

24seven

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CEO's message

In recent times FESA staff and volunteers throughout Western Australia have responded to a number of major events in the wake of natural disasters and emergencies.

I am extremely proud of the way we have all worked together in a professional, efficient and compassionate manner despite the challenging weather conditions, danger and devastation encountered.

Given the magnitude, severity and number of incidents it is exceptional that not one life was lost. This was largely due to the quick and effective response effort, whether at the floods in the Gascoyne, Wheatbelt and Kimberley, bushfires in Karnup, Lake Clifton, Red Hill and Roleystone, Tropical Cyclones Bianca, Carlos and Dianne, or significant storms that affected Perth, Northam and York.

To achieve a cohesive response across so many incidents and vast geographical areas involves an enormous amount of training, planning, coordination and effective multiagency cooperation, and I thank everyone who played a part in combating these significant emergencies.

While facing challenges on the home front, we also helped out at major disasters beyond our borders. Thirty SES volunteers and Urban Search and Rescue Service (USAR) Taskforce members were deployed to Queensland to help with the flood aftermath and damage caused by Cyclone Yasi. USAR members also went to the aid of Christchurch, New Zealand following the city's tragic earthquake.

The spate of bushfires, floods, storms and cyclones highlighted the valuable contribution of career and volunteer Fire and Rescue Service firefighters, USAR crews, volunteers from Bush Fire Brigades, Fire Services, State Emergency Service and Marine Rescue Services, FESA's Air Fleet crews, and all those staff who gave their time, energy and skill to respond when our community needed help.

It was a mammoth effort all round. I know of volunteers who returned from retirement and holidays, career firefighters who came back on duty on their days off and

FESA staff who worked around the clock to assist with incident management and public information.

FESA support staff ceased regular work to undertake rotating shifts, answering calls from the public and providing other necessary support to the State Operations Centre and incident management teams.

Thousands of residents were relocated to safety and the huge recovery task quickly got underway to provide for the short and long term welfare of those affected.

FESA received hundreds of phone calls from people eager to find out about becoming emergency service volunteers, particularly during and after the bushfires. It has been heartening to see this high level of interest in our volunteer force.

We are now contributing to a Major Incident Review (MIR) into the Lake Clifton, Red Hill and Roleystone fires. The MIR is examining the organisation's operational performance and effectiveness of arrangements and assessing the preparations that led up to these incidents. Mr Stuart Ellis AM, former Chairman of the Council of Australian Government Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management, is heading up the review.

FESA is also making a comprehensive submission to the Perth Hills Bushfire February 2011 Review convened by the Premier of Western Australia and led by Mr Mick Keelty APM.

As an organisation we are committed to continuous improvement and it is critical that we reflect on how we responded, note what we did well and take in the lessons learnt.

With autumn advancing we still face the possibility of more fires as well as further floods, cyclones and early storms. I ask you all to keep safe and once again thank you for your ongoing commitment.

Jo Harrison-Ward
FESA Chief Executive Officer

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Flooding in the Gascoyne.

Magazine articles are welcome – please send to: Editor – 24seven, FESA Media and Public Affairs, GPO BOX P1174, Perth WA 6844 or email: kristine.smith@fesa.wa.gov.au

Stories should be up to 450 words in length and submitted with accompanying images wherever possible. Digital photographs are required to be taken on a 4+ megapixel camera at the highest possible resolution setting to ensure acceptable quality for printing. Photographic prints are also welcome – please mark with name and address if return is required.

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Major flooding swamps Carnarvon and Gascoyne Junction



Aerial view of flood inundation of low lying areas, property and plantations along the west end North River Road, Carnarvon.

Emergency services personnel worked tirelessly to help people in Carnarvon, Gascoyne Junction and surrounding areas after they were impacted by severe flooding in December.

While the 1960 Carnarvon flood record was 7.62 metres, the 2010 peak reached 7.79 metres.

A year's worth of rain fell in less than two days, leaving homes, properties and businesses submerged, turning main roads into rivers, ruining millions of dollars worth of crops and drowning thousands of cattle.

The main town of Carnarvon was cut off, isolating its 5,000 residents.

Emergency services personnel, with the aid of FESA and WA Police helicopters, were called in to help people relocate from the torrent of brown water that swamped several areas.

The Bureau of Meteorology said a slow moving monsoonal low caused the massive downpours.

Geraldton State Emergency Service (SES) District Manager Tim Dalwood said it was a coordinated effort to help the community.

"Up to 100 personnel including SES volunteers and FESA staff from across the state left their families and friends

just before Christmas to pitch in and support local emergency services and the community," Tim said.

"They reinforced Carnarvon's levees which helped prevent the overflowing river from impacting the town, and sandbagged around homes.

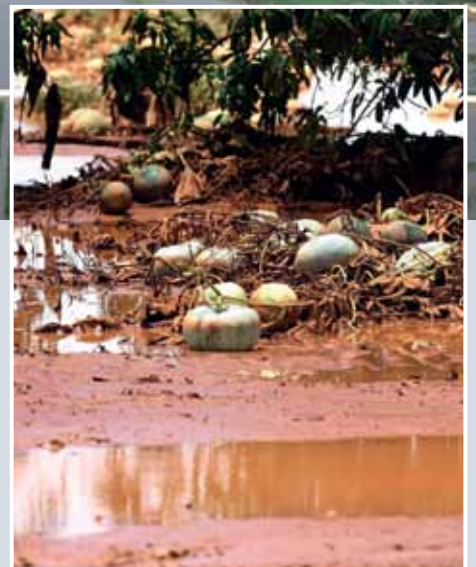
"They were also busy helping people relocate from the light industrial area east of town, as well as residential areas and caravan parks."

While the main town of Carnarvon was spared, floodwaters did inundate about 70 homes and 170 plantations and pastoral stations. This left more than 100 stations and Indigenous communities cut off. It also resulted in massive fruit and vegetable crop damage, along with considerable stock losses.

Around 180 people took refuge in the relocation centre at the Carnarvon Civic Centre.

The floods also affected Gascoyne Junction, 170 kilometres east of Carnarvon, where record breaking peaks left the small community with damaged structures and roads. The historic century old Junction Hotel was destroyed after water inundated it to roof level.

Tim said the Gascoyne floods saw the SES receive more than 300 calls for assistance, mainly for relocation and flood damage to properties.



With plantations ravaged by floodwaters, fruit and vegetable crops were decimated. Photo courtesy of *The West Australian*.

"SES volunteers used flood boats and helicopters to rescue dozens of people from properties around the region," he said.

"Roads disappeared under water, power and telecommunications were cut, the water supply was affected and industries shut down."

Flood damage has been estimated at around \$100 million.

Tim said as the waters started to recede, strike teams were soon on the scene to help with the clean up. They were made up of SES volunteers from the Mid West region and the Perth metropolitan area, as well as members of the Volunteer Marine Rescue Services (VMRS), Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) and Rio Tinto employees.

“The teams helped people clear collapsed ceilings and other debris, pumped out flood water and assisted people stranded in isolated areas,” Tim said.

“FESA organised for five planes of food and water from Perth to be delivered to pastoral stations and several Indigenous communities that were isolated.

“A further two helicopters in the region carried out rescues and supplied communities and stations with essential items.”

Resupply continued until road delivery services were re-established some weeks later.

Goods transported from the Eastern States had to travel an extra 1,000 kilometres to reach flood impacted communities because of road closures.

Premier Colin Barnett visited the area and declared it a natural disaster zone, along with parts of the Pilbara.

Second coming

Carnarvon residents left their homes for the second time just two weeks later, after rising floodwaters again threatened the town. The cause was a tropical low near the Kimberley coast that produced heavy falls in the Gascoyne catchment.

Tim said while this second flood was not as bad as the first, it did bring further inundation to low lying properties and isolated communities.

“When the news came that another flood was set to arrive it was a major blow to the community as repairs were just getting underway for the first event,” Tim said.

“Fortunately the Gascoyne River peaked at 6.5 metres on 7 January, below the flood level, and there was a great sense of relief in the community.”

Prime Minister Julia Gillard flew in to Carnarvon to inspect the damage and announce further Commonwealth relief funding.

Outstanding effort

Tim said volunteers from the SES, VMRS and VFRS along with FESA staff, did a remarkable job helping residents.

“The fact that there were no deaths or injuries from these floods is due largely to the exceptional efforts of all our personnel, along with other agencies that worked so well together,” Tim said.

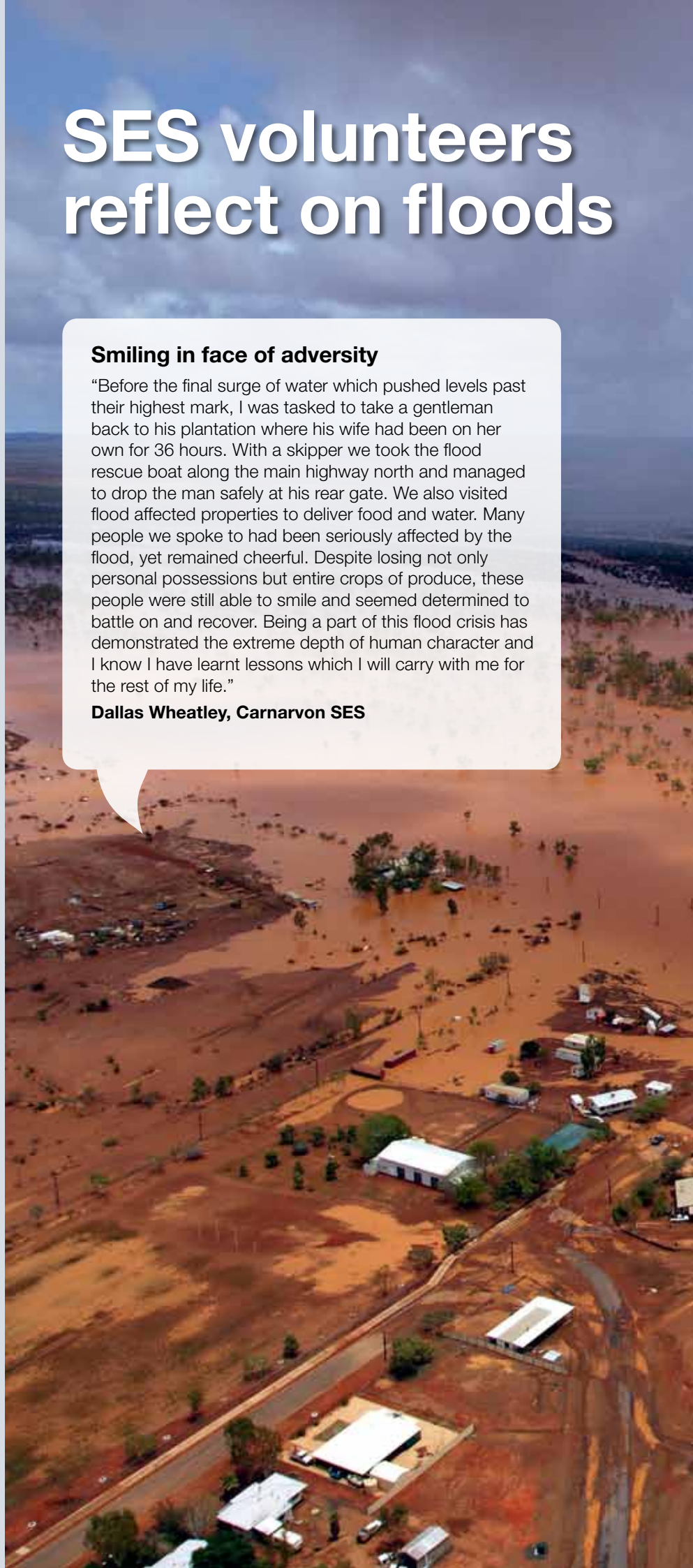
“Everyone played a vital role in helping the community get back on its feet as quickly as possible.”

