFA and FRV, to deliver the objective of this action.

FSIM considers there may be an opportunity for a strategic governance body to provide oversight, leadership, and input into planning for the development of future service delivery strategies, reviewing future sector capability and capacity requirements and ensuring the foundations are in place before further progressing detailed arrangements and agreements by CFA and FRV. In addition, the governance body could provide an escalation point for issues resolution, collaboration and interoperability between the fire services and the broader emergency management sector.

9.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Fire services sustainability

## 9.3 FSIM Line of Inquiry: FRV strategy



<p><b>Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective</b></p> <p>Develop an FRV Strategy that resonates with stakeholders and the authorising environment</p>	<p><b>Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions</b></p> <p><b>5.3</b> Develop an FRV Strategy</p>
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Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

**1**

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

**2**

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

**3**

Plan and build for the future

**4**

Valuing our people

**5**

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The FRV Strategy line of inquiry reviews Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action 5.3 which has the objective to develop “an FRV Strategy that resonates with stakeholders and the authorising environment”.

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for the action
- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.

FSIM considers that this action has interdependencies with seven actions under the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan:

- 4.4 (FRV values)
- 4.5 (CFA cultural and diversity programs)
- 4.6 (FRV diversity and inclusion initiatives)
- 4.8 (Valuing volunteer and career firefighters)
- 4.9 (Demonstrate progress towards 400 women career firefighters in FRV)

- 5.1 (CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy)
- 5.4 (FRV’s Strategic Workforce Plan).

The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan requires FRV to develop an ‘FRV Strategy’ for action 5.3. This strategy is referred to in this report as the ‘FRV Strategic Plan’, in line with evidence provided by FRV. The FRV Strategic Plan is an organisation-wide, high-level strategic plan, and is separate to, but informed by FRV’s Strategic Workforce Plan (action 5.4).

## Progress of action

<b>Action 5.3: Develop an FRV Strategy.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	DJCS with CFA, FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	New action

The FRV Strategy (referred to by FRV as the 'FRV Strategic Plan') was endorsed by FRV's ELT as at 30 June 2022. At the end of the reporting period, FRV ELT were seeking endorsement from their industrial partner with the intention to implement the FRV Strategic Plan in August 2022.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective

The action 5.3 is reported as experiencing minor delays. Based on evidence provided, FSIM observes that FRV has made significant progress towards achieving the action 5.3 objective. FRV has undertaken work to develop the FRV Strategic Plan; however, at time of reporting these works were not finalised.

### Opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### **Comprehensive approach to development and deliver reform outcomes, culture, diversity, and inclusiveness**

The FRV Strategic Plan aims to develop a comprehensive strategy to establish FRV as a leading contemporary, sustainable, and strategically forward-looking fire and rescue service.

FRV commissioned an independent review to inform the development of a strategic framework, which will form the basis of the priorities and success measures in the FRV Strategic Plan.<sup>120</sup> Work to deliver the FRV Strategic Plan incorporated focus groups with community organisations, industry representatives, local government, and key service delivery partners, including CFA.

FRV identified there is an opportunity, through the FRV Strategic Plan, to:

- forge its own culture and let go of historical divides to ensure everyone feels included
- focus on effective and efficient service delivery, through continuous improvement based on evidence
- partner more effectively with the community, delivery partners and other stakeholders

- building leadership capability, recognising ideas and experience outside of fire and rescue and investing in staff development
- Increase FRV's value to the community by focusing on excellence in education, resilience, response and recovery
- seize the opportunity reform presents.

The independent review also identified that FRV's capability to capture information is limited. Therefore, there are opportunities for FRV to develop both its systems and analytical capabilities to improve its use of information to improve operational and organisational performance and decision-making.

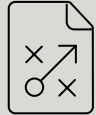
Based on evidence provided, FSIM notes that FRV engaged with a range of stakeholders, both internal and external partners and incorporated surveys, workshops, interviews and focus groups; however, as FSIM was not provided with a draft of the FRV Strategic Plan at the end of the reporting period, it is not yet clear how engagement and identified opportunities have been reflected in the draft Strategic Plan.

FSIM notes that FRV's strategic planning work included reflections from FRV's ELT and staff on workforce development. FSIM considers that this focus on workforce development provides insights into FRV's capability and capacity requirements, which is critical to FRV's success in creating and maintaining a cohesive and capable workforce that feels safe and included, and meeting secondment obligations to CFA. The FRV Strategic Plan is also an opportunity to further align and embed the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective for agencies to recognise and value the work of their people and reflect the diversity of the Victorian community under actions 4.5 and 4.6.

<sup>120</sup> FSIM FY2021—22 information request.

9.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Fire services sustainability

## 9.4 FSIM Line of Inquiry: FRV strategic workforce plan



### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective

FRV has a Strategic Workforce Plan for operations, that forecasts changing workforce requirements through to 2026

### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

**5.4** Develop a Strategic Workforce Plan for operations with a strong focus on regional and remote delivery of services

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

**1**

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

**2**

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

**3**

Plan and build for the future

**4**

Valuing our people

**5**

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The FRV Strategic Workforce Plan line of inquiry reviews Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action 5.4 which has the objective that “FRV has a Strategic Workforce Plan for operations, that forecasts changing workforce requirements through to 2026. The plan will outline the actions required to ensure FRV has the workforce capacity, capability and culture required to deliver on community expectations, including secondment obligations to CFA.”

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for the action
- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objectives.

FSIM considers that this line of inquiry has interdependencies with actions:

- 5.1 (CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy)
- 5.2 (Fire Services Sector future operational capability and capacity requirements)
- 5.5 (Independent financial sustainability review)
- 5.6 (Initial funding plans for years three and four of the reform)
- 5.8 (Long-term funding plans for year five and beyond).



## Progress of action

<b>Action 5.4: Develop a Strategic Workforce Plan for operations with a strong focus on regional and remote delivery of services.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

As at 30 June 2022, FRV had developed a draft Strategic Workforce Plan (Operations), that outlined 19 recommended initiatives that FRV consider will support the capacity and capability of FRV’s firefighting workforce. FRV advise that work to forecast workforce affordability, demand and supply over a five-year horizon had been completed, and it is progressing to complete the forecast capacity and capability gaps analysis in 2023. FRV aims to table its Strategic Workforce Plan for consideration and endorsement by FRV’s ELT and industry partner in Q1 of FY 2022-2023.<sup>121</sup>

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective

The action 5.4 is reported as experiencing minor delays. FSIM observes that FRV are progressing towards the action objective of “FRV has a Strategic Workforce Plan for operations, that forecasts changing workforce requirements through to 2026. The plan will also outline the actions required to ensure FRV has the workforce capacity, capability and culture required to deliver on community expectations, including secondment obligations to CFA”. FSIM has been provided with a high-level, draft version of FRV’s Strategic Workforce Plan (Operations), pending the completion of the relevant workforce capacity and capability analysis and gaps analysis.

### Opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### Building a foundation to understand workforce needs

FSIM notes that FRV’s draft Strategic Workforce Plan (Operations) aims to build and maintain a strong foundation for existing workforce needs; while placing FRV in a strong position to adapt to changes.<sup>122</sup> The draft FRV Strategic Workforce Plan (Operations) includes focus areas such as:

- health, safety and wellbeing
- capability planning and development
- culture, inclusion and engagement
- workforce modelling and data quality
- governance.

FSIM considers that the draft FRV Strategic Workforce Plan (Operations) provides a comprehensive starting point to support FRV’s action objective, but notes that there is significant work to do to put these high-level strategic intentions in place. FSIM notes that the implementation of other organisational-wide strategic plans such as FRV’s Diversity and Inclusion Strategy will assist FRV to achieve its aims in the draft Strategic Workforce Plan.

#### FRV’s workforce capacity and capability forecasting

FRV’s draft Strategic Workforce Plan (Operations) notes that FRV’s workforce is impacted by a number of factors – from FRV’s ageing workforce profile to Victoria’s demographics, density and built environment and requirements for interoperability and complementary fire service delivery.<sup>123</sup> It is important that FRV adopts a modern, staff-focused workforce planning approach to forecast changes to its workforce. FRV’s Strategic Workforce Plan (Operations) is a necessary tool to forecast future skills demands against projected supply.

A workforce supply and demand forecast model, supplemented by a comprehensive, cross-agency capacity and capability gap analysis, is essential to enable FRV to accurately identify its workforce requirements, and its costs, through to 2026. FSIM notes that FRV needs to strategically analyse its skills gaps and project what skills will be required, as its fire and rescue service evolves, to ensure it has the critical skills and knowledge needed to deliver on its strategic goals, reform outcomes and secondment arrangement obligations.

<sup>121</sup> Year Two to Five Implementation Plan status report as at 30 June 2022.

<sup>122</sup> Fire Rescue Victoria, July 2022, *FRV draft Strategic Workforce Plan (Operations) 2022-2027*.

<sup>123</sup> FRV anticipates that over the next five years, approximately 450 career firefighters are likely to retire. FRV identified that 23 per cent of its workforce is aged 55 and above, noting that career firefighters aged 55 and above represent 31 per cent of firefighters at metropolitan sites compared to 13 per cent of career firefighters in other locations.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

At the end of the reporting period, FRV has undertaken a data-driven capacity and capability gap analysis to identify workforce opportunities and risks. This will support FRV to determine the best strategy to address skills gaps, drive decisions to recruit, train and retain staff, and support key priorities for working with delivery partners (including secondment obligations to CFA). FSIM considers that the completed capability and capacity forecasting and gap analysis will enable FRV to identify and quantify costs and act as a key input to the development of FRV's longer-term funding requirements.

### Clarity of requirements for FRV staff to be seconded to CFA

Longer-term organisational and reform success relies on FRV accurately forecasting its changing workforce needs and meeting the capability requirements of CFA through the secondment model (action 5.1 CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy). In addition to accurate forecasting, FRV has responsibility for vacancy and relief management of seconded staff. The impacts of ongoing ACFO and Commander vacancy and relief issues continue to be discussed weekly at HoA and are outlined in the Agreements and Engaged and Safe lines of inquiry.

FRV's draft Strategic Workforce Plan (Operations) identified there are many factors that influence FRV's workforce capacity and capability needs over the next five years, particularly building a skilled and capable district command for both CFA and FRV. FSIM considers that FRV's early and proactive engagement with CFA on its needs is fundamental to integrated workforce planning and will enable FRV to provide CFA with staff who have the necessary skillsets to be seconded to CFA. An integrated approach to workforce planning is also essential to support the success of a complementary fire services model and will improve government's ability to make evidence-based decisions for the fire services sector.

An integrated approach to workforce planning would also inform FRB in its work – particularly the establishment of capability standards to support the secondment arrangements (action 4.2).

### Challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### Comprehensive forecasting and gap analysis

Workforce planning is important to secure the ongoing viability of FRV and to ensure that FRV has the capacity, capability, and culture to deliver efficient, effective, and responsive services to the Victorian community, in a continuously evolving landscape.

It is fundamental to reform success that FRV can forecast its changing workforce needs, including the specific capability and capacity requirements identified through the CFA Capability Statement (delivered under action 5.1). However, such a forecast must also consider the comprehensive changes to FRV's own capability and capacity needs brought about through the transfer of co-located and regionally based stations. FRV's review of its operational capability and capacity requirements is an opportunity to adopt a complementary approach to ensuring Victoria's fire services meet the needs of the Victorian community, particularly in co-located and regional areas (as outlined in the Capability and Capacity line of inquiry).

Undertaking a data-driven capacity and capability gaps analysis to identify workforce opportunities and risks will support FRV to determine the best strategy to address skills gaps, drive decisions to recruit, train and retain staff, support key priorities for working with delivery partners (including secondment obligations to CFA) and identify long-term funding requirements to build the capacity, capability, and resilience of FRV's workforce. FSIM understands that FRV has undertaken these reviews; however, at the time of reporting, these reviews were not finalised.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

The workforce capacity and capability gap analysis is a critical input into FRV's forecasting of full costs required under the new fire services model (actions 5.5 independent financial review, 5.6 initial funding plans and 5.8 long-term funding plans). FRV's primary cost driver is employee full-time equivalents (FTE) costs, which constitutes 82.4 per cent of the total expenses incurred in delivery of services for FY 2020–21.<sup>124</sup> At the time of reporting, FRV advised that it was unable to forecast its workforce related costs pending the completion of a gap analysis in 2023. Given that FRV's employee costs are highly influenced by the agreed EBAs, it is important that FRV quantifies employee costs and their impacts on its financial sustainability for years three and four of the reform and provides this detail to government to inform future funding decisions.

### **Implications of potential workforce related cost pressures on financial sustainability**

FRV's ability to analyse its FTE costs depends on FRV having a workforce plan that can forecast changing workforce requirements and outlines the workforce capacity and capability requirements to deliver on community expectations, including secondment obligations to CFA.

FSIM notes that while actions 5.1 and 5.4 (CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy and FRV's Strategic Workforce Plan), which are both due in June 2022, are yet to be completed, these actions could have provided valuable insights into action 5.6 (initial funding plans for CFA and FRV for years three and four of the reform). As FRV's initial funding plan for year three and four of the reform (action 5.6) was completed before the completion of FRV's Strategic Workforce Plan, there may be potential information gaps relating to FRV's workforce requirements and their costs. FSIM notes that actions 5.1 and 5.4 are key inputs into action 5.7 (conduct a financial sustainability assessment update of FRV and CFA, based on three-years operation of the new fire services model) and the development of CFA's and FRV's long-term funding plans for year five and beyond (action 5.8).

