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MEDIA RELEASE

SURKI'S TURBAN STANDS PROUD IN MARCHING CHAMPIONSHIP

Amid a sea of standard issue volunteer firefighter peak caps, Sukhi Singh's turban stood out during the VFBV Victorian urban senior state championships at the weekend.

While he was part of the Knox Group's winning team in the discipline marching event at Bendigo, Sukhi also achieved a place in volunteer firefighting history.

In 2008 he was believed to have been the first person of Indian heritage to sign up as a volunteer with the CFA at Boronia.

A decade later at the state championships he became the first to compete in the discipline event in traditional Sikh headwear.

Sukhi's decision to join the CFA has helped him to give back to the community he now calls home.

"Moving here as a migrant from northern India 23 years ago, this gives me an opportunity to give back to the community," he said. "I love every part of it."

"I'm passionate and happy to encourage others to go to your local brigade and join up."

Sukhi joined after seeing a fire brigade responding to a call in his neighbourhood. "It was a false alarm but I found out about the brigade and joined," he said.

He admits marching in the state competition for the first time was "a bit nerve wracking" but he hopes to return in the future.

Sukhi is also encouraging the next generation of volunteer firefighters as the junior coordinator for the Boronia brigade which has 19 active members.

He has also contributed to the CFA's volunteer surge capacity, attending campaigns at the Morwell coal mine, the Grampians and on Black Saturday. In 2015 Sukhi was awarded fire fighter of the year for the Boronia brigade.

CEO Andrew Ford said the VFBV continues to encourage everyone to become volunteer firefighters to help protect their communities.

“When our CFA volunteers are saving your property or helping in a time of need, you don’t care whether we’re male or female, paid or volunteer, or what their race, religion or sexuality we might be; the thing you take comfort in is that we are there, doing what needs to be done backed by our experience, training, professionalism and community compassion,” Mr Ford said.

“Our CFA volunteers train to national professional standards and the community is proud of the work they do, regardless of who they are or where they’re from.

“Gone are the days when firefighting is a role for just the men, we have highly experienced and very qualified people from all ages, gender, backgrounds and demographics performing front line firefighting roles, operational leadership roles and support roles.”

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