SES volunteers reflect on floods

Smiling in face of adversity

“Before the final surge of water which pushed levels past their highest mark, I was tasked to take a gentleman back to his plantation where his wife had been on her own for 36 hours. With a skipper we took the flood rescue boat along the main highway north and managed to drop the man safely at his rear gate. We also visited flood affected properties to deliver food and water. Many people we spoke to had been seriously affected by the flood, yet remained cheerful. Despite losing not only personal possessions but entire crops of produce, these people were still able to smile and seemed determined to battle on and recover. Being a part of this flood crisis has demonstrated the extreme depth of human character and I know I have learnt lessons which I will carry with me for the rest of my life.”

Dallas Wheatley, Carnarvon SES



Effort worthwhile

“Coming into land at Carnarvon gave us a view of the brown flood waters starting to inundate the town. I was tasked as Operations Manager and saw enthusiastic volunteers very quickly form a capable operations group. At one stage I recall stopping and listening to one volunteer on the phone. The professional way she requested and noted the required information, gave advice, safety information and encouragement was like she had been doing it for years, not just a few hours. The evening soon started getting busier as flood levels continued to rise. There were urgent requests for help from people whose homes had been inundated or those in danger from being swept away by the brown torrents. What remains firmly in my memory is walking back to our motel and seeing people come out of their caravans, applaud and voice their thanks for the efforts that we, the SES had put in. Other cars were tooting their horns and yelling “Good on you, well done!” as they drove past.”

Mac Holt, Kalbarri SES

Teamwork saves the day

“Flying in we sat in silence, looking at what appeared to be an island. Half the town was above water levels and the balance, along with surrounding plantations, roads, paddocks and the river, had been subject to flooding. We were greeted at the airport by an army vehicle and reality hit at this stage when I realised how serious the situation was. The low lying ground in and out of the airport was underwater. White posts on the side of the road were no longer visible, as the water level sat comfortably centimetres below our vehicle windows. At one point we contacted base to report a call for help - a person was experiencing a severe asthma attack in the flooded area. Shortly after the Polair helicopter hovered over the property and the crew winched down. Within minutes the elderly man was airlifted to safety. The helicopter continued to relocate stranded individuals all across the Gascoyne area. The experience was an eye opener.”

Jamie Burton, Shark Bay SES

Inside the operations room

“I worked on the night shift for five nights and my role evolved over this time. I found myself involved in planning and logistics for the following day’s activities and helped to develop an evacuation plan for a worst case scenario if the town’s levy banks did not hold. Many people join the SES to be at the coalface, out in the action, and not to answer phones. But as time went by I learnt that good coordination in the operations room helps teams in the field produce positive outcomes. It’s an important link in the information chain. I also learnt it’s critical to pass the tasks on to others and trust my teammates to finish the job. I have to give credit to the valuable input from FESA and Police staff who were part of the operations room.”

Warren “Daisy” Day, Carnarvon SES

Helitac brings calm to troubled waters



Aerial view of flooding in the Gascoyne, taken from the FESA Type 1 helicopter deployed to the area.

A Type 1 Helitac crew more accustomed to fighting bushfires helped out by rescuing people caught up in the worst flooding to hit the Carnarvon area in 50 years.

For pilot Brian Wienmeyer it was a shocking scenario that involved families flooded out of homesteads, communities isolated and a year's rainfall in less than two days.

"I was amazed at the amount of water that covered the plains. This was a widespread, huge and sudden water delivery. I've never seen anything like it," Brian said.

In operations often carried out in conjunction with the WA Police helicopter *Polair*, the FESA chopper played an essential role in ensuring the health and wellbeing of people impacted by the floods.

Brian said a rescue at Gascoyne Junction saw Helitac 682 provide strategic fuel support to *Polair* before undertaking a rescue.

"The police helicopter crew winched 15 stranded people up to safety and after landing the group they were transferred



FESA Air Intelligence Officer Phil Brandrett on board the Type 1 helicopter that transported stranded people to safety in Gascoyne Junction.

on board our chopper. We then flew them to safety in Carnarvon," Brian said.

"Those rescued had spent hours stranded on rooftops or vehicles, surrounded by masses of swirling brown water.

"It appeared to me that being on the aircraft was the first time they had been able to relax in many hours.

"You could see the relief on their faces when their feet finally touched solid ground and they realised their ordeal was over.

"Although they were complete strangers, they soon became one of us. It was very rewarding to see they were going to be okay and know you'd helped them get through a difficult time."

The next day the helicopter was again tasked to assist a family stranded at Meeka Station.

"On landing our crew boarded four children and one elderly woman who were then transported out of the flood zone and across the water to a station where they could be taken care of," Brian said.

"Although the children in particular were initially frightened of the aircraft, everyone was glad to be rescued."

For Brian the contribution of volunteers and the resolute nature and spirit of the people impacted by the floods was inspiring.

"The volunteers just show up and focus on what needs to be done," he said.

"The level of commitment to those affected by the flood was fantastic and their attitude was to get on with it.

"There was such resilience all round. I was surprised and impressed by it."

Deliberate blaze threatens Karnup

Strong winds sent embers flying and starting spot fires.
Photos this page courtesy of *The West Australian*.

As FESA responded to a large number of incidents on the last day of November, it heralded the likelihood that the 2010-11 summer season would be an incredibly busy one that would test career and volunteer personnel, as well as staff.

That day saw FESA pull out all the stops as it dealt with a total of 110 incidents, including 50 bushfires.

A deliberately lit fire that started near Mandurah Road in Golden Bay just prior to noon destroyed wildlife and more than 500 hectares of Anstey Reserve in the Rockingham Lakes Regional Park.

It took two days to bring the blaze under control after a sea breeze fanned flames, causing a number of new spot fires to start and dangerous embers to threaten homes and businesses in Fletcher Road, Karnup.

Incident Controller Doug Smith said major disruption was experienced by the community, but the outcome was positive in that no people were harmed or homes destroyed.

"Although lives and buildings were threatened, and businesses lost revenue due to disruptions, people in the area were fortunate not to have experienced injury or property damage," Doug said.

"This can be attributed to their level of preparedness and quick action, as well as excellent work and cooperation between the various agencies combating the fire."

Doug added that the weather was a major factor, with fire intensity increasing as the temperature and wind soared, and abating as it reduced.

"There was no let up for fire crews during the day and when things cooled down a bit overnight they remained busy establishing containment lines," he said.

"To add to firefighting demands at the time, a series of suspicious fires were also reported in the area."

The fire jumped Mandurah Road and burnt along the railway line towards a Shell petrol station being protected by firefighters. It then took off into Karnup after spotting caused it to jump the railway line and spread rapidly in a north easterly direction.

FESA was quick to advise local residents about the need to take action. Many relocated early, while others chose to stay and defend their properties.

With unpredictable winds and the ever present risk of the fire escaping and threatening lives and property, parts of Karnup remained on alert throughout Wednesday.

When the wind increased that evening the fire jumped the containment line where it had been pulled up the previous night. Additional firefighting crews were immediately deployed to provide asset protection.

As the blaze moved quickly towards property, FESA issued an emergency warning along with StateAlert messages, advising residents to take shelter. Because of the fire speed and flying



It took firefighters days of mopping up to extinguish smoldering bush.

embers raining down on unburnt bush and grass, new fires were being started close to buildings and it was not safe to actively defend.

The fire burnt up to the edge of residential properties and market gardens where it was contained, but still not under control.

More than 100 firefighters from the career and volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, Bush Fire Service and Department of Environment and Conservation worked in difficult conditions to extinguish the fire, using 50 fire appliances.

They were supported by Helitacs and fixed wing water bombers on both days.

Firefighters worked hard to stop it from taking off, and saved property after property in the path of the raging fire front.



Multiagency effort combats Lake Clifton inferno

Operational firefighters, aerial support and incident management teams put in a mammoth and concerted effort to bring the Lake Clifton bushfire under control. Their hard work and tenacity in the face of a rapidly intensifying blaze saved at least 40 homes, while 10 homes were lost along with 1,450 hectares of bushland and pasture.

The first triple zero (000) call came at midday on Monday 10 January reporting a smouldering scrub fire burning along Forrest Highway, near the cross of Dorsett and Old Bunbury Roads, Lake Clifton.

Multiple emergency calls soon followed, with sightings of several spot fires over a two kilometre radius.

Concerned drivers saw large, towering plumes of dark grey smoke shadowing their cars both north and south on Forrest Highway.

FESA quickly issued an emergency warning which was ongoing until the next morning.

The initial Incident Controller Waroona Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and Waroona Fire Service Captain John Twaddle said at its peak the fire front stretched one kilometre wide across an already parched landscape that provided ample fire fuel.

“The time from receiving reports of the initial fire to the impact on property was incredibly short,” John said.

“The majority of damage occurred within the first few hours of the fire.”

