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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **LARA VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS TURN LIFESAVERS**

Lara grain farmer Ron Bath says volunteer firefighters saved his life, but not in the manner you might expect.

While successfully battling a blaze on his farm, the CFA volunteers had to put their first aid training to use when Mr Bath suffered a suspected heart attack.

Mr Bath has no doubt the quick thinking volunteers saved his life, just days before his 68th birthday on Sunday.

“On the day I didn’t think I was going to make the birthday,” he admitted.

The CFA volunteers were responding to the grass and stubble fire started by sparks from a slasher when they were told that Ambulance Victoria had received a call about a person suffering from apparent smoke inhalation.

Three volunteers from Lara Fire Brigade, David Love, Michelle Cable and Brian Stevens, broke away from the fire fight and found Mr Bath lying near a tractor complaining of chest pains and shortness of breath.

They assessed him and decided to treat it as a heart attack and applied a defibrillator and later gave him oxygen. The defibrillator proved to be a life-saving move as within minutes the defibrillator identified his heart was in trouble and advised the firefighters to shock him which they did.

“They saved my life; I don’t know how long I could have gone at that rate,” Mr Bath said. “I could see them out in the paddock dealing with the fire and the ambulance wasn’t there. I was hoping they’d put the fire out fairly quickly and come and find me because I was feeling really bad.”

Mr Bath shifted a ute and tractor from the path of the fire but slumped over the wheel of the tractor before stumbling out into shade.

“That’s where they found me. I was moaning and groaning and in a pretty bad state but they applied the defibrillator and next minute ‘whack’ and I was instantly right.”

The volunteers continued to care for Mr Bath until an ambulance arrived to transport him to hospital where tests revealed a mild heart attack brought on by the stress but no long-term problems.

“I later rang former Lara Fire Brigade captain Greg McManus to thank them and said next time I have a heart turn I’ll just call you blokes,” Mr Bath said.

Lara Fire Brigade’s Lt Brian Stevens, who was first to reach Mr Bath, said the volunteers do first aid and defibrillator refresher training every year and check the equipment every month in addition to their regular fire training.

“When I got to him he really wasn’t well and was struggling for breath. If we didn’t have the defibrillator we wouldn’t have known he was having an attack.”

The brigade raised money from sausage sizzles and other local activities and donations to buy three defibrillators. “It’s really paid off,” Lt Stevens said.

In his 18 years with the brigade, Lt Stevens has never experienced a similar incident. “I’ve seen the bad side of incidents but never had to defibrillate someone and so quickly saved a member of public’s life,” he said.

“As soon as it happens all the training done over the years kicks in and you do it. We could act quickly and we knew what we were doing.”

Lt Stevens also said that while Mr Bath might have confidence in the brigade, he and the public must call the ambulance service on 000 for medical emergencies, not the brigade. “If the ambulance service needs Lara CFA’s assistance they will call us,” he said.

Founded in 1939, the Lara CFA Brigade is a 100 per cent volunteer brigade with about 60 members who respond to about 400 calls a year, including house and factory fires, hazardous materials incidents, road accidents and bushfires.

Lara volunteers provide professional fire services to householders, commercial premises, industry, and significant infrastructure such as Avalon airport and Barwon, Karreenga and Marngoneet prisons.

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