<sup>124</sup> Fire Rescue Victoria, 2021, *FRV Annual Report 2020-21*, pg. 105

9.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Fire services sustainability

## 9.5 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Independent financial sustainability assessment of CFA and FRV



### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective

CFA and FRV have an agreed understanding of financial sustainability and how this may be achieved, with an evidence-based cost and performance baseline

### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

5.5 Conduct an initial financial sustainability assessment of CFA and FRV

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

1

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

2

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

3

Plan and build for the future

4

Valuing our people

5

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The Independent Financial Sustainability Assessment of CFA and FRV line of inquiry reviews Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action 5.5 which has the objective that “CFA and FRV have an agreed understanding of financial sustainability and how this may be achieved, with an evidence-based cost and performance baseline”.

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for the action
- FSIM’s assessment of the effectiveness of agencies in delivering this action to meet the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective
- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective.

FSIM notes that the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action timeframes do not explicitly recognise interdependencies between actions. However, FSIM considers that the following actions have interdependencies with action 5.5:

- 5.1 (CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy)
- 5.4 (FRV’s Strategic Workforce Plan)
- 5.6 (Initial funding plans for years three and four of the reform)
- 5.8 (Long-term funding plans for year five and beyond).

## Progress of actions

<b>Action 5.5: Conduct an initial financial sustainability assessment of CFA and FRV.</b>	
<b>Lead Agency</b>	DJCS, with CFA and FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Dec 2021
<b>Reported Status</b>	Completed
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

In FY 2021–22, DJCS engaged an independent consultant to undertake independent financial sustainability reviews of the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV to complete this action. The independent financial sustainability review also informs DJCS’s financial sustainability program to acquit legislative requirements relating to financial sustainability and ensure the financial sustainability of both CFA and FRV. The independent financial sustainability reviews of CFA and FRV were completed in December 2021.

## Assessment of effectiveness in meeting objective

Action 5.5 was completed in FY 2021–22. In line with methodology, FSIM includes an assessment of effectiveness, based on whether the action output met the action objectives in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan.

FSIM finds that there is clear evidence that CFA, DJCS and FRV have an agreed understanding of financial sustainability. FSIM finds that due to limitations and gaps in the evidence-based cost and performance baseline the agencies do not have an agreed understanding of how financial sustainability may be achieved. FSIM concludes that CFA, DJCS, and FRV partially met the objective of “an agreed understanding of financial sustainability and how this may be achieved, with an evidence-based cost and performance baseline”.

### Evidence to support FSIM findings

#### Action completion

In December 2021, DJCS completed an initial financial sustainability assessment of CFA and FRV and provided sufficient evidence of the reviews to FSIM.

### Has action 5.5 met the objective that CFA and FRV have an agreed understanding of financial sustainability?

FSIM finds that CFA and FRV have an agreed understanding of financial sustainability. The financial sustainability reviews of CFA and FRV were conducted based upon the Fire Services Reform Steering Committee agreed definition for fire services reform financial sustainability:<sup>125</sup>

*“Financial sustainability is defined as the ability of CFA and FRV to deliver their required services in the medium and longer term, and within their regulatory, governance, funding, and operating environments. CFA and FRV should be financially sustainable to be able to meet their current and future financial obligations on an ongoing basis, noting that supplementary funding may need to be sought from government for major and unforeseen events.”*

Based upon the agreed definition, the independent financial sustainability reviews and analysis considered CFA’s and FRV’s financial sustainability across three key areas:

- Service and fiscal responsibility: representing CFA’s and FRV’s ability to maintain service delivery, debt and commitments
- Liquidity: representing CFA’s and FRV’s ability to meet financial obligations when they fall due and the ease with which assets or securities can be readily converted to cash
- Resilience: representing CFA’s and FRV’s financial capacity to withstand shocks, and ability to withstand and recover from temporary financial hardship and disruption.

### Has action 5.5 met the objective that agencies are agreed on how financial sustainability could be achieved?

FSIM finds that there are data limitations that impact agencies’ ability to quantify the full costs of each agency under the reformed fire services model. These limitations impact the ability for agencies to meet the action objective.

<sup>125</sup> The financial sustainability definition was approved by the Fire Services Reform Steering Committee on 30 April 2021. The definition of financial sustainability is contained in the Standing Directions issued under the *Financial Management Act 1994*.



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

Based on evidence provided, FSIM notes that CFA raised significant concerns with DJCS about the limitations of the independent financial sustainability assessment undertaken in the lead-up to the development of CFA's initial funding plan for years three and four of the reform. The limitations include that the financial sustainability assessment was undertaken on Year 1 data only and CFA identified some fundamental concerns with the assessment approach. These concerns were provided to DJCS in January 2022. CFA advised that it did not consider its concerns were adequately discussed and resolved and that these concerns were not addressed in the final independent financial sustainability review or addressed by the initial funding plan. As such, evidence received does not demonstrate a mutually agreed position addressing CFA's concerns, prior to their use to inform action 5.6.

### Improving governance of complex financial sustainability issues

Part of the objective of action 5.5 is for CFA and FRV to have an agreed understanding of how financial sustainability may be achieved and a strong financial sustainability governance framework will help enable government to fully deliver this objective.

FSIM considers that a governance framework focused on the financial sustainability of the fire services should include agencies and departments who have a role in delivering financially sustainable fire services, who collect and analyse data and provide evidence relating to financial sustainability and who

make decisions that will impact the fire agencies' and fire services sector's financial sustainability. Working together in this way will help agencies to define and deliver a more sustainable service. Without an effective governance body, there is no forum for more strategic discussions on the work informing decisions relating to the fire agencies' and fire services sector's financial sustainability.

FSIM received evidence of an evolving financial sustainability governance approach. In year one of reform, DJCS established an overarching governance framework that incorporated a Fire Services Reform Steering Committee, Corporate and Finance Sub-Committees and a Financial Sustainability Working Group. In FY 2021–22, DJCS updated the financial sustainability governance structures and established a Project Control Group, comprising representatives from CFA, DJCS, FRV and the Department of Treasury and Finance. This Project Control Group was responsible for considering key aspects relating to the delivery of financial sustainability commitments and assisting with delivery via the provision of advice, input, coordination and other assistance.<sup>126</sup> FSIM observes that the Project Control Group met twice in FY 2021–22 and that members agreed that direct lines of communication between each agency and the external financial analysts would be used to finalise the independent financial sustainability reviews.

FSIM notes that there were concerns raised relating to the development and finalisation of the financial sustainability reviews' findings and

initial funding plans (explored in additional detail in action 5.6), and CFA put these concerns in writing to DJCS.

