

# media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



## Adelaide grandmother helps MFS firefighters comfort children

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Adelaide grandmother, Fay Smith is an integral part of an MFS firefighter's role at emergency incidents affecting children.

From her northern suburbs home, she spends hours lovingly knitting and embroidering comfort dolls that have become an essential tool on many Adelaide-based MFS fire trucks.

The colourful dolls might spend days, weeks or months riding along in the trucks next to angle grinders, air sets and the jaws of life – until they're suddenly and very urgently needed.

MFS Commander Community Safety and Resilience, Greg Howard, said some of the most challenging incidents firefighters respond to involve children who've been affected by trauma.

"Once we've extracted people and made an incident scene safe, that's when firefighters might have a role comforting a child who has witnessed a crash or fire."

"Fay's handmade comfort dolls are an important part of helping a child cope with what they might have seen. The dolls provide immediate comfort from a firefighter - and lasting support as the child recovers," MFS Commander Howard said.

Fay, the mother of an MFS firefighter, receives regular feedback from crews that her skilfully handcrafted dolls are making a difference.

"They've told me that when you give children the doll, they just light up, you know the look on their faces. I've got a letter from one firefighter... and he'd given a few out and he said seeing the joy on their faces, he said that he hoped I keep doing them."

Fay Smith has been creating comfort dolls for the MFS for about six years and estimates she's made at least 600 of them in that time. Each doll is unique and takes a day to complete.

The dolls vary in themes, from firefighters, paramedics, police officers, volunteer rescue workers through to pirates, ballerinas and even Rambo. Feedback indicates that Rambo appears to be the crowd favourite.

One of Fay's favourite stories involves two children who received the dolls from a firefighter at an incident scene. "The firefighter gave the boy one doll and the girl one doll. And next thing he looked around the girl's got both of them and she's said, 'you're not having them, they're too nice!'"

All jokes aside, Fay dearly loves her important role with the MFS comfort dolls project.

"It's gratifying to me to know that they are appreciated."

"I keep all the little letters I receive from the fire service, which is nice; it's nice to feel appreciated. It makes my day."

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