

# Country Fire Authority establishes an evidence base to guide future leadership development

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The Country Fire Authority (Victoria) evidence-based foundation and framework for leadership targets leadership development needs and opportunities for personnel engaged in incident management and those engaged in business-as-usual activities.

The term 'capabilities' has been adopted from other leadership capability frameworks, such as the AFAC Emergency Management Professionalisation Scheme (EMPS) and the Red Cross Leadership Capability Framework. In these frameworks capabilities are an indication from an organisation to its workforce of the expected areas and levels of performance. Capabilities describe 'how' people work as opposed to 'what' they need to do. Capabilities refer to people capabilities and are distinguished from system, procedural or organisational capabilities.

The CFA recognises that previous ways of gaining experience are not likely to be sustainable into the future. The typical way that existing senior personnel developed their expertise is no longer an option for newcomers for two reasons. First, the cohort of existing incident managers is ageing. Less experienced personnel will not have the luxury of building their capability through experience over decades. Personnel are likely to be thrust into leadership positions sooner than their more experienced counterparts due to the anticipated attrition as the existing leadership cohort reach retirement age. Second, incidents are likely to be faced that are more complex than in the past. This is because incidents can escalate faster, require more diverse stakeholder inputs and have longer-term consequence management considerations.

Personnel and agencies are under increasing scrutiny, requiring all components of emergency management and agency business to articulate the evidence base for existing practice. In addition, government budget cuts require all personnel to do more with less. An incident management leadership development learning system needs to be agile and also efficient.

The CFA takes the idea of leadership outlined by the Australian Public Service Commission:

- Leadership is a practice; something a person *does*. It isn't about seniority or particular personality traits. Therefore anyone, at any level, can exercise leadership.
- *Mobilising* people to thrive; motivating, organising or inspiring others to do something useful or beneficial for the collective good. It isn't about getting people to do what you want.
- Making progress on challenges involves change; changing existing ways of doing things, existing behaviours and assumptions and determining what should remain the same.
- Leadership is something a person chooses to do sometimes when faced with challenges; particularly when a shift is required in behaviours, beliefs or values.

The work of the CFA takes an important step forward and will be of interest to other agencies and jurisdictions.

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