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MEDIA RELEASE

CFA volunteers make a world of difference to Victoria

This week (20-26 May) marks National Volunteer Week and is a chance to recognise the 55,000 CFA volunteers who, in a range of roles and activities, make a world of difference to the safety and resilience of their own communities and all of Victoria.

People who voluntarily put their own safety on the line for others deserve our respect, thanks and support, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) CEO Adam Barnett said.

“Like anyone involved in emergency services, CFA volunteers are a special breed,” Mr Barnett said. “They willingly make sacrifices to defend their communities in times of need, steadfastly standing with courage and honour protecting Victorians during emergencies. From our annual volunteer welfare and efficiency survey we know that more than 94% of CFA volunteers say that protecting their local community and supporting their community in a meaningful way are in fact the key motivations for joining CFA in the first place.”

Volunteer firefighters enjoy the physical and mental challenges of their roles, and they gain benefits in their own lives as well as making a genuine difference to the wider community, he added.

“Being a CFA volunteer provides invaluable skills that carry over into all aspects of their lives. CFA volunteers develop a strong sense of responsibility, teamwork and the ability to think and make decisions under pressure. These are great qualities for employers and in many other aspects of community and life.”

Mr Barnett encouraged people to consider becoming a CFA volunteer. “There are many different roles that people can perform as a CFA volunteer, from firefighter, community education, prevention and recovery to communications, logistics, and support.”

Research shows that volunteering not only enhances an individual’s sense of satisfaction and wellbeing, but volunteering builds significant public value and social capital. “Within the emergency management sector, the value of partnering with our communities and sharing responsibility through a collective sense of pride and purpose delivers enormous community benefits to the public such as an increased sense of safety, self-reliance and community confidence. All vital ingredients for strong, safe and resilient communities” he added.

In Victoria, CFA volunteers deliver a highly professional emergency service that is admired and envied around the world, with CFA volunteers making up 95% of Victoria’s firefighting forces.

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They are highly trained and respond to urban, rural, residential, industrial and bush fires, motor vehicle accidents, hazardous materials incidents, rescues, and floods and storms.

Victoria is one of the most fire prone areas in the world, and as Victoria faces longer fire danger periods, with more and larger fires than ever before, there are even more reasons to support and value CFA volunteers. They are the critical component of CFA's surge capacity (the ability to mobilise huge numbers of highly trained people and resources to multiple, major and long-duration fires while still maintaining capacity at home to deal with any local incidents).



Learn more about CFA's world-respected surge capacity on the VFBV website: <http://www.vfbv.com.au>

"Every time we save lives or property or help people in need, we know we are making a world of difference to those people. I am incredibly proud of our volunteers." Mr Barnett said.

"I am asking the Victorian community to join me in thanking CFA volunteers for the wonderful work that they do."

"I also want to recognise and pay tribute to our fellow emergency management volunteers including those in the SES, Coast Guard, Marine and Rescue Services, Life Saving Victoria, St John Ambulance, Ambulance Victoria, the Victorian Council of Churches Emergency Ministry, Red Cross and the Salvation Army. They join almost 6 million volunteers across Australia who provide invaluable support and services to our communities."

"It may be volunteer week, but we also need to thank and recognise the families, friends and the employers of CFA volunteers. Their support and cooperation make a world of difference to our firefighters and what they do for our communities."

About VFBV:

VFBV is established under the Country Fire Authority Act and is the peak body for CFA Volunteers in Victoria. VFBV works tirelessly to represent, advocate and support CFA volunteers to the CFA Board and management, governments, ministers, members of parliament, councils, instrumentalities, business and the public. Our vision is for ***Strong Volunteerism, Embraced to Build Community Resilience for a Safer Victoria.***

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