



March/April 2019

HOT TOPICS

Celebrating our network

A HUGE THANK YOU TO DAVID AND MAY



Photo: Members of the Labasheeda Volunteer Bushfire Brigade joined David and May Joyce to celebrate their outstanding contribution to the brigade for over three decades.

Thank you to David and May Joyce of the Labasheeda Park Volunteer Bushfire Brigade, who have generously provided the use of their own home for the benefit of their brigade and their community for more than 30 years.

They selflessly formed the foundations of the brigade and quickly became trusted and well respected members of their community.

They kindly opened their doors to provide a place where the brigade members could come together and in turn it became one that the community could depend on for fire management help and advice. Oh, and of course, their patch also served as the place to store and maintain vehicles and equipment as well as the local firefighting water source.

After years of planning and a few frustrations the brigade now has a new HQ facility to call home.

This achievement would not be possible without the leadership, hard work and commitment of such a remarkable couple and an example of what a community organisation can achieve under the right direction, discipline and determination.

Dave's local knowledge and humour will be hard to replace and May's diligence won't be easy to beat as they step away to enjoy the next phase in their lives.

The Bushfires NT community would like to wish them all the best in their new adventures and hope they stay in touch.

Thank you!

DEPLOYMENT TO VICTORIAN FIRES

Regional Fire Management Officer Christine Platell and Senior Fire Management Officer Lee Gleeson joined a multi-state force – fighting fires in Victoria in March.

The trip presented a great opportunity, for Christine especially, to see how they do things in the “high” country... and she created a little bit of history along the way.

Christine’s account of her time in Victoria

Lee Gleeson and I went to the Incident Control Centre (ICC) in Melbourne to meet Andrew Crisp, the Victorian Emergency Management Commissioner. We also spoke to other staff who highlighted the areas of concern with the fires around Licola and Dargo.

Lee Gleeson was recently appointed as the new Senior Fire Management Officer for Central Australia and recently worked for Parks Victoria. He was requested to take up the Air Operations Manager role for the week.

Lee and I were introduced to the Traralgon Incident Management Team (IMT) crews before heading to Heyfield for the handover.

Lee was welcomed by Victorian crews and slotted into his role of Air Operations Manager very easily. I hung with the planning team, seeing what information they were placing into the Incident Action Plan and Incident Shift Plan.

With 400 people to account for in this IMT (57 in the IMT and 346 out in the field), it was impressive how smoothly it all worked.

Heyfield IMT were looking after eight fires when we arrived. They were monitoring three in inaccessible country and had crews with dozers, mulchers, graders, loaders, water carts, rollers, helicopters, single engine air tractors, heavy air tractors, repel crews and firefighting crews/units engaged on the rest of the blazes.

I was involved with all aspects in the IMT including public information, resources, facility, welfare, fire behaviour, heavy machinery, safety, communications, operations, air operations and



Christine Platell all set for lift off during her deployment to the Victorian Bushfires

situation officering (there were a lot of other roles but they were the admin side of things and not for me).

I found the planning, situation and operations crews the most informative and they assisted me with the paperwork before it was forwarded to the Incident Controller (IC) and the Deputy IC.

It all worked like a well-oiled machine once crews were settled into their roles with communications flowing.



Bushfires Lee Gleeson (right) hard at work on the Victorian deployment

Three briefings were held each day. One for the ground crews going out on the fire line; one at Latrobe Airfield for aircraft; and one with the IMT office staff keeping all informed of what was expected of them and what they were trying to achieve.

I enjoyed being able to assist all with the flow of the IMT.

But, the highlight of the week was when I thought I was going to be Air Observer and get to see how the aircraft works in the mountains with fire. But, I ended up getting to be Air Attack Supervisor (AAS) for the day.

Their radio system for aircraft is fantastic with the AAS in full control of all communications.

I was very lucky to be mentored by Jan Radic (AAS) and Pilot Neville Wright. They both kept me up to date with the topography and what the plan was for the mountainous area.

I assisted with hot refuelling, communicating with air bases, tasking aircraft and ground crews; and getting on the ground at Dargo IMT to show them what we had seen from the air.

Sometimes drawing lines on maps is the easiest way to get the information correct in Sector Commander's eyes, and usually that confirmed what they were thinking and planning.



Inside the Victorian Incident Management Team

I also found out at the end that I was the first woman to be Air Attack Supervisor in Victoria. Yes, I was a little chuffed and proud to be Territorian.

