

Inclusion and success go hand in hand

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) is a volunteer and community-based fire and emergency services organisation. CFA helps protect 3.4 million Victorians, and 1.4 million homes and properties across the state. With over 54,000 volunteers, the organisation seeks opportunities to highlight to the greater community the commitment and hard work that goes on behind the scenes to meet their mission: To protect lives and property.

There are many excellent initiatives and programs aimed at enhancing our people's capability, safety and engagement. These happen every day at CFA, but some initiatives stand out and deserve special recognition.

The Culture of Fire – A Koorie Inclusion Project was one such initiative. The aim of the project was to give CFA volunteers and staff an opportunity to learn about traditional burning practices, biodiversity, protection of sacred sites, Indigenous culture and ancient ways to care for country.

A team of 25 CFA volunteers were joined by three CFA project staff and two Traditional Owners for a trip to the Gulf of Carpentaria in July of last year, funded from a successful Enhancing Volunteerism Grant from the Victorian Government.

They attended the Jigija Indigenous Fire Training Program lead by the Gangalidda people and the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation. The immersion experience allowed participants to learn about Indigenous fire management techniques that have been used for hundreds of thousands of years.

Since the trip, the individual team members have taken the lessons they learned back to their local communities and developed partnerships with their local Traditional Owners to implement a wide range of initiatives.

This program will have positive impacts for years to come, not just amongst those who attended the training, but more broadly in the community as linkages made between Traditional Owners, CFA and community members expands.

Winning the Volunteering Victoria State Award for Innovation has sparked interest for more collaborative projects and initiatives with our Indigenous communities right around the state of Victoria.

With a shared culture of fire, CFA and Indigenous communities can work together to care for the environment and mitigate the risks of living in one the world's most fire prone areas.

Congratulations Country Fire Authority (CFA) on their well-deserved Innovation Award at the 2019 Volunteering Victoria State Awards.