Up to 100 kilometres away in Perth a thick veil of smoke could be seen clouding parts of the skyline.



“It was one of the most cohesive and effective multiagency operations, despite the unfortunate loss of property.”

Photo at top and above courtesy of Alf Sorbello, *Perth Now*.



Smoke from the fires disrupted traffic on several roads in the area including Forrest Highway. Photo courtesy of *The West Australian*.

Surrounded by native bush, the streets of Lake Clifton were a smokey maze of flames, floating embers, fire trucks and firefighters.

Subsequent Incident Controller District Manager Country Operations Chris Widmer said that by mid to late afternoon the fire threat had intensified substantially.

“It became clear the fire had escalated beyond what could reasonably be managed with local resources and FESA planned for a prolonged incident,” Chris said.

People were encouraged to leave their homes as flames fanned by strong easterly winds reached higher than roof tops and threatened properties.

Dozens of people made the decision to relocate to the Waroona Aquatic and Recreation Centre.

The fast moving wall of flame travelled quickly through the Armstrong Hills and Tuart Grove sub divisions of Lake Clifton where ten homes along with sheds and fences were destroyed.

By mid-afternoon a large multiagency operational taskforce of 200 personnel had been deployed, utilising the Australasian Interservice Incident Management System (AIIMS) and combined FESA and Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) preformed teams.

Chris said it was one of the most cohesive and effective multiagency operations he had been involved in, despite the unfortunate loss of property.



The Lake Clifton bushfire destroyed this home. Photo courtesy of Alf Sorbello, *Perth Now*.

“A sophisticated mobile Control Centre with nine purpose built offices, first aid post and mobile policing facility was fully operational on Forrest Highway, near the Old Bunbury Road intersection to combat the fire,” Chris said.

“Up to 200 career and volunteer Fire and Rescue Service crews, Bush Fire Service volunteer firefighters from 13 brigades, along with crews from DEC and the Forest Products Commission, worked tirelessly to contain the blaze.

“Valuable assistance was also provided by State Emergency Service volunteers and WA Police.

“At the height of the incident firefighters were supported by 29 firefighting appliances and 16 earth moving machines.

“During daylight two Type 1 helicopters and six fixed wing water bombers

from Perth and Bunbury operated continuously from the air for more than 21 hours.”

Over the course of three days the aerial fleet made a massive 162 drops, dumping 258,322 litres of water and using 520 litres of foam to hold back the fire.

The FESA Air Intelligence helicopter also dedicated more than 15 hours of flying time to the incident, gathering data and surveying damage.

The fire was contained three days later, although burning trees, downed powerlines and flare ups continued to create hazardous ground conditions.

The fire was extinguished and the area made safe on the morning of Thursday 13 January.

The FESA Vintage Restoration Team needs your help

Members of this dedicated team of volunteers are currently working to restore Motor No.78, a Ford D600 Marksman appliance decommissioned in 1991.

Team members already have the appliance looking good and performing well, but they still require further items to complete the restoration.

In particular, they are looking for brass or aluminium firefighting equipment.

If you can assist, please contact Bob Cook on 9458 4327, Frank Pratt 9409 1127 or the Restoration Team Coordinator John McMahon on 0411 469 849.



Helitacs reign once again

Canadian Brian Wienmeyer is on his first tour of duty to Western Australia piloting the large Type 1 Helitac, an aircraft he views as a highly versatile machine capable of not only water bombing, but also handling crew and cargo transport operations.

“In a two hour cycle we have a four minute turnaround time and can deliver water at a rapid rate before we require fuel, provided there is a nearby water source to replenish from,” Brian said.

“This equates to roughly 48,000 litres delivered in coordination with FESA Air Attack wherever needed, and with pinpoint accuracy.

“The precision comes from the aircraft’s ability to salvo a load using either both doors open when it can drop a greater volume of water, or one door open where the water can be strung out over a distance.

“It all depends on the airspeed and altitude of the aircraft.”

In Brian’s homeland the role of the Helitac is primarily protecting industrial timber values rather than structures, as is the case here.

He acknowledged that fighting fires was pretty universal and the role of the aerial fleet was consistent whether operating in Australia, Canada or the United States.

“Our main function is to try to redirect and slow down the bushfire, protect structures and deliver as much water as we can to achieve that,” Brian said.

“There are some differences with regard to local terrain and wind conditions though.

“It’s flatter here and you have shifting winds, usually a coastal wind that changes through the day. Your terrain also allows a nice steady approach.”



Pilot Brian Wienmeyer at the controls of the Type 1 chopper.

During the Lake Clifton fires in January the Helitacs and other aerial fleet water bombers assisted ground crews with fighting the blaze.

Together they saved many structures in a rapidly spreading fire that threatened a number of homes situated among dispersed vegetation.

Recalling the difficult conditions aerial crews experienced during that bushfire, Brian said considering the circumstances he thought there was a good chance a lot more structures would be lost.

“We had a fire line we’d identified coming into Lake Clifton and dropped one load at the back of a home, went to get water and on return the smoke had laid right over, the wind had changed and I couldn’t get in for the rest of the fire,” he said.

“With every structure that doesn’t get protected you think about what you could have done.

“You have to try not to focus on the 10 structures that were lost, but the other forty or fifty that didn’t get burnt down.”

Helitacs only operate during daylight hours for safety reasons, but unlike the fixed wing aircraft they are able to replenish water supplies from static sources such as dams, rivers or collar tanks, allowing for a quicker turn around and more time spent at incidents.

Brian and his fellow aerial fleet crew members understand they have a critical role in how incidents are responded to and managed.

They recognise the importance of the role they undertake, and the roles and responsibilities of those on the ground.

Aerial fleet 2010/11

- As at 31 March 2011 more than 3.9 million litres of water and foam was dropped on bushfires throughout the state in nearly 2,800 drops.
- The fleet was activated 348 times and flew more than 530 hours.
- Helped to save almost 300 properties.
- Protected many lives in conjunction with firefighters on the ground.

“We never view the closure, the end of a fire, based just on what we do,” he said.

“Aircraft never put out a fire, the aircraft only assist in slowing and redirecting the main frontal area of a fire.”

It is a distinction Brian makes very clear.

“It’s always the crew down on the ground, in the hazard, that are the final people that put it out, it’s never an aircraft,” he adds.

“Until they get in and dig, cut, plough and water, it’s not fully extinguished. They are the people who do the very physical, dangerous work.”

The arrival of two Type 1 (Heavy) Sikorsky S61N multi-purpose Helitacs in WA, a month earlier than in previous years, has significantly enhanced aerial firefighting resources for metropolitan and rural regions of Western Australia.

They were brought forward to November following the driest winter on record and predictions of an early severe bushfire season.

This move proved correct when a number of incidents highlighted the need for the state’s aerial firefighting capability to be ramped up.

The helicopters join an aerial fleet that now includes eight fixed wing water bombing aircraft, four Type 3 rotary wing Helitacs, as well as an aerial intelligence helicopter.

The Type 1s can carry up to 3,785 litres of water, almost four times the amount of the smaller Type 3 Helitacs, and up to fifteen firefighters and equipment.

Initially both operating from Perth’s Jandakot airport, in January one helicopter travelled to its home base in Busselton to support the high risk South West region.

Versatile BFB veteran has many sides

It would be true to say that Brian Toussaint, a volunteer of 25 years standing with the Mandurah Southern Districts Bush Fire Brigade (BFB), has many sides.



Long serving BFB volunteer Brian Toussaint is Peel Volunteer of the Year. Photo courtesy of *Mandurah Mail*.

A professional fisherman in Mandurah before retiring, Brian held the position of brigade captain for 14 years. Wife Kaye is also a volunteer, having joined the brigade at the same time.

The civic minded pair are often called to incidents together and both were turned out to the Lake Clifton bushfire.

Brian spent a total of 20 hours at that major blaze, including a 12 hour shift on the first night, while Kaye put in 15 hours.

“We have seen some fires that have been big and bad, and Lake Clifton is one of them,” Brian said.

“Everyone involved in fighting these fires and the support units did a magnificent job in very hot, smoky and difficult conditions.”

Reflecting on his time with the brigade, Brian said while modern vehicles and equipment may have come along, some things had not changed.

“The camaraderie and satisfaction of doing something to protect the

community always stay the same,” he said.

As well as fighting hundreds of fires over a quarter century, Brian is also a dedicated conservationist who joined Men of the Trees (MOTT) five years ago.

He devotes any spare time to helping supervise the planting, growing and distribution of more than 30,000 trees a year.

“Last year MOTT donated a lot of trees to the fire ravaged Toodyay area and is growing more for them this year,” he said.

“We are also planning to do some planting at Lake Clifton in winter.”

Brian believes his work with the BFB and MOTT go hand in hand.

“At the brigade we try to save bush from being destroyed and with MOTT we grow plants to revegetate areas affected by fire, salinity and population pressure,” he said.

Brian’s contribution to the community recently saw him named City of Mandurah Peel Volunteer of the Year.

State battered by floods, cyclones and storms

Mother Nature delivered on the Bureau of Meteorology's prediction of a busy wet season thanks to the current La Nina weather pattern.

Major floods, severe tropical cyclones and thunderstorms affecting a large part of Western Australia left hundreds homeless, caused extensive damage to roads, isolated communities, destroyed crops, killed livestock and forced industries to shut down.

Assistant Chief Operations Officer Metropolitan SES Gary Gifford said dedicated FESA State Emergency Service volunteers, career and volunteer Fire and Rescue Service and Bush Fire Service firefighters,

Volunteer Emergency Service, Volunteer Fire Service and Urban Search and Rescue crews, as well as Volunteer Marine Rescue Services, came to the aid of thousands of people.

"Emergency services personnel have put in a tremendous effort around the clock to keep the community safe and help them cope following a series of wild weather events," Gary said.

"No lives were lost during these incidents and this is a reflection of the hard work and dedication of all involved.

"The past few months have been a challenging time for our personnel and they have made an excellent contribution during a very busy wet season."



Image courtesy of *National Aeronautics Space Administration (NASA)*.

Bianca tracks southwards

Tropical Cyclone Bianca travelled many thousands of kilometres along the Western Australian coast, threatening dozens of communities in its path.

Unusually, the remnants reached Perth and the South West, with Bianca being the most powerful cyclone to pass southern parts of the state in more than 30 years.

As the first cyclone for 2011 in Western Australia, Bianca was named in the early hours of Australia Day.

