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MEDIA RELEASE

SKYE HOPES TO RECRUIT MORE WOMEN VOLUNTEERS

When Camille Pola moved to the Melbourne suburb of Skye she thought that volunteering with the local CFA would be a good way to get to know people.

That proved to be true, and she's also learned some new skills along the way.

Ms Pola, 26, a financial planner formerly from Warrnambool who moved to Skye earlier this year, set up home near the Skye fire station and was inspired to volunteer.

"I'd just moved to the area and didn't really know anyone and wanted to find something to do," Ms Pola said. "I was going to join a netball team but I thought the CFA was better for the community."

Ms Pola officially started as a volunteer in June and has completed her minimum skills training and continues to train alongside her fellow volunteers every Monday night.

"I love it; it's good fun and I've learnt a lot about tankers and trucks but more importantly about teamwork and learning to communicate with other people," she said.

"Everyone has been very friendly; it's not difficult at all."

The brigade hopes the presence of Ms Pola – who is the first female volunteer in almost a decade - will inspire more women to join.

"I don't notice that I'm the only girl there," she said. "Everyone has been very welcoming."

Skye is a busy brigade in Melbourne's outer eastern suburbs and has contributed to CVA surge capacity at every major bushfire since its formation in 1951, including Ash Wednesday and more recently Black Saturday.

So far Ms Pola has attended six incidents; including minor car crashes, and feels confident that she and her fellow volunteers can cope with whatever comes their way.

"I feel well prepared and there's always someone more experienced to help me if I need," she said. "If the brigade leaders ask me to do something, they know that I can do it."

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria CEO Andrew Ford said the brigade hoped Ms Pola's commitment would inspire more women to volunteer.

"There is huge experience and skills amongst our CFA women volunteers and we need to do everything we can to recognise and encourage women to participate and also take on leadership roles," Mr Ford said.

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