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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **EMERGENCY SERVICES VOLUNTEERS TRAIN FOR LEADERSHIP**

More than 70 emergency services volunteers have just graduated from a special leadership course run by Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), the CFA volunteers' association.

The volunteers are from five Emergency Service organisations, serving in Brigades and units all over Victoria, and have achieved the nationally recognised Certificate IV in Frontline Management.

Presenting the Certificates, Minister for Police and Emergency Services Kim Wells said volunteers are essential to the state's emergency services.

"This course includes volunteers from CFA, Ambulance Victoria, Lifesaving Victoria, St John Ambulance and the SES," Mr Wells said.

"The course has equipped them with a nationally recognised qualification in leadership that will help them in their day to day careers, their work as emergency volunteers and their contributions to the community for years to come," he said.

"I congratulate every one of the graduates and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria for initiating this leadership program," Mr Wells said.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria President Hans van Hamond AFSM said the program is now in its fifth year of operation.

"VFBV's first group of volunteers took the course in 2010 and a lot has changed since then, with the cementing of an Emergency Management sector, dealing with major events on an all hazards-all agencies basis," Mr van Hamond said.

"One thing that has not changed is the fact that volunteers are essential to the emergency services in Victoria, and leadership skills are part of the professionalism that makes volunteers vital contributors from the front line to the highest levels of decision making," he said.

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“This year’s VFBV Volunteer Leadership Scholarship course is the largest yet, with the most agencies involved, and the graduates are already better contributors to their local communities for having taken part.”

Many graduates of the earlier courses are now serving in leadership roles with their Brigades and units, as well as in representing volunteers at higher levels.

The VFBV Leadership Scholarship course has been designed for volunteers, with a mix of lectures and interactive activities designed to suit the needs of adult students, as well as ample support using distance learning methods. To reduce travel time for the volunteers, the classroom sessions were made available at four locations: Bendigo, Horsham, South Morang and Traralgon.

The course includes units on; leadership, decision making, planning, safety and risk management, team effectiveness, making presentations, managing projects, and engaging the community.

The VFBV Leadership Scholarship program is funded by VFBV, in large part through a trust established with public donations received after Black Saturday from generous donors such as international racehorse breeding organisation Darley, the Herald Sun and the Victoria Racing Club.

Over the past two years, the program has received top up funding and support from the Victorian Government through the Valuing Volunteers Program, which has assisted VFBV in extending the program to a larger number of emergency service agencies, including SES, Lifesaving Victoria, Ambulance Victoria and the St John Ambulance. The qualification is provided under the auspices of Chisholm Institute of TAFE.

This year’s graduates include 50 from CFA, nine from VICSES, five from Lifesaving Victoria, one from St John Ambulance and one who volunteers with both CFA and Ambulance Victoria.

VFBV emphatically acknowledges and thanks Darley for their ongoing support and enthusiasm for emergency service volunteers, and in particular their support of VFBV’s leadership program, which would not have been possible without their generous donation to VFBV following Black Saturday.

In particular this year’s Graduation ceremony would not have been possible without the generosity of Darley with their organisational assistance, the VRC with the provision of their venue at Flemington Racecourse and the support of Racing Victoria.

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