



May, 2017

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **STRATHKELLAR SELECTS FIRST FEMALE BRIGADE CAPTAIN**

Strathkellar volunteer rural brigade's first female captain Kathryn Robertson has seen firefighting from a family, local and national perspective.

Ms Robertson comes from a family with strong ties to the CFA. She's been involved "since I was old enough to join" and has contributed to CFA's strength in numbers by joining strike teams responding to major disasters around the state and beyond.

Her father Don Robertson has held just about every office in the brigade and is currently Dundas Group Communications Officer covering 18 brigades around Hamilton. He is also a former CFA Board member. His father (and Kathryn's grandfather) James, was also a long-serving volunteer.

Kathryn's sister Mary Knight is the Strathkellar brigade treasurer.

Ms Robertson, who officially takes over as captain on July 1 and will be the first female brigade captain across the group, says volunteering with the CFA is a worthwhile and rewarding community contribution.

"I've been involved since I was old enough to join, even when away studying in Melbourne I was still able to be involved over summer holidays," she said.

"It's good to be part of the local community and to do such a worthwhile activity."

She has been a general firefighter and held official brigade roles as part of her training and preparation for taking on the captaincy.

"There is very good succession planning in the brigade which has made it easier for me to transition to the role," she said.

"The former captain, Pete Bergmark and other experienced brigade members provide very good support and knowledge."

Along with many local incidents, Ms Robertson has been part of strike teams to fires in Canberra and Sydney, flood recovery in Kerang and the Black Saturday fires.

“That’s where you see the best of people working together as a team to achieve a common goal,” she said. “It gives everyone a lot of satisfaction.”

The Hamilton-based Veterinarian and member of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) is also encouraging other women to volunteer with the CFA.

“Being female shouldn’t discourage people from being involved,” she said. “We’re just as capable as anyone else and I don’t feel like I’m treated any differently to a male member.”

Don Robertson is pleased to continue his commitment as a CFA volunteer and has enjoyed seeing his daughters rise through the ranks.

“I made no effort to force them into it,” he said. “It’s all their initiative.”

Mr Robertson remains a dedicated volunteer. “It’s rewarding personally and I see the benefits to the community,” he said.

VFBV Board member Samantha Rothman said contributions like that of the Robertson family had been the backbone of Victoria’s volunteer CFA capacity.

“It’s great to see CFA women continuing to take up these senior roles and I encourage all women to step up to the challenge of leadership within their brigade and or group,” she added.

Ends