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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **VOLUNTEERS WELCOME MORE DIVERSITY IN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES.**

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) has welcomed the State Government's decision to engage Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner Kate Jenkins to examine issues around gender equity and workplace culture in Victoria's emergency services.

Representing Victoria's 60,000 CFA volunteers, VFBV sees the announcement as a move towards encouraging greater diversity, not just of gender, but of cultures and ages in CFA.

VFBV Chief Executive Officer Andrew Ford said greater diversity means practical benefits for Brigades and the communities they protect.

"Having more diversity of gender, cultures and ages will strengthen CFA Brigades' connections with the communities we protect and increase the pool of potential volunteers," Mr Ford said.

Minister Garrett has highlighted the fact that only 3% of CFA and MFB operational staff are women.

"Among CFA volunteers, approximately 20% of all volunteers are women and nearly 5,000 of those women are front line firefighters," Mr Ford said.

"CFA volunteers serve in front line, command and specialist roles at all levels, and provide CFA's great surge capacity, the ability to field thousands of trained, experienced firefighters to deal with major and multiple incidents wherever they occur," he said.

"We see diversity as not only ensuring that essential response capacity into the future, but adding to CFA Brigades' connection with every part of the community."

"VFBV looks forward to supporting the efforts of Minister Garrett and CFA CEO Lucinda Nolan to drive gender equity across CFA," Mr Ford said.

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