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MEDIA RELEASE

SCORESBY FIRE BRIGADE MIRRORS A CHANGING COMMUNITY

The Scoresby volunteer fire brigade looks nothing like it did a few decades ago.

The change mirrors a changing local community and the latest recruits continue the move towards diversity.

Ex captain Jim Read has been around firefighting long enough to remember when the brigade was basically the domain of middle-aged white men.

Now he welcomes the diversity, which he says reflects the local community.

“The mainstay of CFA has always been white Anglo Saxon males and more recently females, along with Dutch and German people,” Mr Read said. “But that’s not what we are any more as a community or as a brigade.”

“We’ve had an influx of people from all around the world, including a large population of Chinese people and from the Sub continent, and so the base for volunteers has changed.”

This month two recruits from Sri Lanka and one from China have signed on, and over the past year six new women volunteers have joined.

“Up until the 1990s women mainly joined the Fire Brigade auxiliary or community support roles, but now they are front line firefighters and in leadership roles,” Mr Read said. “They join, train; and turn out to fires as their way of giving back to their community. Women do the job just as well as men; they’re not pigeon-holed in support roles like they used to be.”

“We’ve now got men with family commitments who can’t keep up the training but have gone into an auxiliary role. It’s changed 180 degrees and it’s wonderful to see.”

Scoresby Fire Brigade has about 50 volunteer members and responds to more than 500 emergency calls a year, ranging from structure fires and bush fires to car accidents and hazardous materials incidents. The brigade covers Scoresby, Knoxfield and Wantirna South and regularly supports surrounding CFA brigades at Boronia, Rowville and Ferntree Gully and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria CEO Andrew Ford said the VFBV continues to encourage everyone to become volunteer firefighters to help protect their communities.

“When our CFA volunteers are saving your property or helping in a time of need, you don’t care whether we’re male or female, paid or volunteer, or what their race, religion or sexuality we might be; the thing you take comfort in is that we are there, doing what needs to be done backed by our experience, training, professionalism and community compassion,” Mr Ford said.

“Our CFA volunteers train to national professional standards and the community is proud of the work they do, regardless of who they are or where they’re from.

“Gone are the days when firefighting is a role for just the men, we have highly experienced and very qualified people from all ages, gender, backgrounds and demographics performing front line firefighting roles, operational leadership roles and support roles.”

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