Moving into Year 3 of the reform and considering the large amount of work ahead of agencies and government to inform the delivery of actions 5.7 and 5.8, DJCS could consider convening a governance body focused on the financial sustainability of the fire services to:

- track and discuss interdependent actions and activities to deliver the broader financial sustainability program of work outlined in the agencies' funding plans and the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan (noting that there are agency-specific sensitivities relating to the financial management that should not be aired in a broader governance body)
- provide a forum to inform fire services sector financial sustainability decision-making
- provide a formal escalation point for decisions that impact the financial sustainability of both CFA and FRV
- provide a point at which CFA, DJCS and FRV can raise issues arising from the reform that could impact the fire services financial sustainability, to inform the long-term funding plans for year five and beyond.

Given the issues outlined above, FSIM finds that DJCS, CFA and FRV have partially met the objective of an agreed understanding of how financial sustainability may be achieved.

<sup>126</sup> Terms of Reference, Fire Services Financial Sustainability Program – Project Control Group, EMV, October 2021.



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### Has action 5.5 met the objective of an evidence-based cost and performance baseline?

FSIM finds that there is clear evidence that the financial sustainability reviews of CFA and FRV have:

- enhanced understanding of many of CFA's and FRV's service delivery costs and cost drivers
- identified emerging costs exposures under the new fire services model, including the financial implications of EBA's provisions on FRV's workforce costs and the secondment arrangement on CFA's and FRV's cost base.

FSIM notes that emerging cost pressures could potentially pose risks to CFA's and FRV's ongoing financial sustainability. However, due to limitations of data captured, the financial sustainability reviews were unable to quantify the potential costs exposures on the financial sustainability of CFA and FRV and inform future funding requirements.

### Strengthening CFA's and FRV's financial management information and reporting mechanisms

Both CFA and FRV acknowledge the need to mature their planning and financial management abilities and capabilities, including to track costs to activity measures, outputs and outcomes, and also demonstrate good value for government investment. CFA and FRV are challenged by legacy processes and systems (finance, human resources and payroll) which rely heavily on manual processes, and are impeded by pockets of poor-quality data, and limitations in CFA's and FRV's ability to easily integrate data from disparate systems.

Improvements to data and systems will enable both CFA and FRV to use business intelligence capabilities to interpret data to quantify and assess the full costs for the new fire services model and support strategic decisions on how they can improve their service delivery approach and maintain financial sustainability. Strengthening financial management and information systems will better equip agencies to make better informed business decisions, improve forward planning, and better identify and manage risks to financial sustainability and service delivery.

### Forecasting model improvements

Both CFA and FRV recognise that they are limited by their existing forecasting models. There is an opportunity for CFA's and FRV's forecasting models to better inform and reflect expected movements in their costs base and support detailed analysis of the agencies' cost drivers and financial implications for implementing the new fire services model.

FSIM notes that CFA and FRV are currently reviewing their forecasting model and supports agencies undertaking further work to improve their forecasting capabilities to better reflect future costs base. FSIM considers that understanding the full impact of how costs will change under the new fire services model is a key input to support the planning for agencies longer-term funding requirements.

### Understanding the cost of asset replacement and renewal

Both CFA and FRV have highlighted to the government the need for significant new capital funding for asset replacement and renewal. FSIM notes CFA and FRV face additional challenges with acquiring specialist assets where supply is constrained and/or where there are long lead times for securing land and completing planning approvals.

As outlined by the independent financial sustainability reviews, CFA's Asset Management Strategy and FRV's Capital Planning, FSIM notes that the majority of CFA's and FRV's delivery assets are aged beyond useful life (specifically, stations, appliances and equipment).<sup>127</sup> CFA and FRV have informed FSIM that the aged assets could pose significant risks to CFA's and FRV's future service delivery. FSIM notes that the implications of ageing appliances and equipment relate mainly to either the cost and difficulty of maintenance as parts become unavailable or appliances become outdated in their safety features. Given data limitations, further analysis is required by CFA and FRV to quantify associated costs for asset renewal and replacement.

FSIM notes that a whole-of-life asset plan that includes CFA's and FRV's asset procurement, replacement, renewal and maintenance plans will help the agencies provide a clear picture to government on the full costs and investment required for providing services and meet community expectations. Better data on asset replacement and renewal will inform future government investment decisions and help to ensure their financial sustainability in the longer term.

<sup>127</sup> The definitions in relation to the end of life of an asset are established by the fire agencies and there is no standardised definition across government

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### Linking costs to agency outputs and outcomes

Both CFA and FRV acknowledge that work is required to mature their outcome frameworks and build capacity to track activities and costs through to outputs and outcomes.

CFA and FRV currently report their operational performance against agency-defined outcomes on a quarterly basis to FSIM. FSIM observes that CFA and FRV do not currently track or link expenditure to performance outputs and outcomes and there is little alignment between the agencies' current outcomes frameworks and cost drivers, and notes this was also outlined by the independent financial sustainability reviews. Under the current structure, funding has minimal observable impact on outcome performance that guide progress towards achieving CFA's and FRV's key priorities and demonstrate what success looks like under the new fire services model.

FSIM considers tracking of costs of outputs contributing to performance measures will create greater transparency in developing CFA's and FRV's long-term funding plans and inform future policy decisions to support long-term funding requirements. Further, this would strengthen CFA's and FRV's internal financial management capability and support greater transparency to government and the wider public for the cost of delivering the new fire services model. FSIM is aware that, post 30 June, agencies were developing programs of work to address these limitations.

Given the issues outlined above, FSIM finds that CFA, DJCS and FRV have partially met the objective of an evidence-based cost and performance baseline.

### Action 5.5 assessment conclusion

In concluding the assessment of effectiveness in completing action 5.5, FSIM finds that this action has partially met its objectives, given that CFA and FRV have an agreed understanding of financial sustainability. However, there is still work to do to define how financial sustainability can be achieved and to improve evidence-based cost and performance baselines.

9.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Fire services sustainability

## 9.6 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Initial funding plan for CFA and FRV



### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective

CFA and FRV have funding plans for years three and four that are evidence-based and based upon an independent review

### Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

- 5.6** Develop an initial funding plan (Funding Plan) that address high priority funding requirements for CFA and FRV in years three and four of the Fire Services Reform and addresses the impact of:
- 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.

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

**1**

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

**2**

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

**3**

Plan and build for the future

**4**

Valuing our people

**5**

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The Initial Funding Plans for CFA and FRV line of inquiry reviews Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action 5.6 which has the objectives that “CFA and FRV have funding plans for years three and four that are evidence-based and based upon an independent review”.

This line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for the action
- FSIM’s assessment of the effectiveness of agencies in delivering actions to meet their Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

- FSIM’s assessment of key opportunities and challenges faced by agencies in achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective
- FSIM recommendations to address key risks, improve practices and adopt a more strategic approach.

