

# CFA set for digital switch

**JOSH FAGAN**

THE Country Fire Authority says Bendigo brigades are on track to switch over to a new digital network for this fire season.

A digital communication link with the central dispatch unit is expected to be ready for use in December.

Bendigo and surrounding areas in the CFA district 02 region will be among the first to be connected to the upgraded network in the new roll-out.

District 02 operations officer Steve Smith said the transition period was already well underway.

He said hundreds of radios would soon be switched over to the digital-based network to help with dispatching call-outs and two-way communication.

“Every radio will have to be upgraded to enable the digital functionality,” he said.

“The radios aren’t going to change. But we need to make sure everyone’s aware of the new functions.”

Mr Smith said volunteers and staff firefighters at all brigades

would be trained on how to use the new functions between October and November.

“It’s the biggest project that’s going to be implemented before summer,” he said.

“We’ve got approximately two months to get people trained and make sure they’re capable of using the system.”

A CFA spokesman said the state-wide upgrades to the Regional Radio Dispatch Service was on schedule.

The \$42.9 million project is part of a program to eventually switch over to digitally enabled Tait radios.

Mr Smith said all firefighters would still be able to use both analogue and digital networks, even when the switch over comes online.

But he said the transition period over the coming months would be critical in focusing on radio upgrades, testing and training.

CFA chief officer Euan Ferguson said the network would provide regional brigades with direct radio communications to the dispatch operators, and a new generation of high-quality digital dispatch capability across the state.



FROM THE HEART: Rani Jayasekera placed second in the Dorothea Mackellar award. Picture: JIM ALDERSEY

## Poem wins Rani accolades

RANI Jayasekera only started writing poetry this year but is already making her mark.

The year 10 Girton Grammar School student came second in the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards annual poetry competition recently.

Her poem, titled *Sticks and Stones may break my Bones but Words can Break my Heart*, centred around the topic of relationship break down.

“I wrote it about what it is like

to break up a relationship with a partner or friend,” she said.

“It is silly to think that words can’t hurt someone, because they can.”

She said she had never really enjoyed writing poetry but had acquired a liking for it through her literature class.

Rani will receive \$300 in prize money, books and a national promotion of her work.

Literature teacher Amanda

Scott said several students from the school had entered their work into the competition.

“I strongly believe that writers need readers, and I wanted to encourage them to take the risk by entering this competition,” she said.

“This particular competition has a national profile and the standards are obviously commensurately higher, which makes Rani’s achievement all the more wonderful.” – MADDIE WINES

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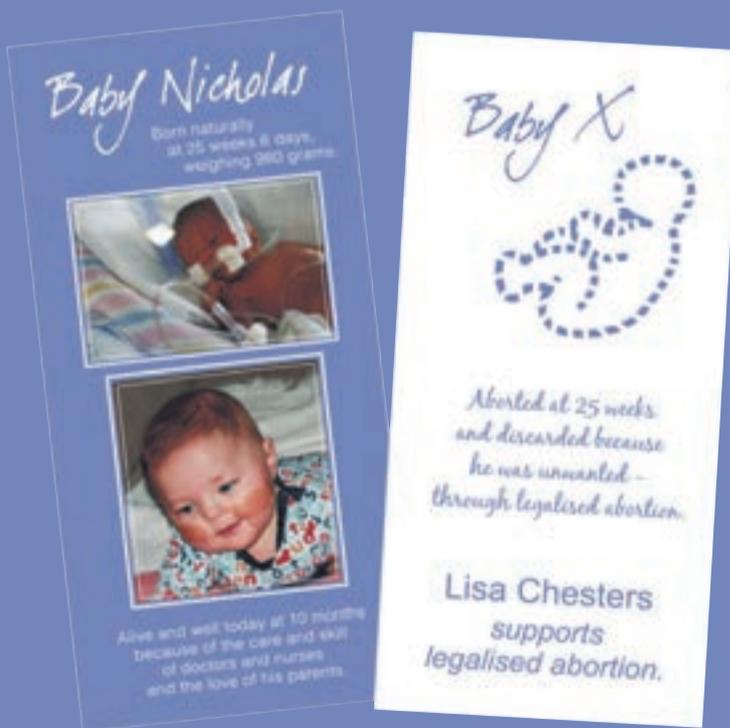
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**Lisa Chesters ALP candidate for Bendigo is a member of EMILY’s List.**



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