For what we have up here and what we do, we are definitely at the top of the mulga heap when it comes to containing our wildfires and our mitigation programs.

It was great to see all states and territories from the mainland helping to control these menacing fires.

I am thankful for the opportunity to see a campaign fire in motion and it reminded me how proud I feel about how well we do things in the Territory.

VICTORIA RIVER DISTRICT AND ROPER RIVER BUSHFIRE PLANNING MEETINGS 2019

Mark Gardener, Bushfires NT Senior Risk Planner and Troy Munckton, Senior Fire Management Officer

Every year at the end of the Wet season a number of landholder groups get together to across northern NT to plan for the coming bushfire season.

On March 12 and 14, the Victoria River District Conservation Association and the Roper River Landcare group met in Top Springs and Mataranka respectively.

The meetings were attended by pastoralists, hay growers, defence, Parks and Wildlife, Bushfires NT, Weed Management Branch, Aboriginal ranger groups and the Indigenous Land Corporation.

The meeting highlighted the importance of good communication between neighbours and getting fire management plans completed early so to be ready for variable seasonal conditions (e.g. this Wet season was well below average in both districts).



Belinda Townend from Weeds Branch discussing prickly bushes

COMMUNITY SUCCESS

The Tennant Creek Volunteer Bushfire Brigade was the deserving winner of Bushfires NT Best Community Engagement Award for 2018.

The brigade has worked hard under great leadership to increase their presence in the local Tennant Creek area which has made a real difference.

Their increased community engagement activities has seen an increase in volunteer numbers and created a greater awareness of the valuable work they do in support of their community. Well done guys and keep it up!



Photo: Ngaire Donald, Captain and Keven Stout, Deputy Captain



EVERYONE HAS A DUTY OF CARE REGARDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

A timely reminder for all as we head into the fire season.

Everyone has a duty of care at work, this includes when undertaking a volunteer role.

People conducting a business or undertaking (organisations) and workers, including volunteers are responsible for their own health and safety.

And just as importantly they are responsible for the health and safety of others while at work. This includes while volunteering for Bushfires NT.

For more information or to help understand volunteer rights and obligations under WHS law visit www.worksafe.nt.gov.au/LawsAndCompliance/Pages/volunteers.aspx

Everyone's safety must be everyone's priority! It is important to us that you and others return home safely.

AIDR VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) has announced its Volunteer Leadership Program dates for 2019.

The immersive three-day program is designed for emergency sector volunteers with the aspiration and aptitude for leadership within their organisations.

The Darwin program is being held on 24-26 May 2019 at the Club Tropical Resort, Lee Point. See www.clubtropicalresortdarwin.com.au - all arrangements met by AIDR (unless otherwise stated).

So far BFNT have had interest from the below Volunteers:

- Paul Johnston – Lambells Lagoon
- Ralph Dein – Murrumbidgee
- Ngaire Donald – Tennant Creek
- Keven Stout – Tennant Creek
- Barrie Diggins – Manton
- Douglas Barden – Berry Springs (considering enrolling)

For more information visit www.aidr.org.au/events

UPCOMING FF1 TRAINING

Bushfires NT Training and Extension Officer Wendy Coughlan wants volunteers to know there are still places available on the FF1 training courses on May 11 and 12; and June 1 and 2.

The courses will be held at Berry Springs. For more information contact Wendy on 08 8922 0788 or email training.bushfiresnt@nt.gov.au





By Ken Baulch
Director Policy and Planning

The North Australian Savannah fire forum was held at Charles Darwin University in February.

While this was only the second year that this forum has been held, it has quickly become the premier land and fire management forum for northern Australia.

This year around 250 people attended, including land managers from Cape York, the Gulf country, the Top End of the Territory, Central Australia, the Kimberley and the Pilbara.

There was also a strong representation of scientists and researchers and policy makers from the Commonwealth and state and territory governments.

There were fantastic presentations from land and fire managers from all parts of the industry, with a focus on fire management for greenhouse gas abatement.

While the sharing of stories through formal presentations was great, the most telling benefit of this event will flow from the networking and informal ideas exchange that it allowed.

Bushfires NT was a proud sponsor of the event in collaboration with the Commonwealth government, the Indigenous Land Corporation, CDU and the Indigenous Carbon Industry Network.



Photo: Mark Gardner (left) from Bushfires NT with Phil Hickey from the Weed Management Branch at the forum



Photo: Ken Baulch presenting at the forum



Photo: Willie Rioli from the Tiwi Land Rangers addressing the forum