

DONATION BENEFIT NORTH EAST BRIGADES

Head torches will help light the way for CFA brigades throughout the State's north east region, thanks to funds donated at a community event in the wake of the 2019/20 bushfires.

The 85 Pelican torches were the result of a \$6000 donation from the organisers of the High Country Comeback – an event that brought businesses from Bright and the surrounding areas to Melbourne to sell local products in the wake of the bushfires.

Captain **Brett Michie** (Bright Fire Brigade) said it was fantastic to receive an unexpected gift from the community.

"We need them to work at night if there's a grass or scrub fire.

"There can be mineshafts and wombat holes and so forth out in the bush, and after we've put the fire out, we can't see any more so they're a very handy thing to have.

"It will also help structure firefighters who already have a torch on their uniform, but the head torches really come in handy when going into a search and rescue situation at a structure fire.

"It's great for us, but there are plenty of brigades around



Bright Fire Brigade was just one brigade that received Pelican head torches via funds donated by High Country Comeback. An appreciative Captain Brett Michie is pictured with organiser Janelle Boynton at the handover to Bright Brigade.

here that will really benefit from having the new torches."

A total of 85 torches are being provided to brigades in the area with Bright, Buffalo River, Harrierville, Mudgegonga, and Wodonga having received them already.

High Country Comeback organiser **Janelle Boynton** said it was fantastic to help local CFA brigades in addition to local businesses.

"The brigades were really chuffed to know that these had come from the commu-

nity," said Ms Boynton.

"We put the event together to help local vendors in the wake of the fires, but really wanted to include a door-donation so we had money going to CFA and some local wildlife organisations."

Event organisers worked with CFA District 24 members to find out what was most needed in the local area, with Captain Michie saying the torches will be helpful for many brigades in the area.

CFA honoured its fallen members and thanked all firefighters for their service on International Firefighters' Day, 4 May.

International Firefighters' Day is a global event started by CFA members in 1999 following the tragic death of five CFA firefighters in Linton the previous year.

International Firefighters' Day coincides with the Feast of St Florian's Day – the patron saint of firefighters.

Chief Officer **Jason Heffernan** said: "The day in particular is an important day to remember the 80 CFA members who have died in the line of duty since the organisation's inception 76 years ago.

"Every day across Victoria, our firefighters selflessly give their time to serve and protect their communities," he said.

"Tragically, too many members have lost their lives doing so.

"Today, we pause to remember them. They are forever in the hearts and minds of everyone at CFA and the Victorian

Fallen firefighters honoured

community.

"We honour them today and every day by continuing their vital firefighting work, and learning, innovating and constantly improving the safety of our members."

An annual memorial service for fallen members was held in Melbourne's CBD. Following the service, attendees visited the new Emergency Services Memorial in Treasury Gardens.

CFA CEO **Natalie MacDonald** said the new memorial was a fitting tribute to emergency services personnel who have lost their lives.

"CFA and the families of our fallen members have contributed to the design and development of the new site," she said.

"It is a beautiful, public trib-

ute to those we have lost, which all Victorians can visit and pay their respects.

The CFA memorial service was cancelled in 2020 due to the coronavirus, so Sunday's event also paid tribute to the firefighters lost in the devastating 2019/20 fires.

"In the 2019/20 fire season we tragically lost three of our colleagues from Forest Fire Management, as well as three members from New South Wales Rural Fire Service and three of our firefighter colleagues from the United States.

"On behalf of CFA, we give our condolences to their friends and family and remember their sacrifice this International Firefighters' day," CEO Natalie MacDonald said.

Chief Officer Jason Heffernan and CEO Natalie MacDonald at the recent memorial paying tribute to CFA's fallen firefighters.



Committed to the values and ethos of CFA

Comments by Chief Officer Jason Heffernan

When someone reflects on why they joined a volunteer-based community organisation, whether it is CFA, SES or Rotary, the primary purpose is 'how can I contribute back to my community'.

This month, the week of 17 May to 23 May is National Volunteer Week, which is Australia's largest annual celebration of volunteers.

I started as a volunteer firefighter in the Riverina Region of Wagga Wagga in southern NSW in 1998. I share our members passion for the role of community-based emergency services and emergency management.

My first memories as a member of the Rural Fire Service (RFS) is attending many different incidents on the back of the Bedford truck. We didn't have much equipment and status was having second hand single piece overalls supplied to go with the boots, gloves and goggles you sought.

Our training compared to today's standards was rudimentary and in hindsight, I wonder if I was really prepared for what we would come across at fires, both bush and structural, as well as some bad high-speed incidents on the Stuart or Olympic Highway.

However, what resonated the most was the comradery of being part of a group that helped our fellow community. We were made up of a rag tag bunch of people from Wagga,

enjoying the company of each other. Our one goal was to assist the community and neighbouring brigades, and that motto remains the same today.

As a young volunteer I remember the pager going off during school assembly, and I would stand up and leave. I don't recall my teachers being that impressed by it, but I did end up receiving a school award for community service, acknowledging my persistent want to attend fire calls, and protect community.

That one goal, our motto if you will, has not changed for me. I have always wanted to be a firefighter and help my community. For me, a volunteer is someone prepared to give everything in service to another for the want of nothing in return.

For our firefighters, they are risking all that they can give of themselves which is life itself.

Although I can't jump on a truck anymore (or shouldn't at least), my motto hasn't changed. From the outset I have prioritised the objective of building capability within senior volunteer ranks and

Chief Officer Jason Heffernan (middle) in his early days as a volunteer firefighter with the Rural Fire Service in the Riverina Region of Wagga Wagga in southern NSW.



brigades, ensuring that all volunteers are resourced and supported to undertake their important roles. You can check out some of our initiatives listed in the advertisement on page 11 of this edition of Fire Wise.

Our CFA members place the community at the centre of everything they do. As Chief Officer, I will do all I can do to champion the needs of our members in their desire and need to protect their local communities.

My objective is that everyone is safe and have an enjoyable experience with CFA that they will pass onto others. That CFA is a great organisation that you can be proud to belong to.

Thank you to all our volunteers.



VFBV BOARD VACANCIES

Invitation to ALL CFA Volunteers to apply

Closing date for written applications is 30 July 2021

VFBV advances the interests of all Victorian fire brigade volunteers and advocates on their behalf to CFA and other key stakeholders. The VFBV Board drives policy development based on volunteer input and is involved in management of issues of central importance to all CFA volunteers.

Vacancies for four Board Members will arise when the terms of Samantha Rothman, Libby Hay, Jan Cleary and David Sidebottom expire on 1 October 2021; all members are eligible for re-appointment.

The term of appointment will be to 1 October 2023 (two years) and applications are invited from interested volunteers to be considered for these vacancies.

The role of a VFBV Board Member involves contributing to VFBV direction, policy determination and monitoring the performance and governance of the Association. Also actively contributing to policy discussion at Board Meetings, networking with others about policies and issues management, and not only making decisions but being prepared to actively advocate for the benefit of all CFA volunteers and ultimately the Victorian community.

A Board Member Role Statement including the key selection criteria is available from the VFBV office or from the VFBV website.

This is an honorary position; no honorarium is paid.

If you are motivated by the prospect of making a difference for CFA volunteers, then send your written application addressing the key selection criteria in the role statement, plus an outline of your CFA/VFBV activity including the names of two referees.

Applications must be lodged with VFBV by Friday 30 July 2021 to:

VFBV, 9/24 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East 3151

Tel: 9886 1141; Fax: 9886 1618

Email: vfbv@vfbv.com.au