Over five days Bianca put communities on high alert along large stretches of the state's coast.

In Onslow an emergency storm surge relocation advice was issued for residents in low lying parts of the town.

Bianca did not make landfall, but moved out to sea and strengthened again to become a category 4 cyclone before heading towards Perth and the South West.

Although not forecast to be as destructive as Cyclone Alby in 1978, which killed five people and caused extensive damage, Bianca was expected to pack a hard punch if it reached land.

Emergency services throughout Perth and the South West were put on standby, with FESA warning communities from Geraldton to Esperance to prepare and plan for dangerous conditions.

Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes said the greatest concerns were heavy rain, storm surges in low lying areas and high wind which could have resulted in catastrophic fire conditions for inland areas.

"This was very unusual weather and had the potential to cause significant damage to homes and make travel, boating and camping very dangerous," Craig said.

Bianca weakened quickly as it moved towards the coast. By the morning of Sunday 30 January it was no longer at cyclone strength and the possible impact on Perth and the South West did not eventuate.

Avon hit by storm fury



In Northam a huge dust storm was stirred up by the wild weather.

Many hundreds of people and a total of 20 communities were impacted by severe thunderstorms that left a trail of destruction through parts of Geraldton and the Mid West, metropolitan Perth and the Wheatbelt on 29 January.

Wind gusts of more than 100 kilometres per hour left pockets of damage, including fallen trees and powerlines, as the storm passed through Geraldton and the Mid West.

District Manager SES Midlands Colin Brown said while it lasted less than half an hour, the storm was one of the worst he had experienced in close to 30 years.

“Northam felt the effects at about 3pm with the storm stirring up huge clouds of red dust. It then cut a swathe through York and continued on its destructive path.

“It turned day into night. It was like standing outside at midnight and sounded like a couple of trains roaring through.”

“It turned day into night. It was like standing outside at midnight and sounded like a couple of trains roaring through,” he said.

Colin said that following the storms the SES received more than 300 requests for assistance from Northam residents and in excess of 200 from York.

“Approximately 20 houses in Northam were uninhabitable or needed to be assessed by structural engineers, and a further 30 to 40 were severely damaged,” he said.

“In York, about 10 houses were left unlivable and 30 to 40 severely damaged.”

Colin said at least 200 volunteers assisted with the effort in York and surrounding areas to assess and help

respond to damage that included repairing roofs and structures, removing trees and freeing up roads.

“Several SES volunteers sustained damage to their own homes, but they just did a quick survey of their properties, then fronted up and did what volunteers do. That’s a pretty common occurrence.”

FESA’s State Emergency Service, Volunteer Emergency Service, Volunteer Fire Service, career and volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, Urban Search and Rescue teams and Bush Fire Service volunteers helped with the massive task.

Teams responded from both metropolitan and regional areas and were assisted by the Air Intelligence helicopter in the Avon area.

Double cyclone impact brings more flooding

“SES volunteers were busy door knocking parts of Greenough and Walkaway, encouraging people to prepare, and watch for changes in water levels.”



Tornado damage at Karratha's Mercure All Seasons Hotel.



SES volunteers and inmates from Greenough Regional Prison fill sandbags at Walkaway. Photo courtesy *Geraldton Guardian*.

Two tropical cyclones within days of each other formed near the top end of Australia in mid February, causing more flood devastation across half of the state.

FESA warned people in most parts of central and northern WA to prepare for the expected severe flooding caused by heavy downpours from ex-Tropical Cyclone Carlos and Tropical Cyclone Dianne.

As Dianne intensified to a category 2 system off the coast of Exmouth on February 17, people in flood ravaged Carnarvon braced once again for more flooding as SES volunteers from the Mid West arrived to assist local emergency services personnel.

Fortunately Dianne continued out to sea with minimal wind damage to coastal communities. The levee bank held and Carnarvon was spared, but plantations, outlying stations and Gascoyne Junction became isolated for the third time in recent months.

SES volunteers responded to 61 requests for assistance, mostly for flood preparation and resupply items.

Floods reach Mid West

In the face of heavy downpours, SES volunteers worked alongside Greenough Regional Prison inmates at Walkaway filling sandbags.

The SES also placed a temporary levee across the Geraldton-Walkaway Road to protect homes from flooding.

On 20 February people further south near Geraldton were warned that the banks of the Greenough River could break at Walkaway and the Greenough River Bridge following flooding from severe thunderstorms.

Again SES volunteers were busy door knocking parts of Greenough and Walkaway, encouraging people to prepare, and watch for changes in water levels.

As the floodwaters peaked they spread across several kilometres outside the banks of the river to Greenough Flats.

One home and stone cottage ruins were inundated with flood water while Brand Highway at Greenough River Bridge disappeared under half a metre of water.

Flood waters also isolated several hundred people in the rural Walkaway community.

Tornado hits Karratha

As the system continued to track south west towards the Pilbara region on 28 February, Karratha was hit by a tornado that afternoon which saw SES volunteers respond to damage at 38 homes, including 22 that had severe structural damage.

At least nine commercial properties including the Mercure All Seasons Hotel, Woolworths and the Karratha Vet building were also badly damaged.

Later that night FESA advised people in parts of Port Hedland to relocate immediately due to a storm surge from Carlos.

SES volunteers door knocked around 250 homes in the area and relocation centres were set up to provide refuge for around 40 people.

In the early hours of the following day a Red Alert was issued for people between Whim Creek and Mardie, before Carlos crossed the coast near Karratha around midday.

Coastal communities in the path avoided major damage as the category 2 system swept through.

The extreme weather forced the closure of twenty public schools across the north west and production at Apache's Varanus Island gas processing hub was halted temporarily.

Minimal impact on North West

Meanwhile, ex-Tropical Cyclone Carlos was travelling inland through the east Kimberley.

SES and Emergency Services volunteers assisted with localised flooding which also closed a number of roads.

Carlos reformed into a Category 1 cyclone west of Broome. Local volunteers assisted the community to prepare for a potential impact, but as the cyclone passed there was minimal damage.

Isolation in the Pilbara

Carlos and a tropical low that followed also brought heavy rainfall to the Pilbara region.

The remote Indigenous community of Punmu, about 200 kilometres east of Telfer, received more than 300 millimetres of rain over a two week period. On 2 March, 22 people from the community were relocated to Port Hedland.

After rain entered some of the buildings, damaging electrical equipment and causing waste water systems to overflow, emergency services personnel flew to Punmu to carry out repairs and assess the needs of the community.

Several food and fuel resupply operations were carried out from Port Hedland and Newman with the assistance of local SES volunteers.

FESA was continuing to resupply essential food and basic living items to isolated communities still being affected by flooding throughout March.

Flash floods wreak havoc in the Wheatbelt



SES volunteers and the Type 1 helicopter assisted the Laverton flood recovery.

The Wheatbelt town of Nungarin was hit with flash flooding on 11 February as water levels rose quickly following heavy rain.

SES volunteers from Northam and Merredin responded to calls for assistance as ten homes were flooded.

The previous day, 112 people were affected by flash flooding in the remote Goldfields Aboriginal community of Warburton.

WA Police helped relocate those affected ahead of the rising floodwaters.

Thunderstorms also brought heavy rain to parts of the Goldfields where the small community of Laverton bore the brunt of flash flooding.

More than 150 millimetres of rain fell in 36 hours, causing roads in the Shire of Laverton and the Crescent Gold Mine to be closed.

One home was inundated and around 200 people were relocated to the Laverton town hall.

SES volunteers and a FESA manager from Perth arrived in Laverton in a Type 1 helicopter to assist local emergency services personnel with recovery efforts. They were soon busy assessing damage and visiting remote communities within a 100 kilometre radius to resupply them with food and water.

The remote community of Tjuntjuntjara received around 1,300 kilograms of essential food and medical supplies for two weeks following the flood.

“The towns of Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek were isolated, along with a number of remote Indigenous communities.”



A very busy wet season

Guests and staff were relocated from Fitzroy Lodge in the Kimberley after being stranded by floodwaters.

A number of unusually active monsoonal troughs have contributed to a wetter than usual season in the Kimberley.

Several low pressure systems moved inland, resulting in massive rainfall, widespread flooding and isolation to many towns and communities across the region.

The Fitzroy and Ord River catchment areas received record rainfall in March causing the evacuation of one community.

Bridges and roads were damaged, and much of the Great Northern Highway was closed.

The towns of Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek were isolated, along with a number of remote Indigenous communities.

On 13 March the community of Warmun in the east Kimberley was impacted by a major flood when up to 400 millimetres

of rain caused Turkey Creek to burst its banks.

Most of the community's 65 homes were destroyed and those remaining were uninhabitable. Losses also included the Warmun Art Centre and a significant part of the art collection.

On 15 and 16 March FESA organised the relocation of 217 community members from Warmun to Kununurra, using helicopters and buses.

Department for Community Protection, Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley worked closely together to establish a relocation centre at a fly in fly out camp.

Halls Creek was isolated with enough supplies for a week, but nearby Balgo Hills and Ringer Soak had to be resupplied with bottled water and essential commodities.

The Ngallagunda community on the Gibb River Road also received significant rainfall the week prior,

prompting the evacuation of 16 community members.

At Fitzroy Crossing the approaches to the Great Northern Highway were damaged and the bridge had to be closed. Fifty seven guests and staff were relocated to the other side of the Fitzroy River before being flown to Broome to alternate accommodation.

Kimberley Regional Director Rob Cox said the flooding impacted electricity, water and gas supplies, and there were extensive road and airport closures, loss of communications and major structural damage.

“The high level of planning and interagency cooperation ensured the health and safety of the community was paramount, and helped those affected to cope in these trying times,” Rob said.

“FESA worked closely with a large multiagency operational taskforce including state government departments, local governments and utility providers to restore services to these communities.”

Bushfire threatens Swan Valley

Residents of the normally tranquil Swan Valley found themselves confronted with a large summer bushfire that threatened people, homes and the environment around 9.15pm on Saturday 5 February.

Initially fanned by strong winds, firefighters battled dangerous conditions to protect properties under threat.

Regional Director North Metropolitan Eddy Brooks, an incident controller during the fire, recalls that the terrain and wind were major factors for crews.

“It was steep land and because the fire area was largely inaccessible, crews, appliances and earth moving equipment could not get close,” Eddy said.

