



Sparkling a Debate

After more than 30 years in Victoria Police, former deputy commissioner Lucinda Nolan has just been appointed CEO of a very different organisation—the Country Fire Authority.

Images by Craig Sillitoe and Keith Pakenham

Lucinda Nolan had been in the role of Chief Executive Officer of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) for four days when *The CEO Magazine* spoke with her.

Victoria is one of the most bushfire-prone areas in the world, so there will be no easing into the top job. As Lucinda steps into her new office at the emergency services organisation, the state has already entered this year's fire season, but after holding the second-highest role in Victoria Police since 2012, Lucinda is looking forward to leading one of the largest volunteer-based emergency services organisations in the world.

"I will be hitting the ground running, and I want to provide as much value as possible, especially to the front line," Lucinda says. "The organisation is focused on making sure Victorians are prepared and protected this summer."

With a significant history, CFA is an organisation that's respected and well regarded not just within the Victorian community but across Australia. With a workforce of mostly volunteers, it is tasked with preparing, informing, and protecting the community from a range of incidents.

There are more than 1,200 brigades operating across five

regions, each with its own needs, challenges, and opportunities. The landscapes and the dangers each community faces differ greatly.

CFA's mission to protect lives and property is what brings its more than 57,000 members together—and Lucinda is now responsible for the strategic leadership and direction of CFA, ensuring it remains a world leader in fire services.

"My first priority is to get out and speak to as many members as possible so I fully understand the issues, challenges, and risks faced by CFA and its people," Lucinda says. "I will be on the ground, meeting with people and listening. The aim of my first few months is to build relationships, consult with people, and make sure I really understand the people I am working with, and their positions."

"Listening will allow me to better understand what the priorities are for the CEO, and what are the most significant issues and barriers impacting our front line to make sure they have everything they need to keep themselves and the community safe."

"You can't make decisions without being informed. I need to get to know this new organisation and understand how it operates so I can understand our people. It's also about sharing

a little bit about myself so the organisation knows who I am, what I stand for. I would like them to get to know me as a person as well as their CEO."

For Lucinda, emergency services may now be in her blood, but it wasn't what she set out to do after graduating high school. "I was training to be a clinical psychologist," she says. "I had studied for four years at Melbourne University and decided to take a break from the course to get some life experience. I was looking at emergency services or defence, and chose emergency services."

"Emergency services gets in your blood. Once you are in, it's hard to extricate yourself. Policing provides you an opportunity to give back to the community, and Victoria Police also provided me so many opportunities to learn new skills and progress in my career."

Lucinda joined Victoria Police in 1983, and her CV is broad and diverse, encompassing front-line policing, criminal investigations and taskforce work, internal investigations, strategy and planning, education, intelligence management, and media and corporate communications.

She also has extensive experience in major event management, large-scale criminal investigations, >

"Policing provides you an opportunity to give back to the community, and Victoria Police also provided me so many opportunities to learn new skills and progress in my career."

- Lucinda Nolan



As featured in
The CEO Magazine
For more info visit
theceomagazine.com



and counter terrorism. Her record in providing leadership in such a large and complex organisation assisted her in securing sought-after roles such as superintendent, assistant commissioner, and most recently to the second-highest position in the force—the deputy commissioner.

“My role as deputy commissioner involved regional operations, and I was responsible for the four regions, State Emergencies and Security Command, Transit and Public Safety Command, and the new Family Violence Command,” Lucinda says.

“Before this, I was the deputy commissioner, strategy, where I oversaw professional standards, operational improvement, media and corporate communications, people development, corporate strategy and the Service Delivery Reform Group.

“My focus was on developing and implementing reforms to ensure that Victoria Police was efficient, effective, and flexible when it came to tackling changing emerging issues and risks.”

Lucinda’s key achievements in the police force included the recruitment and deployment of 1,700 additional police officers and 940 protective services officers.

She also improved planning, risk management, and governance, enhanced leadership and management development programs for sworn and unsworn staff, reduced administrative burden on the front line, and launched key strategies such as the enhanced family violence model.

“In emergency services, you are dealing with one of the most dangerous areas in public service. You need to be strong, resilient, and flexible.”

- Lucinda Nolan

A recipient of the Australia Police Medal for distinguished service to policing, Lucinda has recently completed the Advanced Management Program at Harvard University and has been awarded a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) and Master of Arts (both from University of Melbourne), as well as a graduate diploma in public sector management.

“My management style is dependent on the situation, on the environment, and it’s dependent on the people I’m dealing with,” Lucinda says. “I think I’m very flexible and very agile, and hopefully have enough common sense to work out the best approach that’s needed.

