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MEDIA RELEASE

RECORD HOLDER HELPING THE NEXT GENERATION

Martin Rennie might hold the most prestigious record in fire brigade competitions, but as a coach he's keen to promote the importance of teamwork to his junior charges.

This year Martin will lead Tatura's two under 14 teams and under 17 teams at the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) State Urban Junior Championships in Warrnambool on February 24-25. Sixty eight teams from across Victoria will take part in the annual event.

Martin is the only person to better six seconds in the senior ladder race competition. He won the event five times and his record of 5.99 seconds has stood since 1996.

Martin started as a junior 31 years ago, following in the footsteps of his father and brothers, and has been coach of the junior teams since 2002.

Two of his four children, Matthew and Hayley, will be competing in Warrnambool this year.

Coaching was a natural progression for Martin. "I was pretty much at the end of my running time in the senior comp so when the previous coach retired I took over," he said.

He remains committed to the competition and the skills and benefits it brings to young people

"It's a very competitive sport that's good for their basic skills and confidence and to interact with kids from other brigades.

"We do a lot of team building which is important."

Ideally running in the junior brigade will lead young people to train and become volunteer firefighters.

Martin says skills learned during the early years stay with the juniors if they continue as volunteer firefighters. "You can tell the competitors at a fire because they use hydrants a lot better than others," he said.

The Tatura team will be up against some stiff competition – including “friendly rivalry” with other local brigades.

Apart from coaching the juniors, Martin will also present a shield named in his honour for the ladder race.

The championships are run by Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) in conjunction with the CFA.

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford said junior brigades and the championships were the best way for young people to become engaged and learn practical skills before being old enough to attend fires.

“The VFBV State Urban Junior Championships can set young people on a pathway to serve their communities,” Mr Ford said.

“They encourage family participation and help to instil a sense of community service and volunteerism in young people while raising the importance of local fire brigades,” Mr Ford said.

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