



Media Release

Victoria State Emergency Service

12 November 2020

After bushfire, pandemic and more VICSES turns attention to family



Behind every brave and hard-working Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) volunteer is a support network of people that help them achieve amazing things.

The 2019/2020 bushfire season was an especially trying time for eastern Victoria in 2020, with the small town of Cann River among many facing a massive fire front and significant loss of property.

Volunteer and local Sara Matthews has detailed her experience in Cann River, and has praised her family for their support and love, which has fuelled Sara's drive to support community through VICSES.

Sara has credited the stoicism of her young son and her father who stayed to defend his property – also in East Gippsland. Sara says being reunited with them after phone lines were down and roads blocked for some time was something she's extremely grateful for. Thankfully, Sara's home also survived.

While there was substantial loss of land and property during the 2019/2020 bushfire season, Sara says that her town showed an amazing resourcefulness and positive spirit. She spoke in further detail on the new *VICSES Orange Podcast* about her experience. You can listen by [following this link](#).

'YFOF' takes place on [14 & 15 November](#), and is an opportunity to thank the numerous people supporting every member of VICSES. They are the unsung heroes behind Victoria's first responders.

For more information, contact:

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Quotes attributable to Cann River unit volunteer Sara Matthews:

“Family is everything, at the end of the day. Being a VICSES member comes with lots of challenges and sacrifices, and my loved ones do whatever they can to ensure I can go out and help the community. I’m so grateful for that.”

“My son was quite apprehensive during the bushfire season and was evacuated as I stuck around to volunteer with VICSES. There was no power and no phone service, and I was thinking of him the whole time, alongside my Dad, who stayed at his property to protect his home.”

“I’m an east Gippy girl at heart, always have been. These bushfires and floods are things we have to face - they are part of the natural world. Having family along for the journey is really special.”