



MEDIA RELEASE

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VOLUNTEERS REWARDED FOR BLACK SATURDAY CAMPAIGN

Ten volunteer firefighters from the Eppalock Group have been rewarded for their efforts during Black Saturday.

The Heathcote, Mia Mia and Junortoun brigades came together yesterday (Sunday) at Heathcote for a joint presentation at the Heathcote Community Centre, which also included service awards and handover of new brigade vehicles.

The joint function was the initiative of the local brigade secretaries Laraine Leask, Sue Bull and Gloria Turner who wanted to bring the communities together to celebrate the efforts of CFA volunteers.

“Instead of everyone having their own little event, we decided to have one big event,” Ms Leask, the Heathcote secretary and District 2 Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) president, said.

Seven volunteers from Junortoun, two from Heathcote and one from Mia Mia received National Emergency Medals for their efforts during Black Saturday fires.

The recipients were Heathcote - Fred Miller, Graeme Millard; Mia Mia- Peter Bennett; Junortoun – Luke Carracher, Ray Mundy, Deb Monti, Peter Patullo, Mark Zulian, Norm Bateson, Jeff Barber and Wayne Watts(deceased).

“They missed out on receiving the awards at the time so it was fitting to come together to recognise their efforts,” Ms Leask said.

Heathcote also presented service awards to seven volunteers, ranging from five to 45 years. New brigade vehicles were presented by CFA Deputy Chief Officer Gregg Paterson AFSM.

Ms Leask said the event was a great way to acknowledge the importance of volunteer firefighters. “We’re the backbone of the community,” she said. “They need us and we’re here for one thing only and that’s to look after our community.”

“Nobody expects an award; they just down tools and do it.”

Ms Leask said the brigades were strong and active, including providing back-up support in Bendigo and at times of major disaster like Black Saturday.

“We’ve got more younger people in training at the moment but we still have the older ones there to help them,” she said.

People put in a lot of time during the fires and in providing support afterwards,” she said. “Nobody expected a medal but these guys went above and beyond.”

VFBV CEO Adam Barnett congratulated the volunteers on their awards and said the commitment typified the community spirit of regional Victorians.

“The experience and willingness of CFA volunteers to drop everything and help others makes a huge contribution to the safety and response capacity of CFA and the protection of Victoria,” Mr Barnett said.

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>

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