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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **BRIGHT CFA VOLUNTEER AWARDED FOR SERVICE**

Veteran Bright CFA volunteer Graham Cocks says there will always be a need for volunteers to protect local communities.

Mr Cocks, who recently received a Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) life membership, says volunteers are a vital part of any community and need to be protected amid government plans to dismantle the CFA.

Mr Cocks has been a CFA volunteer for 35 years, including 29 years with Bright Fire Brigade, and has been a long-serving delegate to VFBV. He has also been a district council vice president, state councillor, a member of the VFBV district 24 council executive and a long-serving brigade first lieutenant and deputy group officer.

He is now Bright's community safety coordinator.

Mr Cocks' work in local government as a civil and shire engineer and nearly 30 years as a consultant in civil and structural engineering, building surveying and design and town planning often related to fire protection.

He was always inspired to contribute to his local community and volunteering with the CFA was an obvious choice.

"When I was a little kid in Kerang the CFA used to train on the street a block up from where we lived. On a Tuesday night, mum usually knew where we were when we didn't turn up for dinner," he said.

"Some of my work related to fire protection and I developed an interest in it to try to help the community. All the work I did in local government was to help the community and volunteering was a recreational extension of that."

Mr Cocks said the life membership was a pleasant surprise and he continues to support the role of volunteers.

"It has become difficult because of the political nature of things but volunteering is a vital part of the community," he said.

“Whether it changes the way the government is proposing or there are some other changes, there will still be a need for volunteers.

“The CFA is volunteer-based and it needs to stay that way.”

Mr Cocks said his biggest concern about the proposed reforms was the recommendation to second people to manage the CFA. “I can’t see how outsourcing all the administrative and operational support can work,” he said.

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford said volunteers like Graham Cocks were the lifeblood of local communities.

Mr Ford said the current fire services model recognises volunteers and paid staff working together as a united team but the Government’s proposal would dismantle that for no reason and no benefit to service delivery.

“Everywhere else emergency services are talking about working as one team and yet the Government wants to further fragment the fire services in Victoria – it’s foolish.”

Mr Ford said the VFBV was concerned that the Government’s proposal to carve up the CFA would drive a huge reduction in volunteer numbers. “If this happens, Victoria will have lost forever the powerful volunteer surge capacity to tackle major fires that occur every summer and lost a community-based model that is regarded as one of the best in the world.”

“These changes would cost Victorians a great deal in increased Fire Service Levy, hand even more control of Victoria’s fires services to the union and there would be less flexibility and efficiency in how fire services deploy their firefighters.”

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