FSIM notes that the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan action timeframes do not explicitly recognise interdependencies between actions. However, FSIM considers that the following actions have interdependencies with action 5.6:

- 5.1 (CFA capacity and capability secondment strategy)
- 5.4 (FRV’s Strategic Workforce Plan)
- 5.5 (Independent financial sustainability reviews of CFA and FRV)
- 5.8 (Long-term funding plans for CFA and FRV for year five and beyond).

## Progress of actions

**Action 5.6: Develop an initial funding plan that address high priority funding requirements for CFA and FRV in years three and four of the Fire Services Reform and addresses the impact of:**

- 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.

<b>Lead Agency</b>	DJCS, with CFA and FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Dec 2021
<b>Reported Status</b>	Completed
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	Reframed action from Year One Plan

The draft initial funding plans for CFA and FRV were completed in February 2022. The final funding plans were endorsed by the Minister in July 2022, six months after the agreed completion date of December 2021.

CFA and FRV both considered that there was minimal involvement in finalising their respective funding plans. Further, agencies advised that delays in approving funding baselines have impacted their ability to plan for the two upcoming financial years.

## Assessment of effectiveness in meeting objective

Action 5.6 was completed in FY 2021–22. In line with methodology, FSIM includes an assessment of effectiveness. This assessment is based on whether the action output met the action objectives in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan.

FSIM finds that CFA and FRV have initial funding plans for years three and four of the reform that are based upon an independent financial sustainability review commissioned by DJCS. The initial funding plans were endorsed by the Minister and DJCS advised that they addressed high priority funding requirements. FSIM notes that the initial funding plans were constrained by insufficient data to conduct comprehensive cost modelling of emerging cost pressures.

### Evidence to support FSIM findings

#### Action completion

The final initial funding plans were endorsed by the Minister in July 2022 and were informed by the independent financial sustainability reviews completed under action 5.5.

### Has action 5.6 delivered on its scope to develop an initial funding plan that are evidence-based and based on an independent review?

FSIM finds that DJCS has developed initial funding plans for CFA and FRV in years three and four of the reform.

### Defining ‘high priority funding requirements’

Action 5.6 scope requires development of funding plans that address “high priority funding requirements for CFA and FRV in years three and four of the reform”. The Year Two to Five Implementation Plan and the independent financial sustainability reviews of CFA and FRV do not define what constitutes high priority funding requirements. However, DJCS advised that the agencies’ requirements to deliver their services constituted high priority funding requirements and provided the foundation for the financial sustainability reviews’ key cost drivers’ analyses and deep dives on areas impacting key primary costs and financial sustainability for CFA and FRV.

FSIM notes that evidence provided has highlighted emerging cost exposures and potential impacts on CFA’s and FRV’s respective cost base and ongoing financial sustainability. CFA and FRV are currently unable to accurately model and quantify the cost pressures due to a lack of data to support detailed analysis, issues surrounding tracking of costs to cost drivers and outputs linked to outcomes, and assumptions used for forecasting (limitations as outlined in action 5.5).

### Addressing the impact of transfers of functions, resources and assets between CFA and FRV

Reforming the fire services involved a range of transfers from CFA to FRV, which included the transfer of former CFA career firefighters and assets relating to former CFA integrated fire stations to FRV, including appliances and tools of trade.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

At the end of the reporting period, CFA and FRV were continuing discussions to finalise tenancy schedules for the remaining four co-located stations and redrafting the Deed of Agreement including indemnities for those property, rights, liabilities, and obligations relating to personnel and assets.

FSIM observes that the initial funding plans have addressed the impacts of the transfer of resources and assets between CFA and FRV, which involved analysis of the relevant assets, liabilities, costs and the associated funding to be transferred to FRV. However, the initial funding plans have not yet addressed the impact of the transfer of functions on financial sustainability of CFA and FRV. Evidence provided has indicated potential cost pressures associated with additional costs from (but not limited to):

- managing vacancies, overtimes, and work arounds to fill vacant positions under the secondment arrangement
- interim arrangements currently in place by CFA and FRV to embed legislative functions transferred under the SLDAs, for example, Land Used Planning, Structural Fire Investigations (as outlined in the Agreement line of inquiry).

FSIM recognises that the FY 2020–21 was a transitional year and that there was limited data available to quantify impacts on CFA's and FRV's financial sustainability resulting from the secondment arrangement and interim arrangements in place for transferred legislative functions.

### **Addressing the impact of the changes to the FRV fire district upon the fire services property levy revenue base and changes to the differential rates of the fire services property levy<sup>128</sup>**

On 1 July 2020 several response areas across Victoria were transitioned from CAoV to FRV response areas and the funding was also transferred.

FSIM notes that there were no changes to the FRV fire district and no changes to differential rates as at December 2021 as a result of fire services reform. Therefore, the initial funding plan does not comment on or recommend changes to the fire services property levy.

### **Understanding funding requirements for years three and four of the reform and resulting impacts on financial sustainability**

There is an opportunity for CFA and FRV to lay the foundations for robust planning of immediate and longer-term funding requirements and FSIM notes that CFA's and FRV's initial funding plans for years three and four of the reform set out clear improvement actions for agencies to position themselves more strongly for the development of their long-term funding plans for year five and beyond. Based on evidence provided, FSIM notes that CFA's and FRV's ability to assess their respective immediate and longer-term financial sustainability and delivery of actions 5.7 and 5.8 would be improved by delivering the actions outlined in their respective funding plans.

Both agencies agree that this work is important and have signalled that the size and complexity of the tasks may require additional time to complete effectively.

FSIM notes that FRV is not yet able to forecast its primary cost driver (FTE costs), noting it has minimal discretionary control over FTE costs, as they are highly driven by the relevant EBAs. Forecasting will help FRV understand the scale and the source of current and future cost pressures. Delivery of actions identified in FRV's funding plan should address this gap and provide a clearer understanding of the scale and the source of future cost pressures to understand the impact.

CFA similarly has work to do to quantify the costs associated with providing staff and volunteer capability and capacity to meet service delivery needs under their new operating model (action 1.7).

Finally, it is unclear to FSIM if additional costs arising from the secondment arrangements (for example, backfilling, provision of high duties or unplanned overtime) will be captured in FRV's workforce planning, given FRV were progressing this piece of work at time of reporting.

### **Action 5.6 assessment conclusion**

In concluding the assessment of effectiveness in completing action 5.6, FSIM finds that this action has met its overarching objective, given that CFA and FRV have funding plans for years three and four of reform that are evidence-based and based on an independent review. FSIM notes that data gaps in the evidence base, initial funding plans' actions to address these gaps and additional Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions currently underway all have implications for agency cost base and will inform future work on actions 5.7 and 5.8 (which are yet to commence).

<sup>128</sup> The *Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012* stipulates that the levy may be applied to generate an amount of funding up to 87.5 per cent of FRV's funding and 77.5 per cent of CFA's funding (referred to as the statutory contribution). Under the *Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012*, the Treasurer may determine different levy rates based on the location of the leviable land and the use classification of the leviable land. From 1 July 2020, the levy rates are standardised across Victoria.

