



**November 2019**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

More than 100 south-east Victorian volunteer firefighters have so far helped to ease the fire threat in NSW and Queensland as part of a huge mobilisation of support.

Along with volunteers from across Victoria, about 150 from the south-east have joined the interstate campaign, another example of the strength of the state's volunteer CFA system.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) CEO Adam Barnett said this reflected the commitment and readiness of volunteers to help in times of crisis.

"Volunteers play an important role in our communities every day of the year, but when major disasters happen their training, dedication and professionalism really come to the fore," Mr Barnett said. "To be able to give their time to help interstate is a fantastic contribution."

VFBV District 27 President and Yallourn North volunteer Lance King was one of the strike team members and said the efforts had been appreciated.

"Everyone you drive past waves at you; it makes you feel like you're doing something good for the community," he said.

Mr King was one of about 150 volunteers to fly from Melbourne with the Royal Airforce, following a similar deployment earlier in the week.

Based at Richmond Airforce Base, Mr King and other volunteers were involved in community assurance work, clearing around properties and other asset protection, manning communications vehicles and backburning.

The deployment was hard work. "You might get in between 9 or 11 at night depending on how far you go and what work you're doing and you're on the bus at 6 in the morning to go to the staging area," Mr King said.

"But it's worth it. A lot of people have been evacuated but everyone we saw was very appreciative. We had one guy who brought us cartons of soft drinks," he said.

The team was based north-west of Sydney near the Gospers Mountain fire.

Mr King and his fellow volunteer group returned to Victoria on Monday.

VFBV District 10 President Stratford brigade member Mark Jones returned home on Friday after a week in NSW before returning to the fire zone this week.

“We did a lot backburning and dry firefighting with hand tools like rake hoes to build fire breaks, starting at Goulburn and then Wilberforce and then north of there,” he said.

“There’s tonnes of work to do up there. It was extremely steep terrain and the fires were massive.”

Mr Jones also appreciated the community welcome. “You find a lot of people tooting the horn and giving us thumbs up, which was nice,” he said.

The volunteers praised employers for allowing them time to contribute to the fire effort.

Crews from Bunyip, Koo Wee Rup, Nerrim South, Lakes Entrance, Bairnsdale, Carrum Downs, Mt Martha, Churchill, Rosebud, Welshpool, Traralgon East, Loch, Stratford, Lang Lang, Heyfield and Yallourn North were among those from the region to contribute to the firefighting surge capacity.

Learn more about CFA’s world-respected surge capacity on the VFBV website: <https://vfbv.com.au/index.php/component/k2/item/568-cfa-s-volunteer-surge-capacity-essential-for-victoria>

Ends...