“In addition, the strong winds initially meant our air attack helicopter was unable to be brought in to combat the fire. This meant ground crews had to deal with the blaze defensively with the support of heavy earthmoving machinery to track the fire and clear breaks.

“Firefighting efforts compounded by difficult environmental conditions were further hampered by embers being carried on the wind ahead of the main fire front.

“It is a credit to crews that they managed to install and strengthen containment lines around the blaze and prevent significant damage.”

Communities in Brigadoon, Baskerville, Herne Hill, Millendon and Red Hill were placed on an extended emergency warning as a result of ongoing concerns for life and property.

During the course of the incident more than 200 firefighters battled the fire. When weather conditions improved they were supported by Helitacs and fixed wing water bombers.

At final count the fire had burnt through an estimated 1,200 hectares of scrub and semi-rural land. Damage to property was limited to sheds, fences and farm vehicles.

Eddy attributes this to the overall commitment demonstrated by all personnel who responded to the fire and the effectiveness of the response.

“Good planning, good firefighting and accurate forecasting of the fire path all helped to combat the blaze,” he said.

Investigation into the cause of the fire was found to be linked to a tree branch snapping off in strong winds and falling on to power lines.



Flames from the Swan Valley bushfire glow in the night sky. Photo by Paul Pichugin.

Chloe makes a comeback

Chloe the kangaroo, a casualty of the Red Hill bushfire, had a lucky escape thanks to Darling Range Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service firefighter Liz Appelt.

Liz rescued Chloe from the ashes after flames swept through the area.

Thought to be aged around 19, Chloe had suffered burns to her paws and the pads of her feet, and was found on a recently burnt patch of ground.

She was highly stressed and dehydrated, and would have died without help.

Liz, a volunteer firefighter for 10 years, also runs the Chidlow Marsupial Hospital.

She had been monitoring radio transmission in the incident control vehicle during the bushfire when she was alerted to Chloe's plight.

“At first we thought it would be touch and go with Chloe, but I decided to take up the battle to save her,” Liz said.



Chloe the survivor with her rescuer Darling Range VFRS firefighter Liz Appelt. Photo courtesy of *The Echo*.

“She was wrapped in a blanket and taken home for several days. We changed her bandages and showed her lots of affection, and happily she took a turn for the better.”

Chloe had been hand raised for many years before being released into the bush and when the person who owned her heard she was still alive, he asked to be reunited with her.

Liz expects Chloe to make a good recovery and reports she is doing well.



Firefighters battle tough conditions in Perth Hills

A huge wall of flame dwarfs a firefighter.

Ground and air crews battled freakish strong and shifting winds to save as many homes as possible in Roleystone and Kelmscott on Sunday 6 February. It was one of the most significant bushfires in WA's history and if not for an overwhelming effort by those working at the fire front and behind the scenes, many more properties could have been destroyed in addition to the 71 lost and 39 damaged.

While the Toodyay fire impacted 38 homes in December 2009, the magnitude of the Roleystone-Kelmscott fire had not been seen in the state since the Dwellingup fires fifty years earlier.

Hundreds of residents fled as fires fanned by hot easterly winds gusting up to 80 kilometres roared through hills and valleys covered in trees, grass and bush.

FESA actioned its community warning systems as soon as the gravity of the fire became evident.

The Incident Management Team also requested Police to door knock homes to tell people that for their own safety they should leave immediately. Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes said a Total Fire Ban was in place on the day of the fire and FESA warned people they should be careful not to do anything that could cause a fire to start.

"In the right conditions a small fire can become very large and destructive very quickly, and that is what happened at Roleystone," he said.

“The combination of topography, terrain, dry fuels and high winds meant the worst type of fire behaviour was presenting.

“A significant number of homes were lost or seriously damaged, but there were no deaths.

“Unfortunately a volunteer firefighter did receive serious injuries and was hospitalised.

“No one else was hurt in the blaze and this can be partly attributed to the efforts of fire crews and the fact that many people in the area heeded FESA’s messages.

“Some residents had already undertaken prevention work around their homes and on the day of the fire followed their survival plans. Others monitored the fire’s progress on the media and FESA website, opting to either remain at home if they were prepared or leave in time to get to a safer place.”

Craig paid tribute to the dedication of all involved in battling the hills fires.

“Hundreds of career and volunteer firefighters and backup personnel worked tirelessly to protect lives and save homes in very hot, windy and challenging conditions,” he said.

“Their outstanding efforts and determination helped to stop the fire from destroying even more properties and the environment.”

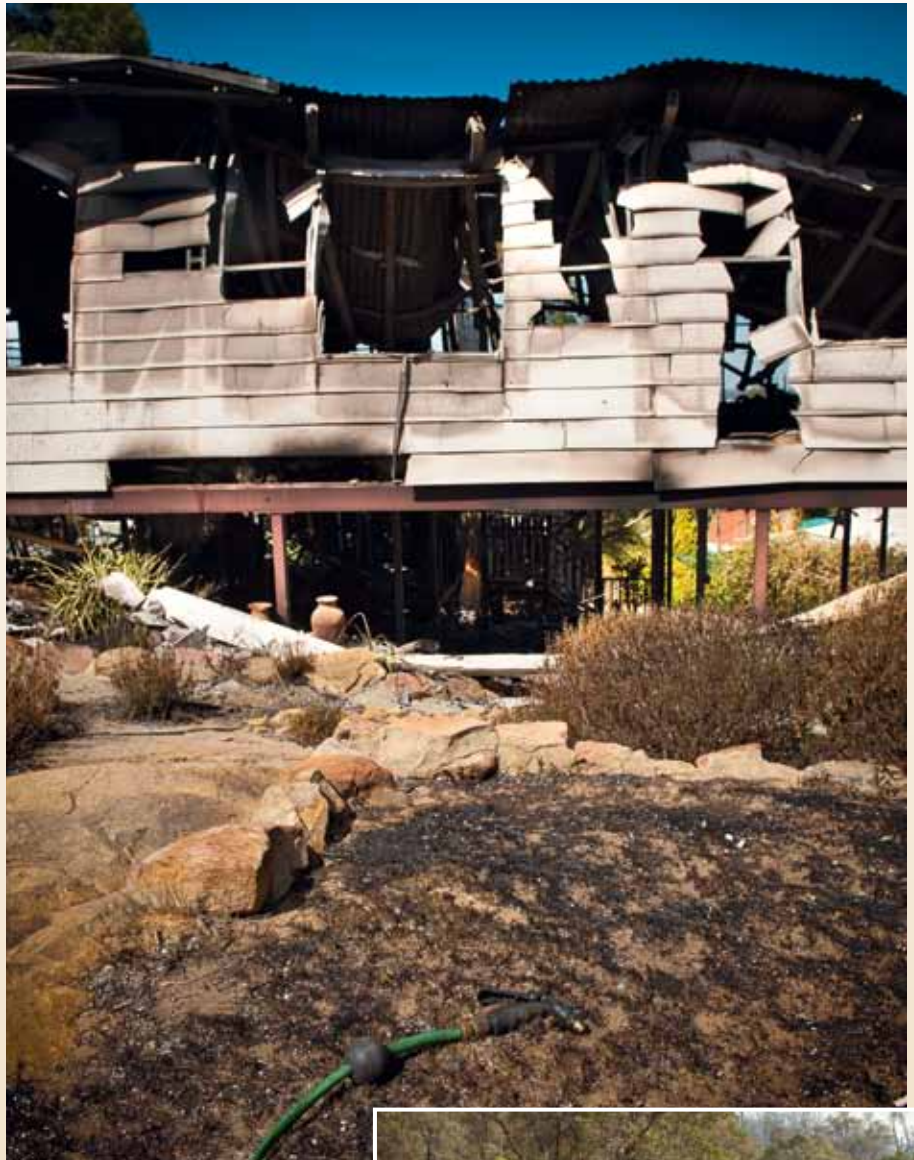
The fire began shortly before midday and is believed to have been started by sparks from an angle grinder.

Meanwhile, across the other side of town fire was continuing to threaten areas near Red Hill in the Swan Valley. These fires, combined with hot blustery weather, thick smoke and difficult terrain, stretched firefighters and resources.

Throughout the afternoon and evening maximum effort was used to try to bring the Roleystone fire under control.

Crews and equipment were brought in from around the state to relieve exhausted colleagues, and next day two Victorian Incident Management teams comprising three taskforce leaders and 18 personnel from the Country Fire Authority, Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria, together with two Helitacs arrived at the fire ground from Victoria to assist wherever needed.

At the height of the blaze winds sent embers flying up to 200 metres ahead of the flames, starting spot fires and showering down on homes.



Conditions were so severe that an emergency warning for the area remained in place until late on Monday afternoon when it was downgraded.

Weather conditions and thick smoke made flying so dangerous that fixed wing water bombers could not be used. It was fortunate that Helitacs, including the large Type 1 helicopters, were able to fly.

Some air crews felt physically ill from the buffeting winds after making numerous low level runs to drop water over the fire.

Roleystone Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service Brigade Captain Noel Plowman, a veteran with 30 years firefighting experience, said his crew had never seen conditions and destruction on the scale of the fire at its height.



As the fire spread these power poles caught fire and fell onto the road.



The 76 year old Buckingham Bridge collapsed in the bushfire.



“Crews could not have tried harder to protect the community.”

“We were the second crew to arrive after Armadale Fire and Rescue Service,” Noel said.

“The incident started off quite normally and we were consolidating when we saw a hopover. From there it just took off, travelling very fast in the blustery conditions.

“Flames were roaring 30 metres above treetops. It was hit and miss, with one house burning while the one next door escaped.

“We chased the fire all over the place, ending up in Clifton Hills around 7.30pm before returning to base exhausted.”

Noel said that brigade members were relieved that no one in the community died or was injured in the fire.

“It was very hard to see so many homes lost, including those of three brigade members, but crews could not have tried harder to protect the community,” he said.

Members of the Urban Search and Rescue Taskforce were quickly on the job, felling and removing dangerous trees and helping to conduct damage assessments.



