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MEDIA RELEASE

VICTORIAN VOLUNTEERS USE CFA EXPERIENCE TO HELP SAVE QUEENSLAND KOALA HABITAT

Victorian CFA volunteers have used their experience in fire management and planned burning to save a koala reserve threatened by the recent Queensland fires.

The volunteer expertise and strength of numbers to respond to major disasters helped the Trust for Nature to save its koala crossing reserve, south of Brisbane.

At the base of Mt Flinders, Goolman Reserve is the largest remaining stretch of open eucalypt forest in the region and was threatened by the recent Queensland fires.

Eildon CFA lieutenant and Alexandra group officer, Len Timmins, was part of the District 12 strike team that protected the koala reserve.

Mr Timmins took on crew leader and sector and divisional commander roles during his five days in Queensland.

“Our knowledge of bush fire behaviour was very helpful in protecting the reserve,” he said.

“The Trust obviously wanted to save the koalas but importantly, also the 100,000 special trees they had planted to create the unique koala habitat.”

A 28-year veteran volunteer with Eildon CFA, Mr Timmins worked with the Queensland Fire Service, Trust for Nature and Ipswich Shire to create a five-kilometre containment line with a bulldozer.

“We were able to use our knowledge from plan burn strategies that we use at home to know where to construct the containment line. Understanding fuel types and arrangement helped influence containment strategies,” he said.

“Being in a local CFA, we’ve been brought up to save life and property and understanding the value of plantations is another part we learn in prescribed burning.”

Mr Timmins is involved with the CFA Koori inclusion program and has previously visited Cape York to work with Indigenous landowners.

“Having that Queensland experience helped and I’ve been part of previous strike teams to New South Wales,” he added.

“We were affected by Black Saturday and we had Queensland and NSW teams here looking after us while our crews got some rest, so it goes both ways.”

Mr Timmins said the morale and experience of the Queensland strike team were second to none. “Everyone was there to help the Queensland fire services and the communities to get the job done,” he said.

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford praised all the volunteers who assisted in Queensland, saying it was another example of the strength of Victoria’s flexible integrated CFA model.

“As one of the most fire-prone places in the world, Victoria’s excellent integrated CFA model provides a critically important surge capacity that delivers a ready workforce of professionally trained and equipped volunteers, able to step up and respond anywhere in the state and even interstate in times of disaster,” Mr Ford said.

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