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MEDIA RELEASE

HURSTBRIDGE BRIGADE HAS EDUCATION ON ITS MIND

The Hurstbridge volunteer fire brigade places a high priority on education and its latest recruit is helping from the inside.

The brigade has recently undertaken a recruitment drive, adding 13 new volunteer members to its ranks including local primary school principal Chris Tatnall.

With an emphasis on growing the brigade's juniors, Mr Tatnall hopes to inspire a new generation of young volunteer firefighters.

"It's important for the school to be involved with local community organisations and the Fire Brigade is an integral part of Hurstbridge," he said.

"I'm keen to promote the junior ranks and increase the connection between the school and the Fire Brigade."

The school recently hosted a red balloon day to promote awareness about and respect for brigade volunteers.

Mr Tatnall is an experienced firefighter who was previously a member of the Doreen brigade and helped fight the Black Saturday fires in 2009. Although forced to step back for several years due to family commitments, Mr Tatnall was keen to become part of a community group after moving into Hurstbridge this year.

Hurstbridge is a 100 per cent volunteer brigade has 106 members who respond to about 60 incidents each year, most commonly structure fires and car accidents. Mr Tatnall and the other volunteers have undergone extensive professional training to nationally accredited standards enabling them to respond to a variety of incidents.

The brigade has benefitted greatly over the years from developing a successful junior brigade. The past six brigade captains, including current captain Andy Knight, have come through the junior ranks.

There are currently nine junior members but three are about to progress to the senior brigade and Mr Knight would like to boost the number to 15.

“We have a good program and we’re now trying to get more young people involved and trained and hopefully they can stay on,” Mr Knight said.

“Having Chris involved will help to spread the word about the value of being part of the juniors,” he said.

“It also paints a really good picture for the kids to see Chris involved in a local volunteer community organisation.”

The brigade has been heavily involved in fire brigade competitions for the past 37 years and recorded several top five placings in senior and junior competitions this year. “That’s a cornerstone for our junior members,” Mr Knight said.

The brigade is continuing its volunteer recruitment campaign, and particularly wants people who would be available to respond to calls during the day.

“There is potential for us to start supporting into the Doreen area more frequently than we do,” Mr Knight said. “We are in a heavily treed area so there is potential bushfire risk, although we’re pleased there have been no grass and scrub fires in the past two years, thanks to our community education work.”

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