# 10.0

## FSIM Key Focus Area: Governance



FSIM Lines of inquiry

Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

Governance



3.7 Agencies mature existing joint governance arrangements

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

1

Strengthen CFA  
as a volunteer  
firefighting agency

2

Strengthen  
FRV as a career  
firefighting agency

3

Plan and build  
for the future

4

Valuing  
our people

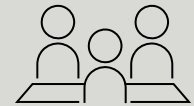
5

Ensure the future  
sustainability of the  
fire services



10.0 FSIM Key Focus Area: Governance

# 10.0 FSIM Line of Inquiry: Governance



## Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Overarching objective

An effective and productive working relationship across the fire services and other emergency service agencies, building on the principle of interoperability

## Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Actions

**3.7** Agencies mature existing joint governance arrangements that support the implementation of the program and ongoing development of interoperability procedures and arrangements.

### Relevant Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Priorities

1

Strengthen CFA as a volunteer firefighting agency

2

Strengthen FRV as a career firefighting agency

3

Plan and build for the future

4

Valuing our people

5

Ensure the future sustainability of the fire services

## Context

The Governance key focus area outlines progress and challenges for agencies towards achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of an “effective and productive working relationship across the fire services and other emergency service agencies, building on the principle of interoperability.” The key focus area is supported by one line of inquiry:

- Governance: (action 3.7) and broader reform governance noting FSIM’s requirements under section 131 (1) (b) of the FRV Act to monitor and assess ongoing efforts to improve the interaction between FRV and CFA and other agencies.

### Key finding

CFA and FRV has made progress towards the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of an “effective and productive working relationship across the fire services and other emergency service agencies, building on the principle of interoperability.” However, as outlined in the Complementary Fire Services key focus area, FSIM observes a lack of an empowered, overarching governance body to resolve fundamental barriers to completing actions.

The Governance line of inquiry includes the following sections:

- a summary of progress to date for action 3.7
- FSIM’s assessment of the effectiveness of agencies in delivering actions to meet their Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective, including key opportunities and challenges impacting effectiveness.

## Progress of actions

**Action 3.7: Agencies mature existing joint governance arrangements that support the implementation of the program and ongoing development of interoperability procedures and arrangements.**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	CFA, FRV
<b>Due date</b>	Jun 2022
<b>Reported Status</b>	Minor delays
<b>Relationship to Year One Plan</b>	New action

DJCS has revised the governance framework so that agencies report quarterly to the Minister, via DJCS, on progress against the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan through a reporting process coordinated by DJCS.

CFA and FRV developed a governance framework to oversee, and support, the implementation of key reform activities. The framework comprises HoA, FSOC and six sub-committees across core areas of service delivery.

## Assessment of effectiveness in meeting objective

This action is reported as experiencing minor delays. FSIM observes that CFA and FRV are progressing towards the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective of an “effective and productive working relationship across the fire services and other emergency service agencies, building on the principle of interoperability”. The joint governance arrangements, led by CFA and FRV, address several operational issues to support service delivery. However, the absence of an overarching governance body that is empowered to make decisions and drive outcomes on complex and entrenched problems impedes effective and timely reform implementation.

### Opportunities for achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### Governance structures address many operational issues

CFA and FRV developed a governance framework to oversee, and support, implementation of key reform activities. CFA and FRV executives meet weekly at HoA to ensure senior agency engagement, complementary fire and rescue service provision, and provide a formal escalation point and decision-making body for key reform matters.<sup>129</sup> Chaired by CFA, the executive at both CFA and FRV demonstrated constructive participation in HoA and ongoing, high risk operational issues are tabled for monitoring and/or action, with both CFA and FRV using the meetings to provide frank and forthright discussions on specific operational issues. HoA has provided an escalation point to address obstacles of some reform matters, including identifying and agreeing on

a pragmatic and targeted approach to determining which corporate services may need a formal agreement<sup>130</sup> and endorsing a pathway to progress CFA’s Allocation Statement 4A.

FSOC, established in FY 2020–21, meets monthly and reports directly to HoA. FSOC aims to identify and promote opportunities for collaboration and joint interoperability to provide complementary fire service delivery to the community.<sup>131</sup> FSOC is responsible for preparing an annual work plan that supports a collaborative approach to progress key Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions. Key focus areas in the plan include the development of:

- IPs
- roadmaps for a Protective Equipment department and BA operating model
- statewide capability for marine response, technical rescue and hazardous materials (HAZMAT) response
- an understanding of co-response model and GARS (state-wide)
- capability through a commander induction program and ensuring joint exercising is in line with expectations set by the FRV Commissioner and CFA’s CO.

Successful and timely delivery of FSOC’s work plan is fundamental to the success of reform. Given the importance of the issues to be addressed by FSOC, six joint CFA and FRV sub-committees were established to oversee core areas comprising: operational communications; community safety; training; infrastructure and protective equipment; specialist response; and doctrine.

<sup>129</sup> CFA/FRV HoA Steering Committee Terms of Reference.

<sup>130</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 engagement.

<sup>131</sup> Fire Services Joint Operations Committee Terms of Reference Statement 2021.

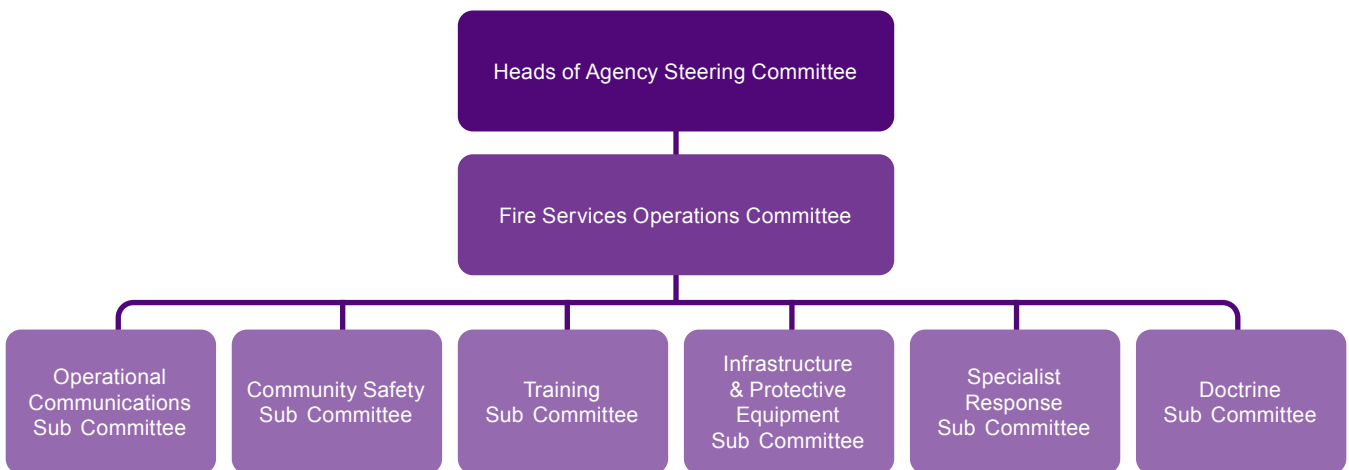
## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

Figure 8 outlines the joint governance structure established by CFA and FRV.