“In emergency services, you are dealing with one of the most dangerous areas in public service. You need to be strong, resilient, and flexible, and ensure you are highly skilled and professional in terms of your capability and technical skills.

“A good leader is someone who spends the time getting to know people, who listens, who takes into account different perspectives, and who is willing to change their mind when their original opinion wasn’t quite right.

“My leadership style is about being upfront. It’s about being open and transparent with both external and internal stakeholders. That won’t change.”

Her new role doesn’t come without a number of challenges. After the tragedy of the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria in 2009, a royal commission was established to investigate how emergency organisations could have responded better. This led to a number of lessons for CFA.

“This was one of the most tragic moments in our state’s history, and there were many lessons learned through the royal commission,” Lucinda says. “When I look at the changes post Black Saturday for all emergency services, we are all rapidly changing and morphing

into a new model and a new service-delivery approach that we need to work from.

“Interoperability between emergency service organisations is the key to ensure we are doing everything possible to keep Victorians safe. CFA is an organisation that plays a critical role in providing warnings, advice, and information to people rather than just responding to the emergency itself. We need to make sure we are working effectively and efficiently with other agencies; we need to work as one.”

The close working relationships within the emergency services sector means Lucinda has come to CFA with an understanding and appreciation of the work they do. “During my 32 years of service with Victoria Police, I have had the opportunity to work closely with CFA firefighters and staff on numerous occasions, including during emergencies.

“During my time as deputy commissioner, regional operations, I was responsible for—among other things—state emergencies and security command, and therefore had the opportunity to meet many CFA members.”

What makes CFA unique is that it is a volunteer-based organisation, focused on protecting 3.3 million Victorians and more than one million homes and properties. The volunteers are supported by more than 870 career firefighters, as well as more than 2,200 support staff working in areas such as community education, training, media, communications, health and safety, finance, human resources, and emergency management.

“My focus has always been on strong and unequivocal support to the front line. This will not change or waver now,” Lucinda says. “The complexity that CFA has that policing doesn’t is around the staffing mix and the fact it’s so heavily reliant on volunteers to give up their time, to risk their own safety to keep the community safe. That is a complex thing to lead and manage.

“It’s a real privilege to be able to serve our volunteers. They are people who are giving up their time with their family and friends to help protect the community—it is a very exciting and rewarding challenge that I am stepping into.

“The integrated model where career firefighters support the volunteer firefighters in outer urban and large country stations is a fine model which ensures there is a surge capacity of trained and available firefighters for those occasions when large-scale emergencies occur.

“As an organisation, we need to attract as many volunteers as possible to ensure we are in the right position to protect Victorians.”

Understanding the environment an organisation works in is important for any leader, and Lucinda’s connection to regional Victoria is already significant.

In a previous leadership role, Lucinda was the assistant commissioner of Western Region, comprising 52 per cent of the geographical mass of Victoria, six divisions and 14 police service areas, 30 local government areas, as well as major regional centres such as Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, and Mildura.

“My previous focus has been about the front line and ensuring that the front line is supported by the centre. It’s about setting up those communications so the front line has a very clear and strong voice to outline what’s required, what’s needed, and the leadership they need,” Lucinda says.

“I see many similarities between the two organisations, CFA and Victoria Police, in particular, the environment context in which we work.

“In the emergency services sector, the external environment can

change rapidly. However, it is not so much about what the emergency management sector can do for and to the community, but rather how the sector can work with communities to share the responsibility for their safety.

“We have seen a significant change in natural disasters and emergencies during the past five years. We are also facing a new threat of terrorism where CFA might have to play a major part, as Victoria Police has, so the significance of that threat is something we will have to grapple with over the next 12 months.

“CFA needs to be agile, responsive, and flexible. We need to be focused on working with communities to enhance their resilience to disasters and emergencies and be delivering the best possible public value. That is my goal; that is what will drive me.” •



General Aeronautical Agricultural Marine, better known as GAAM, began trading in 1933 and quickly became known as a specialist in design and manufacture of pumps for urban and rural fire suppression. Over the years the company has become an Australian leader in fire fighting pumps and trusted name to most Australian fire fighters - many GAAM employees are also volunteer fire fighters.

Designed to meet the requirements of the fire fighting industry, our extensive product range includes fire fighting pumps, emergency rescue and safety equipment, protective equipment, nozzles, foam systems, lights and sirens.

Phone: 03 9464 8400 | gaam@tycoint.com | www.gaam.com.au



A Tyco Business