Responders to Roleystone-Kelmscott bushfire

BUSH FIRE BRIGADES

Baldivis
Bedfordale
Brookton West
Byford
Calingiri
Corrigin Central
Dongara Town
Gosnells
Jarrahdale
Keysbrook
Kulin Town
Kwinana South
Middle Ward
Mundijong
Murray West
Narrakup
Newdegate Town
New Norcia
Oakford
Piesseville
Roleystone
Rosa Brook
Seabird
Serpentine
South Coogee
Singleton
Waterloo
Witchcliffe
Wooroloo
Yunderup South/
Ravenswood

CAREER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Armadale
Bassendean
Belmont
Canning Vale
Claremont

Daglish
Ellenbrook
Fremantle
Hope Valley
Kensington
Maddington
Malaga
Midland
Murdoch
Osborne Park
Perth
Rockingham
Welshpool

VOLUNTEER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Bunbury
Guildford
Lake Grace
Mandurah
Mt Barker
Rockingham
Roleystone

VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY SERVICE

Kondinin

VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE

Waroona

USAR TASKFORCE

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

AIR OPERATIONS

Air Services Unit
Air Reconnaissance
Helitac Aerial Services

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

City of Armadale
City of Bunbury
City of Gosnells
City of Wanneroo

STAKEHOLDERS

Bureau of Meteorology
Department for Child Protection
Department of Health
Department of Education
Main Roads WA
WA Police
St John Ambulance
Telstra
The Salvation Army
Water Corporation
Western Power

State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers also made a valuable contribution assisting in a number of areas including communications and logistics.

Bushfire Environmental Protection branch staff members also went into the field to conduct critical research and undertake loss assessments.

In addition to firefighting, FESA was heavily involved in assisting with community recovery. Working closely with the City of Armadale and dozens of key stakeholders, the community was kept well informed about where they could go to seek assistance. A series of well attended community meetings were also held.

As the scale of destruction became apparent, the State Government declared the fire a natural disaster, triggering emergency assistance and funding for residents who had lost their homes.

The all clear for the Roleystone-Kelmscott bushfire was finally given on Monday 14 February.



Regional Director North Metropolitan Brad Stringer and District Manager South Paul Ryan were part of the Incident Management Team.



Firefighters work at the scene of a burning house.

Support floods in after WA's worst bushfire

People eager to become emergency service volunteers have contacted FESA after seeing the devastation of the State's worst bushfires.

At the height of the blaze in Roleystone-Kelmscott, FESA was receiving an average of 50 calls a day from people wanting to help.

Danny Michau from Port Kennedy is one of those who decided to volunteer as a direct result of the fire.

When the bushfire occurred he was visiting family near Roleystone.

"The fire came too close for comfort," Danny said.

"A big part of making the decision to help was seeing a 16 year old Bush Fire Brigade volunteer in action and hearing about another female volunteer who was injured whilst firefighting.

"I thought, I have two legs and a heartbeat, and I should be out there doing my bit."

Danny is no stranger to volunteering, having been involved with St John Ambulance for 10 years in Meekatharra and Tom Price.

He has now joined the Singleton Bush Fire Brigade and is looking forward to meeting new people.

"It's about putting a bit back in and giving a hand to the community," he said.

A/Manager Youth and Volunteer Services Merveen Cross said it was fantastic to see such a large number of generous, community spirited people coming forward to offer assistance.

"We've received hundreds of calls from people who saw the impact of the fire and were so moved they wanted to help by becoming a volunteer and donating goods, money or time," Merveen said.

"If there is one positive thing to come out of the devastating bushfire it's the generosity of the Perth community.

"We even had a call from a person in Turkey wanting to help and an American who recently moved here."

FESA has more than 32,000 volunteers in Western Australia who play a crucial role in supporting communities when they need it most.

"We can never have enough volunteers," Merveen said. "They play a tremendous role in protecting people in times of need, often foregoing other commitments in their lives.

"They also put in a mammoth effort during the Roleystone bushfire, which is commendable."

People interested in volunteering should call FESA's Volunteer Recruitment Information line on 1800 628 141.

Arson attack on City Farmers store



The collapsed roof and large amount of product at the store made access to the seat of the fire difficult for crews. Photo courtesy of *The West Australian*.

Pet fish, guinea pigs and birds were among the losses when fire caused \$3.5 million damage at a City Farmers store in Wembley.

The building was ablaze when the first of six Fire and Rescue Service crews arrived at 1.30am.

Products kept on the premises represented potential hazards for nearby residents as well as firefighters, who battled the blaze through the early hours and were still on the job later in the day.

Incident Controller Geoff Roberts said there were a lot of factors to take into account when dealing with the fire, including pool chlorine, several large racks of fertiliser and at least 10 nine kilogram LP gas tanks located at the premises.

“The building was ablaze when the first of six Fire and Rescue Service crews arrived at 1.30am.”

“We were faced with large quantities of smoke coming from the fire and a priority was to consider people in homes nearby,” Geoff said.

“Police were asked to door knock the area and advise residents to stay inside and turn off air conditioners.

“If they suffered breathing difficulties, they were told it would be best to relocate.

“A further concern was preventing water runoff from getting into nearby Herdsman Lake.”

Department of Environment and Conservation Pollution Response Unit officers monitored the air and water, advising there were no health risks.

Although the fire was brought under control relatively fast, the volume of goods stored in the building and the collapse of the roof, meant it was not able to be fully extinguished until later in the day.

An excavator and front end loader were used to demolish the building to ensure it did not pose an ongoing safety risk.

“Crews did an excellent job preventing the fire from spreading to adjacent buildings and reaching chemicals and gas tanks, as well as containing runoff,” Geoff said.

The blaze was believed to have been deliberately lit by thieves seeking to cover up their illegal activities.

Michelin man no match for raging fire

A blaze at the Michelin tyre factory near Perth Domestic Airport saw thick black smoke engulf the area and traffic halted on nearby Great Eastern Highway.

Fire crews were not immediately aware of the potential problem posed by 4,000 litres of heavy gear oil stored behind the premises outside its perimeter, because of the vast amount of smoke billowing around.

The oil was inside plastic cubes which had melted in the heat, sending a mixture of oil and water flooding into a drain that led to the Swan River.

Incident Controller Rob Forster said a firefighter had noticed a strong smell of oil coming from a grate.

“The oil was stopped metres away from where the drain flows into the river, avoiding potentially major environmental damage,” Rob said.

“It shows that having a good nose is still as important as ever when you’re a firefighter.”

Burning magnesium tyre rims also caused problems for crews after the items reacted with water to produce hydrogen and oxygen that helped to fuel the fire.

In addition, oil residue from burning tyres and water produced a slippery film which flowed on to Great Eastern Highway and Fautleroy Avenue in Belmont, creating hazardous road conditions.

Department of Environment and Conservation Pollution Response officers monitored the smoke but reported it was not toxic.

As a precaution, FESA advised local residents to stay inside, close windows and doors, and turn off air conditioners.

“Bassendean, Belmont and Welshpool Fire and Rescue Service crews were assisted by aviation firefighters from Perth Airport. Their PPE equipment was black by the end of the incident.

“They did an outstanding job to control and extinguish such a complex fire, prevent pollution of the river, save large amounts of warehouse stock and clean up major roads and make them safe,” Rob said.

Damage to the warehouse and stock was estimated at \$1 million.



“The oil was stopped metres away from where the drain flows into the river, avoiding potentially major environmental damage.”

Thick black smoke obscured vision of containers of gear oil that was a potential environmental hazard. Photo courtesy of *The West Australian*.

Large blaze guts Claremont Council buildings

Although the heritage listed Claremont Council Chamber and Library sustained \$5 million damage in a massive blaze, firefighters acted quickly to save valuable council records and computer equipment.



The collapse of the ceiling and intensity of the fire made it extremely difficult for crews to fight it from inside. Photo courtesy *Perth Now*.

The fire began in the library ceiling and was well alight before the alarm was raised in the early evening.

The first arriving Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) crews were on site in five minutes and immediately asked FESA Communications Centre for more resources from surrounding fire stations.

FRS District Manager Peter Jones described how initial actions included removing tiles to gain access to the roof cavity, only to find that the fire had spread quickly and already caused extensive damage.

“Despite the fast turnout the fire was so advanced little could be done to prevent it spreading through the building,” he said.

“Firefighters were forced to fight the fire from the outside because there was a real risk that the roof could collapse.

“The first priority was to ensure no one was inside and only seconds after firefighters left the building the ceiling collapsed.



“There were no separation compartments in the roof space to slow the fire and old, dry timber, cabling, ducting and insulation fuelled its intensity.

“We couldn’t save the building, but did salvage a lot of records and equipment by removing or protecting them from water damage.”

Claremont Council later passed a motion to put on record its appreciation of the efforts of the FRS in fighting the fire.

Eight pumps from eight metropolitan stations responded, along with two combined ladder platform appliances, two special equipment tenders and an incident control vehicle. More than 50 firefighters battled the blaze at its peak.

The Council Chamber, part of the original 1898 building, the 1930’s art deco and 1970’s library and offices were all extensively damaged.

The extensive damage was clear the next morning. Photo courtesy *The West Australian*.



Cigarette sparks costly damage bill

A cigarette butt discarded down a drain started a fire that caused considerable damage at Armadale-Kelmscott Memorial Hospital and Perth Radiological Clinic.

Having landed on a bed of dry leaves, the blaze silently and slowly smouldered away, igniting PVC pipe and sending smoke and flames spiralling through the ceiling cavity.

It was just after 6am when career Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) crews from seven stations were turned out to the scene of the fire that kept the hospital’s emergency department closed for three days.

Armadale FRS Station Officer Evan Collis said the smoke travelled quickly through the building’s air conditioning ducts into the roof space.

“Thick, heavy smoke snaked through the hospital’s main walkway and engulfed the private Gallier wing, Emergency Department and nearby Perth Radiological Clinic where staff had evacuated,” he said.

“Crews worked hard to contain the fire within an hour of arrival.”

The blaze forced elective surgery cancellations and dozens of patients were relocated to safe zones.

Armadale Health Service Manager for Infrastructure Services Philip Moody said the clinic sustained extensive smoke and radiant heat damage.

“Sensitive and expensive diagnostic medical imaging equipment including a CAT scan machine worth \$730,000 needed to be replaced, and the air conditioning system was also damaged,” he said.

“With some areas out of action, we experienced a loss of revenue for ten days.”



Firefighters assess damage inside Armadale-Kelmscott Memorial Hospital. Photo courtesy *Community Newspaper Group*.

It was later revealed the ceiling tiles of the clinic had absorbed smoke particles, with every one needing to be stripped, cleaned and put back. The bill for this was estimated to exceed \$60,000.

The final figure was set to escalate and could soar into millions of dollars as vital X-ray, ultrasound and other medical equipment underwent extensive assessment to determine whether they could be used again.