In FY 2021–22, the Minister introduced new requirements for CFA and FRV to report quarterly on progress against the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan. The process provides a level of transparency and regular status updates to the Minister on action progress.

The requirement for CFA and FRV to publish their respective outcomes frameworks also provides a level of transparency and accountability for organisational performance. FSIM acknowledges that the process to establish effective measures to demonstrate linkages between

action and output and outcome is complex and will take time. CFA and FRV continue to refine their respective outcomes frameworks to better identify and explain the link between action and outcome.



### Challenges to achieving the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan objective

#### Absence of a governance body to address strategic reform implementation issues

Prior to commencement of the new fire services model, a governance framework was established comprising the Fire Services Reform Taskforce, the Fire Services Reform Steering Committee, and Fire Services Reform Corporate Sub-Committee and Finance Sub-Committees. An Operational Assurance Group was also established to provide assurance prior to commencement

of fire services reform and assurance prior to the commencement of the 2020–21 summer season that all of the necessary capability and capacity was in place to support state, regional and incident operational arrangements (refer to Figure 9). In FY 2021–22, DJCS, in consultation with government CFA and FRV replaced this governance framework with a process to report against relevant implementation plan(s) (refer to Figure 10).

Other than quarterly Year Two to Five Implementation Plan reporting to the Minister, there is no other formal mechanism for the fire services to address strategic reform implementation issues, discuss

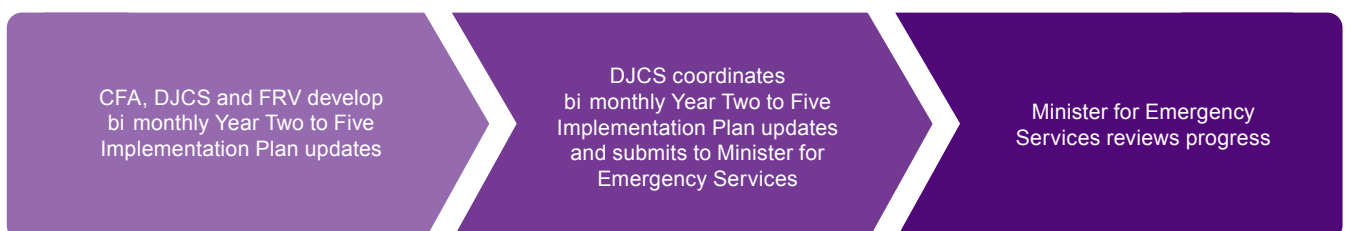
interdependencies or address major challenges to delivery of Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions. As an example, FRV is investigating options to implement an accreditation system that may have significant implications for CFA’s workplaces; a strategic governance body is an ideal forum to ensure CFA is suitably involved in the delivery against this action. While quarterly reporting provides a level of transparency in reporting against milestones, there is no formal mechanism to address potential failure to deliver or proactively address outputs that are not meeting government’s reform objectives.

## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

Figure 9: Year One Governance Framework



Figure 10: Year Two to Five Implementation Plan Reporting Process



## Assessment of opportunities and challenges in meeting objective (continued)

### Lack of escalation point for complex issues

Without an overarching governance body, there is no formal escalation point for HoA where the agencies are unable to reach a consensus or to formally raise key risks arising from reform that require engagement with additional stakeholders. For example, CFA has twice raised the issue of vacancy and non-relief through the annual agency risk attestation process to DJCS as CFA felt it was not getting the required traction within HoA; an overarching body would provide a more regular forum for risk identification and management related to reform. The absence of an overarching strategic governance body is a missed opportunity to drive effective collaboration and communication between CFA, DJCS and FRV.

### Governance is focused on retrospective review, rather than proactive intervention on risks

The current governance framework relies on agencies providing quarterly, retrospective updates on the progress of agencies towards Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions. There is no mechanism for proactive intervention where an action is delayed or there are significant challenges to implementation. In some instances, the scope of a joint action is unclear with regard to exactly what is required to acquit the action. For example, action 3.9 requires CFA and FRV to “finalise harmonisation of procedures, including service level procedures between CFA and FRV and any related party to ensure the agreements support effective operations”. There is no defined scope on what constitutes the

full suite of procedures to be reviewed and when a procedure is considered finalised. While the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan reporting process provides an opportunity for agencies to identify and communicate risk, there is no dedicated forum for agencies to address and manage those risks highlighted through reporting.

### HoA decision-making processes are impacted by third parties

HoA decision-making processes are at times impacted by third parties and interdependencies through mandatory enterprise bargaining requirements. Where the agencies have an agree in-principle position on matters, the responsibility for consultation under the FRV Operational Employees EBA to ‘consult and agree’ rests with FRV. This puts FRV in a position to negotiate on CFA’s behalf and communicate the outcomes of this negotiation back to CFA. Positions agreed at HoA can be challenged, held-up or overturned following the industrial consultation process, as industrial consultation happens after agency executives come to an agreed position. The risks highlighted in FSIM’s FY 2020-21 Annual Report<sup>132</sup> have been realised, with examples of approval loops, significant delays, duplicative efforts and mistrust between the agencies at times.

### Significant delays to progress of operational workplan deliverables

At the end of the reporting period, FSOC continued to face ongoing challenges to finalising key components of their work plan, which could impact the ability of agencies to effectively deliver the objectives of action 3.7. Although significant

resourcing issues were mostly addressed through the establishment of the six sub-committees, the FY 2021–22 workplan is not complete. Of the 15 outcomes outlined in the FY 2021–22 FSOC workplan (as at February 2022), one is complete, two are in progress and on track, seven have commenced, but face delays, and five have not started or have major delays.<sup>133</sup> The ‘consult and agree’ provisions of the FRV Operational Employees EBA also apply to FSOC’s decision-making process and impact the ability of FSOC to progress some matters. At the end of the reporting period, HoA identified that FSOC was not effectively delivering what was envisioned and is considering how best to address this issue.

### Impact on reform implementation

Fire services reviews undertaken prior to the current reforms noted that outdated governance structures were resulting in poor decision-making processes, lack of direction and confusion regarding overall responsibilities.<sup>134</sup> FSIM notes that previous recommendations made to modernise legislation for the fire services, reinstate the role of the CO as organisational leader and implement processes to review fire district boundaries have been completed and have made a significant difference in how the agencies operate and deliver services.

