



Thursday, 4 February 2010

LETTER TO THE EDITOR – BLACK SATURDAY ANNIVERSARY

Dear Editor

On this first anniversary of Black Saturday, CFA Volunteers share with many others in the community the deep sense of loss and tragedy of that awful day. But we also remember the spirit and determination of our fellow Victorians not to be beaten by those events.

Our community was galvanised by that day, and the multiple tragedies that were revealed in successive days, in a way rarely experienced outside of war. Shoulder to shoulder, our young and old, wealthy and poor, ordinary everyday people and families, joined together to comfort and help devastated families and local communities who had suffered grievous loss.

CFA Volunteers were proud to play their part on Black Saturday and the days, weeks and months that followed.

Our 60,000 CFA Volunteers remain dedicated to their enduring role of protecting fellow Victorians and helping to build strong resilient communities.

In their thousands, volunteers from rural districts and strike teams from regional cities and Melbourne's suburbs turned out to combat those tragic fires. Thousands more were on standby to protect their local communities.

CFA volunteers were ready that day, as they are every day, to respond to any major bushfire, house fire in the suburbs or other emergency incident.

Non-operational volunteers were at the phones and radios, and specialist volunteers in the control centres - old hands and teenagers, office workers, tradesmen and farmers, male and female, they were all ready, just as they are today.

In our thoughts on this first anniversary are communities, families and many volunteers from those same communities who suffered personal loss on that black day – their lives or the lives of family members, friends, homes, livelihoods and irreplaceable family mementoes.

VFBV would like to thank the employers whose community minded co-operation allows their employees to be active volunteers and be where they are needed most. We especially thank the families of volunteers, who provide vital support to their loved ones.

Without community based, trained and experienced volunteers, Victoria could not afford to maintain its day to day fire and emergency service, let alone the statewide capacity to deal with bushfires. There is simply no other viable way of protecting Victoria.

In the state's times of dire need, the volunteer base of the CFA is the tried and true part of emergency response that works well. But to deal with climate and seasonal risks ahead we must maintain and build an even more effective volunteer based CFA.

Like other Victorians, CFA Volunteers will never forget Black Saturday. We reaffirm our ongoing commitment to serve our community and fellow Victorians both now, and in the future. We are determined to do our best to stop such tragedy from being repeated.

Andrew Ford
Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria
Representing Victoria's 60,000 CFA volunteers