The fire happened despite a non-smoking policy implemented by the hospital.

Quick thinking helps trapped man

The team at FESA's Communications Centre (ComCen) sprang into action to help fire crews locate and rescue a 26 year old man who had crashed his car into bushland.

On 6 January at 12.42am, an emergency call to triple zero (000) was received from the man.

He had become trapped in his vehicle after it veered off Tonkin Highway and landed a considerable distance away in scrub. A key factor was that he was unsure of his exact location.

The ComCen operator who received his call relayed this information to Supervisor Nigel Elliott.

As crews from Maddington and Welshpool Fire and Rescue Service were despatched, Nigel quickly realised the uniqueness of the situation and called the man back.

"We don't get too many calls from anyone trapped in a vehicle and it

"We don't get too many calls from anyone trapped in a vehicle and it triggered a couple of warning bells."

triggered a couple of warning bells," he said.

"The reason I rang was twofold, I could keep him company throughout his ordeal and secondly help direct the fire trucks towards him."

The man's car was too damaged for him to sound the horn and with no bystanders present to give assistance, Nigel managed to guide firefighters to the spot by having them sound their truck air horns.

With each pass he was able to gauge whether they were getting closer or further away.

"He must have been a fair distance from the road because the fire trucks drove by him three times before they were able to reach him," Nigel said.

Maddington firefighters found the vehicle and spent the next four hours extricating the man. Miraculously, he escaped with just a few cuts and bruises.



Chris McIntosh met and thanked Maddington FRS Firefighters James Hislop and Stuart Johnston and Station Officer Kim Van Aalen. Photo courtesy of *Gosnells Examiner*.



Volunteers in gruelling search near Albany

SES volunteers embark on an extended search for an elderly bushwalker in the rugged Stirling Ranges.

One of the largest and longest searches undertaken in the Stirling Ranges near Albany included a large contingent from FESA.

Conditions were tough as the group made their way through rugged terrain, steep slopes, thick bush and undergrowth looking for a missing 79 year old bushwalker.

Volunteers from the State Emergency Service (SES), Volunteer Emergency Service (VES) and Bush Fire Service (BFS) as well as FESA staff all played a major role, but despite their efforts and those of WA Police and Department of Environment and Conservation staff, the search ended without finding the elderly man.

The search began after the walker called a friend on his mobile, asking for help to get down from the Stirling Ridge walk between Bluff Knoll and Ellen Peak.

The 15.5 kilometre walk is rated one of Australia's most challenging wilderness

hikes, but the man was experienced and quite familiar with the area.

When he could not be located a group of SES volunteers from Albany, Denmark, Gnowangerup and Mt Barker, and the Tambellup VES joined the initial search.

Police coordinated the operation which involved the use of their helicopter, plus one chartered by FESA. SES air observers were also brought in, along with two search dogs.

Resources were stretched as crews had to be rested on a regular basis during the day and rostered off after two or three days.

Conditions were so rough that some searchers had to change their boots three times due to the soles peeling off.

A request to SES South West region was quickly answered by volunteers from Australind, Bunbury, Busselton, Collie, Mandurah and Waroona.

In the final days SES units from Armadale, Bayswater, Belmont, Cannington, Kalamunda, North Shore, Rockingham and Warnbro joined the search.

Provisioning was a major challenge that was met by onsite logistic officers Area Manager Mac Johnston and District Manager Russell Gould whose efforts were appreciated by searchers.

Strong support also came from the local community with many people opening their doors after hours to provide food, accommodation and fuel. SES District Manager Great Southern Lynda Elms said on the last weekend there was a mammoth effort with 48 volunteers scouring the area, supported by Redmond, South Coast and Kalga BFB volunteers.

"The involvement of volunteers ended a week after it started when the timeframe for survival was passed with no sign of the bushwalker," Lynda said.

"All agencies and volunteers worked very well together on this large search which was conducted in warm weather and difficult conditions.

"The combined teamwork and dedication to the task were impressive."



Skyshow a hive of activity behind the scenes

Against the background of a rainbow coloured exploding sky, the crackle and whistle of fireworks and rousing cheers from the public, FESA staff worked hard to make sure this year's Australia Day celebrations went off with a bang but without a hitch.

What would not have been obvious to the 300,000 Skyshow spectators enjoying the display was the huge amount of behind the scenes organisation that went into ensuring a great event and maximum public safety. Regional Director Central Metropolitan Bruce Jones said the fireworks display was the culmination of many months of planning by FESA and numerous other stakeholders.

"On Skyshow night, while all eyes were cast skyward, a number of key personnel were involved in emergency coordination at the Perth Convention Centre," Bruce said.

"This one night is the result of more than six months planning, with FESA staff working extensively with stakeholders to develop operational and contingency plans.

"In all there were 21 planning meetings and a week prior to the Skyshow, 16 key stakeholders attended an in depth discussion exercise.

"We were presented with various emergency scenarios which could potentially impact on the event and individual agencies gave their response to them.

"Planning also included building management and fireworks contractors, in conjunction with FESA personnel, conducting risk management assessments for each building identified as a fireworks launch site."

FESA worked closely with a number of parties including the City of Perth, state government departments, utility providers and building owners and managers.

Bruce said this year's event was close to ideal.

"Considering the magnitude of the event, it was an excellent result to have only one minor fire throughout the night," he said.

"This involved a small blaze on one of the fireworks pontoons moored in the river which was extinguished by those on board.

"There were nine tonnes of explosive material used in the pyrotechnic display with approximately 31,000 shots being fired into the night sky from eight river pontoons and four high rise rooftops.

"From FESA's perspective it was very quiet overall, with the only Fire and Rescue Service response being to free a woman and five children stranded in a lift at the bus port."



Emergency services were part of a large behind the scenes operation to ensure a safe and spectacular Skyshow. Photo courtesy of *The West Australian*.

“On Skyshow night, while all eyes were cast skyward, a number of key personnel were involved in emergency coordination.”

“Firefighting crews were deployed on the water in readiness to respond to an incident involving either the fireworks barges or the spectator vessels,” he said.

“As a further precaution a District Manager was based at Kensington Fire Station in case an incident occurred on the South Perth foreshore.

“Contingency plans were in place to ensure the rapid mobilisation of further resources in case an emergency occurred.

“FESA involvement on the day also included field support from State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers, and the provision and operation of communications equipment for FESA personnel in the emergency coordination centre.”

A Total Fire Ban was implemented for Kings Park and the river foreshore, with sparklers, barbecues and any open flames not permitted for the

safety of spectators and in response to incidents in previous years.

In 2007, the popular event was almost cancelled when temperatures reached 41 degrees and bad wind conditions posed a high fire risk.

That year a late change in the weather fortunately saw the approval given, however during the show a fire broke out on one of the barges after a shell failed to eject from a firing tube. This caused another two barges to catch on fire when embers ignited cardboard tubing.

Bruce noted that lessons were learnt from this incident and to further improve safety procedures, all barges containing fireworks for the display are now supplied with firefighting equipment.

For stakeholders who worked tirelessly behind the scenes, the smooth running of the 2011 Skyshow was a fitting reward for their efforts. Held on a perfect summer’s night, the event was hailed as a success by organisers.

Bruce said the success of this year’s Skyworks could be put down to several factors.

“It was a midweek public holiday, with generally well behaved crowds and the weather conditions were really good,” he said.

“The winds were favourable and we had temperatures that reduced the likelihood of serious fires starting from the event.

“The light southerlies also blew the smoke away, giving great visibility and reducing the risk of any fallout into Kings Park.

“In addition, the high level of planning and interagency cooperation helped ensure every box was ticked in regard to preparation and safety.”

Bruce said fire crews and appliances were strategically positioned at Kings Park, on the Perth foreshore and locations around the display site to protect the public and ensure that months of preplanning led to a smooth operation.

Fremantle put on a good show

It may not go off with as big a bang as the Perth Skyshow, but the City of Fremantle’s annual Australia Day Cracker Night still left the public clamouring for more.

FESA staff were involved in several weeks of planning leading up to the event and Fremantle Fire and Rescue Service was very much in evidence on the night itself.

The port city’s Australia Day celebration traditionally targets locals and promotes a carnival atmosphere, with a 15 minute fireworks display taking centre stage.

District Manager Cockburn Sound Paul Ryan said everything went smoothly, with good weather conditions and a family oriented environment helping the cause.

“The challenge for firefighters with fireworks exploding overhead was managing any potential fallout affecting the Fishing Boat Harbour vessels and nearby buildings,” he said.

“Crews were pre-deployed at strategic locations undertaking fire watch duties and monitoring the situation.

“The plan, developed in conjunction with stakeholders like Fremantle Council, WA Police and St John Ambulance, ensured a safe and successful event for 2011.”

USAR helps turn back the tide



In the face of huge flood devastation in Queensland, an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team from Western Australia did their bit to help the locals get their feet back on dry land.

In response to a request from Emergency Management Australia (EMA), the team was deployed to Brisbane to assist with emergency operations and work side by side with interstate colleagues on the flood recovery.

The group consisted of Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Station Officers Ian Joseph and Brad Miles and Senior Firefighters Mick Bartlett and Todd Liddington.

Once at their destination they became part of the first national USAR Taskforce also made up of teams from New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Northern Territory.

For Brad, who lived and worked in Brisbane for many years before moving to WA, the sheer volume of destruction and impact of the floods was shocking.

“Parts of Brisbane were affected by the flood waters that I would not have thought possible,” he said.

“Almost all the residential properties that were damaged suffered a total loss of contents during the flooding and after the waters subsided they left a heavy coating of mud.”

The statistics are difficult to take in, but more than 30,000 residential and



Top: Members of the national USAR Taskforce prepare for deployment in Queensland. Above: Some of the extensive damage caused by floods in the industrial area of Rockley.

commercial structures were either fully or partially inundated by flood waters.

For the USAR Taskforce the challenge would be performing rapid damage assessment in very difficult environmental conditions.

Going door to door in flood affected areas, team members gathered critical information, assessing water levels and structural damage, noting hazards and prioritising tasks.

Their work was vital to ensure that those impacted by the flood could begin the process of returning to normality as soon as possible.

The task of working on damage assessment and recovery operations, in hot and humid conditions, was made even more challenging for teams with the monumental amount of waste

and rubbish left in the wake of the receding water.