However, the existing governance arrangements do not provide the pathways for the fire services to drive strategic reform outcomes and ensure the right foundations are in place before further progressing detailed arrangements and agreements.

<sup>132</sup> Fire Services Implementation Monitor, 2021, *Fire Services Implementation Monitor Annual Report 2020-21: Setting the foundations*, Victorian Government <<https://www.vic.gov.au/fire-services-implementation-monitor-annual-report-2020-21>>.

<sup>133</sup> FSIM FY 2021–22 information request.

<sup>134</sup> Victorian Government, 2017, *Fire Services Statement*, pg 7.

# 11.0

**Concluding remarks**

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## 11.0 Concluding remarks

FSIM provides the Victorian Government and community with an independent assessment of reform implementation progress. By assessing and reporting on the progress, effectiveness and efficiency of reform activity, FSIM provides transparency and assurance to the public that government and fire services agencies are held accountable for the ongoing implementation of Victoria's fire services reforms.

In this second year of reform, it is evident that CFA and FRV have undertaken a significant program of work aimed at finalising and embedding reform changes. FSIM has observed considerable progress of agencies working to modernise Victoria's fire services through applying internationally recognised standards, working to improve health and safety, strategically reviewing service delivery approaches, and strengthening operational governance arrangements. The agencies continue to refine processes and have progressed some key agreements to outline service provision requirements.

CFA is implementing a range of activities, plans and programs to promote cultural inclusiveness and diversity and continues to deliver projects through its Volunteer Support Program. In addition, CFA undertook a comprehensive independent review of its culture and issues management to guide cultural direction in the context of a 10-year fire service reform agenda and has committed to implementing all recommendations made by this review. FRV has undertaken several activities to promote diversity and inclusion and has also developed inaugural organisational values via consultation with approximately 2,700 employees, including with approximately 40 per cent of its staff cohort who are secondees to CFA.

Agencies have progressed work on key activities to support sustainable fire services. Two actions in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan's Priority Five were completed this reporting period. Completion of an independent financial review, CFA defining its immediate capability requirements, and FRV undertaking strategic workforce planning have enhanced agencies' understanding of their service delivery drivers and costs. While there is still work to do to fill data gaps and improve data quality, these foundational activities have enabled government to develop initial funding plans for CFA and FRV for years three and four of the reform.

Both CFA and FRV have established governance structures to address operational issues and through FSOC, are making some progress on their defined work plan.

These are all significant achievements in a two-year period, and FSIM acknowledges CFA, DJCS and FRV in their continued commitment and dedication to implementing reform changes.

At the completion of year two, progress was delayed for many actions and reform is behind the schedule outlined in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan. In undertaking the year two assessment, FSIM identified three systemic issues that constrain the successful delivery of key actions within the complementary fire services key focus area in meeting their objectives. They are:

1. No agreed, shared definition of complementary fire services that is supported by documented and consistent principles
2. Ineffective collaboration between CFA and FRV at times
3. Absence of an overarching, empowered, strategic governance body with the authority and resources to address key challenges to reform progress

These systemic issues must also be considered in the context of significant structural elements of the reform (including implementation of the secondment model and industrial consultation requirements) which have fundamentally impacted how agencies each operate as organisations and within the reformed fire services model. However, an agreed position on what a complementary fire service model is fundamental to the success of numerous aspects of operational service delivery. Agreeing on 'why' a specific agency is responsible for aspects of Victoria's fire services will provide clarity and consistency as to how operational arrangements are finalised and can be used as a guide to finalise principles underpinning service delivery arrangements. Once this is settled, a governance body can use this agreed position to drive strategic discussions and make decisions based on a mutually agreed starting point. Without this, FSIM considers there to be a real risk that foundational agreements will remain outstanding at the end of the third year of reform and that other key pieces of work, including service delivery approaches, will be impeded where they are not guided by a clear and agreed definition of complementary fire services.

Both agencies have made great strides in year two to deliver work that demonstrates how values are reflected in service delivery. FRV settling its inaugural values and CFA's transparent commitment to addressing cultural issues are evidence of the importance the agencies have placed on organisational culture. However, due to the secondment model arrangements and co-location arrangements, the distinct cultures of the two organisations can bring challenges, particularly for those seconded staff operating within both agencies' cultures. FSIM notes actions are underway to address these challenges, such as establishing FRV's Secondment Management Team and looks forward to seeing the positive impact these arrangements will have for those staff working between both agencies.

## 11.0 Concluding remarks

Work to support the sustainability of the fire services will be heavily reliant on the successful delivery of a number of interdependent actions in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan's Priority Five. These large and complex pieces of work will require clear, integrated project and program mapping to understand influences of one action on another and comprehensive and quality data to ensure successful delivery. Foundational activities have enabled government to develop initial funding plans for CFA and FRV for years three and four of the reform, but there is still much to do to comprehensively define FRV's workforce costs, CFA's workforce and volunteer capacity and capability costs, and to calculate the cost of the full range of fire agencies' service delivery demands.

As agencies move into the third year of reform implementation, ensuring clarity on how agencies are measuring their progress and effectiveness towards Year Two to Five Implementation Plan actions is fundamental. Defining these metrics will be a critical step for FSIM to assess the significant number of actions due in year three.

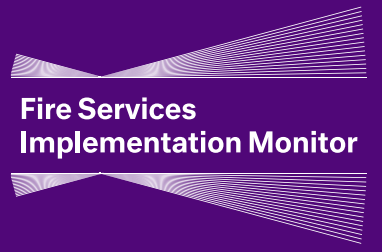
Therefore, FSIM makes recommendations aimed at helping to address key challenges faced by agencies in implementing reform. FSIM considers that implementing these recommendations provides a pathway to escalate issues, agree and commit to principles, improve mapping of inter-related actions and associated data, and provide clarity to government and the community on the achievements and progress of reform.

It is also important to consider that this report is a snapshot of agency progress as at 30 June 2022. Agencies will have certainly made significant progress on many actions

in the Year Two to Five Implementation Plan following the end of the reporting period. FSIM looks forward to seeing the impact that agencies' progress has had towards the vision of a modern, integrated and sustainable system that keeps Victorians safe.

FSIM acknowledges CFA, FRV and DJCS, and other emergency service entities for their ongoing cooperation and active contribution to the monitoring and reporting activities in this second year. In this second year of engagement, FSIM met with many CFA volunteers and FRV firefighters across Victoria, in addition to convening numerous discussions with corporate staff throughout the year. These discussions would not have been possible without the support, cooperation and coordination of both CFA and FRV. Moreover, FSIM extends its appreciation to the CFA volunteers and staff from both agencies who took time away from busy schedules to speak with FSIM and share their experiences and insights of reform. Finally, FSIM acknowledges the volunteer and career firefighters across Victoria who continue to provide high quality fire services to the community and work tirelessly to keep Victorians safe.





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