



December, 2017

MEDIA RELEASE

BEMM RIVER VOLUNTEERS SPEARHEAD SAFETY INITIATIVES

Two initiatives spearheaded by Bemm River Fire Brigade volunteers are making the local community a safer place.

Bemm River's new helipad is now ready for use after a campaign initiated by local CFA volunteers and a nearby 50 metre fire break has improved local fire protection.

Bemm River Fire Brigade captain Russell Pardew said the helipad was a good example of the local community uniting for a positive outcome.

"All services have been good in working together to get things up and going," Captain Pardew said. "As a community we realised we didn't have a helipad but needed one so we did something about it."

"Without a helipad, the only way people could be moved out was by road and that's not very convenient in many cases," Captain Pardew said.

Previously emergency helicopters landed at the boat club carpark but the area wasn't always available.

The brigade approached the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) which made available a Crown Land block next to the fire station

With support from Member for Gippsland East Tim Bull and East Gippsland Shire Council, the brigade also successfully applied for an Emergency Management Victoria grant.

About half of the Bemm River brigade's call outs are to motor vehicle crashes.

Captain Pardew fears this summer could be high fire risk season. "It's as dry as a chip; the country is about as dry as the end of February," he said.

The local brigade is trained and prepared to respond but has also taken the lead on fire safety.

Bemm River is now one of the few Victorian towns with a recognised fire break. The 50 metre break is buffeted by a further 50 metres of understorey removal.

Bemm River Fire Brigade regularly supports other brigades in the region. "Our brigades are about an hour apart so we have to support each other," Captain Pardew said.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria CEO Andrew Ford said the initiative of the Bemm River volunteers was an example of why CFA volunteers are essential to community spirit.

"Volunteers are part of the glue that binds communities together," Mr Ford said.

"We will continue to try to get things done as long as the community is behind us," Captain Pardew added.

"The Bemm brigade and community is fortunate to have a strong cooperative relationship with DELWP and it is this capacity to work together that such a positive outcome has been achieved."

Ends...