



SASSAFRAS-FERNY CREEK FIRE BRIGADE

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CFA service honoured at Sassafras-Ferny Creek

The 2012-13 summer season was an indication of the “new normal” for Victorian firefighters, Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley told around 60 members and guests at the Sassafras-Ferny Creek brigade’s annual dinner on 23 August.

He said this was the first time many of the changes introduced in the fire services since the 2009 bushfires had been tested in real conditions.

While the State’s emergency services were continuing through a period of significant change and restructuring, he said ongoing service delivery at a community level remained the key priority for brigades.

Mr Lapsley told the gathering he was pleased to see many of the post-2009 initiatives in operational and community safety terms were evident in the Dandenong Ranges. In particular, he pointed to the adoption of community warning sirens, the Dandenong Ranges Landscape Planning project and the pilot community fire refuge at Ferny Creek as evidence of the willingness of hills communities to embrace change.

But he said he remained mindful of the particular challenges that community members in places like the Dandenongs face in making decisions around leaving early or remaining to defend their property.

Mr Lapsley commended the brigade on ongoing efforts to secure a high standard of fire protection and community engagement.

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 Officer Graeme Bourne presented awards to Lieutenant John Tomada (20 years), Lieutenant Paul Hicks (15 years), Brigade Members Geoff Birkett and Gwen Horner (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 Lyndy Jewell (Firefighter of the Year) and to Tony Lander (Officers’ Award).

Captain John Schauble told members and guests that the past year had seen the brigade committed in Gippsland during the campaign fires and busy locally at a number of domestic structure fires. He praised the efforts of the brigade leadership team on improved training and development opportunities delivered to the brigade.