



24 May 2019

MEDIA RELEASE

Volunteering ‘just what you do’ in your community says CFA captain

The theme for this year’s National Volunteer Week is ‘making a world of difference’, but former Melbourne resident Andrew Hack is taking a ‘universal’ difference with his commitments to volunteerism and his community.

Andrew moved to the small town of Wye River, nestled in the foothills of the Otway Ranges on the Great Ocean Road in 1997 and lives there with his family, wife Karyn and children Juna, 15, and Pema, 11.

Rather than slowing down and relaxing on the beach, he is now volunteering for no fewer than four different groups, including CFA and the Surf Life Saving Club.

Andrew has been a CFA member since he moved to Wye River in '97, where his father was also a member, and he became Captain of the Wye River CFA last year. “Although I’d never lived here before, it always felt like home because we had holidayed there so much over the years.”

He is a life member and 38 year veteran of Wye River Surf Life Saving Club, a volunteer umpire for the Lorne Dolphins football club, where Juna plays, and a member of the Aireys Inlet Eels football club committee, where daughter Pema plays.

Andrew said being part of a small community meant playing your part to make the community safe and sustainable. “Volunteering in your local community is, of course, a great opportunity for people to socialise and do something for the community and its people,” Andrew said.

“It’s not an altruistic thing for me. It’s seeing something that needs to be done and doing it. You’ve got to put your hand up to help, especially in small towns. The more you put into it the more you get out of it.

“It’s rewarding to feel that you’re servicing the people in your community and performing a valuable role,” he added.

Andrew isn’t the only one in his family who is an active volunteer in the local community. Karyn is actively involved in both the CFA Auxiliary and the surf life saving club, and the two children are junior surf life savers.

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

VFBV Media Contact: Megan Lane - 0431 671 999



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.”

As Wye River CFA Captain, Andrew manages emergency services challenges unique to seaside tourist destinations. He was a long-time “weekends and holidays” visitor to Wye, where his parents retired, and he is now one of the 90 or so residents who see the town’s population swell to 4000 at Christmas and Easter. Houses may be unoccupied for much of the year except on weekends and holidays, and the town has a mix of visitors who know the area well as ‘weekenders’ among the thousands of international and Australian tourists who sweep through the area.

Wye River lost 116 houses on Christmas Day 2015 when major fires broke out. Andrew said fire prevention and planning was a major part of their focus. “We had good planning at the time and we feel we are prepared if it happens again,” he said.

He was also thankful and astounded by the rapid mobilisation of surge support from other CFA brigades and aerial firefighting support. “It’s just amazing that on Christmas Day people just dropped everything to come and help us out. We were overwhelmed by the response.

“Because of the difficult terrain the fire went on for weeks.”

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>

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.**

VFBV Media Contact: Megan Lane - 0431 671 999