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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **BALLARAT FIRE BRIGADE WELCOMES FIRST FEMALE OFFICER**

Tarryn Harris' election to a senior officer's role with Ballarat Fire Brigade typifies the changing face of CFA volunteerism.

Not only is Ms Harris one of the youngest to be take on a senior role with the brigade, she's also the first female operational officer in its 162-year history.

The new fourth lieutenant, 24-year-old Ms Harris is responsible for ensuring communication systems are working and to support new recruits.

Ms Harris joined the junior brigade and moved into senior ranks when she turned 16, following in the footsteps of her father, Russell, the brigade treasurer, and her uncle John, a former captain.

"When they said they were starting a junior program I was keen to be part of it," she said.

Although the brigade has several female members, including secretary Judy Lyons and junior coordinator Crystal Clark, Ms Harris is the first woman to be elected to an officer's role.

"It's a very supportive brigade and we have a lot of women doing excellent work. I'd definitely encourage other women to join because it's a very positive experience," she said.

Ms Harris continues to build on her professionalism and has recently completed rescue qualifications in addition to previous wildfire training.

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

"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 was a role for just 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."

Brigade captain Mark Cartledge said Ms Harris was doing a great job for the brigade.

“It’s also good to have a younger member of the brigade taking on a senior role,” Mr Cartledge said.

“Tarryn came up through our junior volunteer development program and has always had a lot of respect from all members,” he said.

“It shows the changing face of the brigade; we’ve got a good mix of volunteers.”

The Ballarat Fire Brigade is 100 per cent volunteer with about 60 members who respond to about 500 calls each year, including an increasing number of motor vehicle accidents.

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