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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **PAKENHAM TEAM STICKS TOGETHER FOR FIRE BRIGADE CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Pakenham junior fire brigade members training for upcoming state championships are doing more than just honing their running skills.

The team members are laying the groundwork for future involvement as volunteer firefighters.

Head coach Tara Wigfield says teamwork is the core to competitions and the skills learned as a junior can come in handy for the rest of their lives.

“Even though there are one person and two person events it’s all about the team,” she said.

The skills such as setting hydrants and the couplings are good for going on as a firefighter,” she said. “They’re good hand-eye coordination skills that help with other sports and we really push the importance of teamwork.”

This year Tara will lead Pakenham’s two under 14 teams and under 17 teams at the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) State Urban Junior Championships in Warrnambool on February 24-25. Sixty eight teams from across Victoria will take part in the annual event.

The championships are run by Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) in conjunction with the CFA.

The Pakenham brigade boasts strong parental support, with under 14 and under 17 coaches plus specialist and technique coaches who have been around the sport for up to 40 years supporting Tara and the young brigade members.

“We’ve got a really good group of kids who just love the sport and everything about it,” Tara said.

“We’ve had kids who’ve gone through and become volunteer firefighters. The skills they learn in juniors are a good basis for that.”

Tara, who has been coaching for seven years, started through CFA Youth Crew at school, a two-year course in years 9 and 10. She got involved in the running team and ran for two years as a junior and joined the brigade on her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and has been a member ever since. Her son, nearing his eighth birthday, is already keen to join when he hits the minimum age of 11.

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford said junior brigades and the championships were the best way for young people to become engaged and learn practical skills before being old enough to attend fires.

“The VFBV State Urban Junior Championships can set young people on a pathway to serve their communities,” Mr Ford said.

“They encourage family participation and help to instil a sense of community service and volunteerism in young people while raising the importance of local fire brigades,” Mr Ford said.

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