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MEDIA RELEASE

PET BUSHFIRE SAFETY PROMOTED IN NEW CFA-SCHOOL ART PROJECT

Keeping pets safe during fires and emergencies will be easier with the launch today of a new calico pet 'Grab Bag'.

The Grab Bags for pets – similar to those prepared for people and families to take in fire and emergencies - have been created as a joint project between the Hillcrest Fire Brigade, District 13 and Woori Yallock, Launching Place and Don Valley primary schools.

Hillcrest Fire Brigade volunteer captain Fiona Burns said the bags were a great opportunity to engage with people about pet safety.

"The winning design brilliantly captures all the key CFA messages around planning for pet safety in a fire or emergency," Captain Burns said.

The bags will be unveiled today at Woori Yallock Primary School where former student Ashlyn Hermansen designed the logo and developed the message 'Prepare, Relocate, Save your pet's fate'.

They feature the artwork and school details on one side and on the other side a space for the pet's name and a tick box to cover essentials to pack in case of fire and emergencies.

The Brigade Art Competition started in 2016 on the suggestion of Hillcrest Fire Brigade 4th Lt and community safety officer Andrew Smith.

"As a brigade we have a strong community safety focus and proactively promote fire preparedness," Lt Smith said. "The art competition is an initiative to engage children and use their 'pester power' to have important safety conversations with their parents. It's like fast food advertising but we're using it for the greater good."

The pet safety design by Ashlyn was so good the brigade decided to expand on the original art competition and came up with the Grab Bag concept.

All local prep students at the school will receive a free bag and a framed bag is being donated to Woori Yallock Primary School.

"It was too good just to leave as an art prize," Captain Burns said. "It's a different approach to engage with the community around their animal safety and it's already creating a lot of interest and we hope it might spread further."

Hillcrest Fire Brigade is a 100 per cent volunteer brigade and was established in 2007 from the merger of the former Launching Place and Woori Yallock brigades.

The brigade motto is "3 communities, 2 stations, 1 brigade". The main station is at Woori Yallock and there is a satellite station at Don Valley.

The 100 per cent volunteer brigade has 53 members aged 16 to 70. About 40 per cent of members are women and there is a strong mentoring program to encourage a new generation of trained volunteers.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria CEO Andrew Ford said the initiative was a great example of why CFA volunteers are essential to community spirit.

"This is another great example demonstrating that our CFA volunteers are much more than just a fire truck responding to fires," Mr Ford said.

"Our volunteer based system is embedded in the community, working to prevent loss and damage from fires in the first place and working hand-in-hand with communities to develop local solutions and local capacity."

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