



## **SASSAFRAS-FERNY CREEK FIRE BRIGADE**

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# **Fire Commissioner celebrates with Sassafras-Ferny Creek**

Victoria's Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley and his wife Karen joined around 70 members and guests at the Sassafras-Ferny Creek brigade's annual dinner.

Mr Lapsley told the gathering that a change in approach to bushfire safety in high-risk areas centred on a range of options was one of the directions his office had been given through the findings of the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission.

But he said he was mindful of the particular challenges communities in locations like the Dandenong Ranges face in redefining the messages of leaving early or remaining to defend. In particular he noted the potential for huge property losses in such areas if people abandoned an approach truly based on shared responsibility. Finding a balance between private and community shelter options was equally difficult, he said.

In broad terms, Mr Lapsley also outlined the fire services reform agenda that he has presented to the State Government.

He also commended the brigade on its outstanding efforts to secure for its community a high standard of equipment, facilities and training.

A number of brigade members were honoured at the dinner for their service to CFA and the local community through CFA Service Awards. District 13 Operations Manager Dave Renkin presented awards to Firefighter Geoff Pfeifer (35 years), Lieutenant Geoff Horner (30 years), Captain John Schauble (25 years) and Firefighter Jocelyn Hammer (10 years).

In addition to the service awards, merit awards marking significant individual contributions to the brigade over the past year were also announced to Geoff Pfeifer (Firefighter of the Year) and to Gage Foik and Ray Smith (Officers' Awards).

A special presentation was also made to former captain Brian Stevens and his wife Carol, who are moving from the district after an association with the brigade stretching back more than 30 years.

Captain Schauble told members and guests that he was pleased that a relatively quiet year in operational terms meant that newer officers had been able to spend more time on training and developing their leadership skills.

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