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MEDIA RELEASE

CFA VOLUNTEERS SELECTED FOR AUSTRALIA DAY PARADE

A husband and wife CFA volunteer couple from Wattle Glen were honoured in this year's Australia Day parade in Melbourne.

Dale and Joy Pitts were chosen to represent District 14 volunteers in the parade, recognising a combined 80 years dedication to their communities and the CFA.

"It's such an honour; there are a lot of people in the district who do a huge amount of volunteering," Joy said.

"We're happy to be involved. I feel like we're doing something useful and giving back to a very good community," she said.

Dale, 70, and Joy, 65, are still active volunteers and plan to continue their service.

"Volunteers are such an important part of the community. It's volunteers who provide surge capacity, especially from outer-metropolitan areas who can help the smaller country brigades when needed," Joy said.

For Dale, fighting the Ash Wednesday fires in 1983 was his biggest challenge, although a close encounter about five years ago was his most terrifying.

"We were doing everything by the book fighting a fire in grassland at Craigieburn when an unexpected wind change made a whirlybird and the truck got locked up in flames," he said.

"My face was a bit singed and I ended up in hospital. It came so quick the captain only just got his window wound-up before the flames hit the truck. We didn't have time for all the emergency procedures."

Dale joined the Wattle Glen Fire Brigade in 1975 and held roles including communications officer, first lieutenant and captain for 12 years, making him the brigade's longest serving captain. Dale has also served as health and safety coordinator and is deputy Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) District Council delegate.

His special interest has been heavy vehicle driving and he has run driving courses for several CFA districts and conducted VicRoads heavy vehicle licence tests for CFA members.

Dale now has dual brigade membership having joined the Headquarters East (HQE) Brigade where he is health and safety coordinator.

He is a life member of Wattle Glen Brigade and the CFA, and a recipient of the 40-year Long Service Award, the VFBV Gold Star, the National Medal and the National Emergency Medal.

Joy joined Wattle Glen Brigade in 1980 as its first female firefighter. She was a member for 18 years, including eight years as secretary and she helped pave the way for the many female firefighters who have followed.

In 1999 Joy joined the Whittlesea Diamond Valley Group, serving as Group Secretary/Treasurer for 19 years. She also assisted Dale with conducting driving courses and licence testing.

Joy is a foundation member of the D14 HQE Brigade and a radio operator at the KG ICC.

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford said he was pleased to see the efforts of CFA volunteers were being recognised.

“Our highly trained volunteers continue to evolve to deal with changing community risks, providing about \$1 billion worth of service each year and contributing to the CFA’s well-established ability to mobilise huge numbers of highly trained and experienced volunteers to deal with major incidents,” Mr Ford said.

VFBV plays a vital role in advocating on behalf of CFA’s 55,000 volunteers and advising CFA, Government and other decision makers to ensure the right fire service arrangements exist to encourage, maintain and strengthen the CFA’s vital volunteer capacity.

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