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MEDIA RELEASE

MARK CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF SUPPORTING HIS COMMUNITY

Having a business across the road from the local fire station put Stratford's Mark Jones in the firing line to be recruited by the CFA.

More than 25 years later he's glad he took up the offer.

Mark recently received his 25-year medal recognising volunteer contribution to the Stratford brigade, the broader CFA and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV).

A mechanic by trade, in 1988 Mark bought into a service station business. When the nearby brigade lost its radio controller, Mark was asked to give it a go.

"We were directly across the road from the fire station and were there around 13 hours a day," he said. "I thought if I was going to do the radio I might as well join and learn about fighting fires."

Since then Mark has been to thousands of incidents, both locally and as part of CFA volunteer strike teams to major disasters.

Most local incidents are grass and scrub fires or motor vehicle accidents. One that stands out was scrub fire out in a swamp. "We had to wait two hours for it to come out because it was inaccessible; it was interesting to watch the fire behaviour."

More broadly he has contributed to the strong CFA surge capacity responding to major incidents. "We went to Churchill on Black Saturday and helped at Hotham and Dargo in 2003 and on a bad day at Mt Rea," Mark said.

"That's part of the appeal; the camaraderie of working together and the satisfaction that you're helping the community."

Mark says the CFA provides a professional service that is appreciated. "The majority of people are pleased with what the CFA does," he said. "Our training has totally transformed from when I started out and we're well equipped and able to work together," he said.

In the Stratford brigade Mark has held virtually every senior role and is the District 10 VFBV president. He now works as a district mechanical officer for the CFA.

The Stratford brigade has 39 members, including several recent recruits, and Mark is encouraging more young people to join.

“It is rewarding,” he added. “I’m fortunate my wife and kids support me even when I go to something like Black Saturday when the whole sky turns dark at 3’o’clock in the afternoon.”

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford said volunteers like Mark epitomise the professionalism and dedication of CFA volunteers.

“Our volunteers continue to provide a first class service that has evolved to meet today’s needs,” Mr Ford said.

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