



April, 2017

MEDIA RELEASE

CFA IS PART OF THE FAMILY FOR SEDGWICK VOLUNTEER

In 38 years of running a car dealership in Bendigo, Brendan Drechsler has only twice closed his yard.

The first was after the death of his father; the second was to attend the CFA volunteers rally in Melbourne

That's how important volunteering is to Mr Drechsler. The Sedgwick bridge captain from south of Bendigo says the CFA is part of his family and volunteering is part of the fabric that holds country communities together.

"I might have two or three Saturdays off for the year but my car yard is always open. The day of the rally in Melbourne I couldn't get anyone to work so I closed the yard for only the second time in 38 years," he said.

"There were more than 300 trucks organised for the rally within 24 hours which shows how important this is to volunteers. I wanted to make sure our truck was part of it."

Mr Drechsler fears he might have to do it again as rumours of changes persist.

"Would I do it again? Absolutely," he says. "The volunteers will win in the long run. What's happening is an absolute disgrace and leaves me broken-hearted."

"I live and breathe the CFA. It's in our family; my father and brother were captains of this brigade and I'm proud to do the same. Our little districts depend on the CFA and the CFA depends on its volunteers."

"Sedgwick is a nice little farming community but we haven't much left; the one thing that holds the community together is the volunteer CFA brigade."

The 45-year veteran CFA volunteer has overseen the revival of Sedgwick's junior brigade in recent years.

"We've gone from nothing to winning state titles three years in a row," he said.

Mr Drechsler's son Benjamin put a junior team together in 2013 and they have flourished, winning titles from 2015. Six juniors stepped up to senior competition this year and won the C-grade grand aggregate.

"To be a state champion in the fire brigade is a reason to be very proud and they've now got skills to be senior volunteer firefighters," Mr Drechsler said.

Sedgwick has 45 volunteers, including 30 active members who respond to about 25 incidents each year, mainly grass and scrub fires. It also has 12 juniors, including four new recruits this year.

"The kids are the future of the CFA," Mr Drechsler said.

"We've got a very good training program and as volunteers we can go anywhere in Victoria to help out when there's an incident," he said.

"Volunteers will come to your place and put the fire out. It doesn't matter if it's two hours or two days; the volunteers will be there to help the community.

"It's not *only* about winning a medal or trophy; it is about flying the flag for local brigades, the CFA and District Two. This is what holds the community together and it instils respect and discipline into the team members that so many people in the world lack today."

Ends...