The thick mud, with its mixture of sewage and hazardous materials, left a foul smell hanging in the air.

Brad said factories without power had refrigerators and freezers with decaying supplies of meat and vegetables which all added to the stench.

“Though the damage to residential properties was vast, the impact on commercial and industrial premises was on a much larger scale,” he said.

“Many business people we met said they would probably not be able to recover from the disaster.”

Mick said the Queensland public warmly welcomed the assistance from interstate.

“Community members were very surprised and happy to see WA firefighters arriving in Queensland so quickly after the event,” Mick said. “For our part, it was also great to see so many people volunteering to help each other out.”

Team Leader Ian Joseph said the deployment demonstrated that USAR teams from around Australia had an exceptionally high level of commitment and skill.

“The teamwork and camaraderie amongst members of the taskforce from different states provided an opportunity to share and develop techniques, as well as expand collective knowledge,” he said.

“We have nothing but praise for the efforts of our interstate colleagues for their contribution to ensuring people affected by the floods recovered as quickly as possible.

“The assistance and friendliness shown by the other teams, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and Special Operations Unit is to be commended.”

Ian added that the high standards maintained by the WA team showed that local training and skills placed them at the forefront of USAR nationally.

New Zealand mission

Six USAR personnel were also called on to provide assistance to New Zealand (NZ) after the disastrous Christchurch earthquake.

Their role was to work as part of an international multi-jurisdictional taskforce assisting the recovery effort.

The 10 day deployment included assessing debris and deconstructing buildings so that searching could continue.

On the eve of the team’s departure Chief Executive Officer Jo Harrison-Ward said that like many people across Australia her heart went out to all the families who had lost loved ones in the devastating earthquake.

“This tragedy has moved us all, and as New Zealand goes from rescue to recovery mode we acknowledge the hard work of the USAR teams and emergency services who have worked tirelessly to search for survivors in such hazardous conditions,” she said.

The WA team was made up of FRS Station Officers Wayne Spear and Ric Renton, and Senior Firefighters Mick Bartlett, Michael Parker, Jane Humphrys and Steve Longo.

Arriving back in Perth in mid March, Wayne said he headed up a taskforce that included the local WA contingent plus other Australian and Chinese USAR members.

“We arrived in the second wave when there were still 247 people missing,” Wayne said.

“Initially we undertook secondary searches in the Christchurch CBD and inspected buildings for structural stability with an engineer.

“We would use our ingenuity to assess what was needed, for example a steel column or some timber to shore up a slab. The items were then quickly manufactured and we installed them.

“Our USAR training stood the team in good stead, but an area where we picked up some helpful techniques was learning from the Americans about how to dismantle stairwells.

“We were also asked by the NZ USAR taskforce to go into apartments looking for missing people or specific personal items such as computer hard drives or valuables that were needed by the owners. A police officer accompanied teams involved in this type of work.”

Wayne said he was not expecting the utter devastation the team encountered in central Christchurch.

“Often all buildings in a street were down or half demolished, and the whole CBD was closed off,” he said.

“It was strange to go into damaged cafes and see half eaten sandwiches and newspapers dated the day of the quake.

“There were many aftershocks and that was something we found hard to get used to.

“Our last days were quite rewarding because we went out into the suburbs to recover items for residents whose homes had been damaged. They were very grateful and everywhere we went people expressed their appreciation.

“It was a worthwhile experience and a privilege to have been able to help out.”



“It was a worthwhile experience and a privilege to have been able to help out.”

USAR Taskforce member Jane Humphrys surveys quake damage in Christchurch.

Seminar delegates learn from Pakistan experience

The enormous challenge faced by the Australian Medical Taskforce in Pakistan after the disastrous July 2010 floods and the deployment of a Western Australian team to help, were key topics at the second FESA Emergency Management Sunrise Seminar.

Two medical professionals involved in the response recounted their experiences for the benefit of attendees from a broad sweep of WA state and local government agencies and the private sector.

Royal Perth Hospital senior nurse and Australian Defence Force (ADF) Lieutenant Nursing Officer Joanne Wilson said the disaster was monumental, with heavy rains flooding up to one fifth of the entire country and causing close to 2,000 deaths.

"There were more than 20 million people directly affected, a million homes lost and a 160,000 square kilometre area devastated," she said.

"We were based in a temporary field hospital at Kot Addu, named Camp Cockatoo by the ADF.

"The taskforce treated more than 11,000 people or 200 per day, and provided primary health care for a population in desperate need.

"A wide range of medical emergencies and health care needs were dealt with, often under very trying conditions.

"Despite facing many challenges, we still managed to produce great results."

Joanne said it became the norm to keep a 'grab bag' near at all times in case of emergency evacuation, as well as deal with cultural differences and a lack of services.

"We were unable to tell family and friends what was happening and ended up developing our own codes to use when calling home, as this was the only way to let family know we were safe without breaching security," she said.

Manager WA Health Department Disaster Preparedness and Management Unit Muriel LeClerq managed the small team in Perth which organised



Joanne Wilson, a senior nurse at Royal Perth Hospital, carries a Pakistani boy to the treatment room at Camp Cockatoo.

the deployment to Pakistan as part of the national response by the Commonwealth Government.

"After the 2002 Bali bombings and the 2004 tsunami, WA Health set up a Disaster Medical Assistance Team to respond to emergencies in Australia and overseas," she said.

"It comprises medical professionals and support staff, and supplies its own shelter, power, food, water, medical supplies and communications when deployed.

"On this occasion there was short notice, high security, long distances and difficult conditions to contend with.

"The management team handled everything from initial selection, development of indepth risk assessments and treatment plans,

vaccinations and a mountain of paperwork.

"As well as maintaining contact and support throughout the taskforce's time in Pakistan and their return home the team also helped boost morale by sending care packages from home to WA deployees."

Joanne and Muriel agreed that a key to the success of the assignment was being surrounded by great people.

The next Sunrise Seminar is planned for mid 2011.

(The Australian Government, through AUSAID, provided assistance to Pakistan in collaboration with the Australian Defence Force (ADF), Emergency Management Australia and the Attorney Generals Department of Health and Ageing).



Bunbury Fire and Rescue Service Senior Firefighter Russell Ord became a household name when news of his surfing rescue in the US spread around the world. Photo courtesy of *The West Australian*.

No Ord-inary day

An outing at a popular surf beach in California led to a daring rescue and international media coverage for one Bunbury Fire and Rescue Service senior firefighter.

Russell Ord, who has been a firefighter for 16 years, is not one for the limelight. The 36 year old father of three from Cowaramup, however, found himself dubbed 'the hero from Down Under' after rescuing two surfers from a spate of rogue waves at Californian surf spot Mavericks.

The freelance photographer and experienced surfer travelled to the United States in January on a spur of the moment surfing trip with friends.

On Saturday 22 January he was on a jet ski taking photographs of the surf when the 12 and 14 foot sets turned into waves with a 40 foot face.

"Two rogue waves came through and cleaned a few guys up," he said.

"I grabbed one who was near rocks and thought I saw someone else who needed help.

"After searching for a while we found him on the other side of the rocks, I thought he was dead for sure."

Using a rescue sled, Russell managed to drag the man to shore and start administering first aid.

The number one priority was getting the water out of his stomach and lungs.

By the time paramedics arrived the unconscious surfer had coughed up some water but Russell was still not sure if he was going to live.

Miraculously the man survived, but Russell is quick to play down his role in the rescue.

"I didn't put my life on the line - it was a case of being in the right place at the right time."

"It was nothing, it got blown out of proportion," he said.

"I didn't put my life on the line - it was a case of being in the right place at the right time."

Despite his humility Russell admits that without his knowledge of first aid, surfing, operating a jet ski in big waves and experience in a stressful situation, the result could have been very different.

FESA Centre stars in Heritage Festival

FESA's Education and Heritage Centre recently threw open its doors, proving the perfect drawcard for more than 1,000 visitors who flocked there over the Perth Heritage Days Festival weekend.

While children were enchanted with the old fashioned fire engines and equipment displays, their parents took the opportunity to admire the historic architecture and a range of contemporary exhibits.

Many of Perth's best known and loved heritage buildings also provided free access, with the festival creating an atmosphere of nostalgia around the city with old trams, period costumes and industry and services brought back to life to give a glimpse into times past.

Director Community Engagement Suellen Shea said the Centre, housed in the 110 year old Central Perth Fire Station, was a focal point of the local heritage streetscape.

"The building is unique in that it has been connected to Perth's emergency services for more than a century," Suellen said.

"Being part of the heritage festival was a great way to highlight the use FESA has found for the building, and that we continue to maintain and make it available to the community."

"The building is unique in that it has been connected to Perth's emergency services for more than a century."

In addition to promoting the Centre's heritage and hazard awareness exhibits and resources, other festival activities included fire tunic dress-ups for kids, engine rides and a display of appliances from the vintage fleet.

Water pumping demonstrations by a vintage heavy pumper also proved a big hit, with visitors invited to have a go.

"It was a fantastic event and the success of the weekend was largely due to the efforts of our volunteers and both Centre and Operations staff," Suellen said.



Visitors to the FESA Education and Heritage Centre were able to hear firsthand about this restored vintage fire appliance from volunteers Jeff Graves (left) and Jess Luff (right).

Reservist contribution recognised in MOU

With more than 40 Australian Defence Force (ADF) reservists from the Army, Navy and Airforce working for FESA, the authority has confirmed its ongoing support by entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The document was recently co-signed by Chief Executive Officer Jo Harrison-Ward and Major General Greg Melick.

“The MOU is in keeping with FESA’s values and vision for a safer community, and continues our long standing support of reservist employees,” Jo said.

“We are proud to have reservists among our ranks. They are dedicated to protecting and serving their communities, and play an active role in keeping people safe all over the world.

“The agreement helps to recognise that the training and qualifications employees develop in the reserve service are of substantial benefit to emergency services.

“Skills learnt include operational techniques, logistics, reconnaissance and importantly, good self discipline.”

Major General Melick said the MOU aimed to achieve better management of a shared workforce and it would further strengthen the good relationship between FESA and the ADF.

“Reservists bring valuable life and work skills back to their workplaces and that certainly includes our nation’s emergency services,” he said.

For long time army reservist and firefighter, Malaga Fire and Rescue Service Station Officer John Guhl, the new MOU means ongoing increased support from FESA and the ability to have an improved work-life balance.

“There has always been a certain allocation for attending courses and days for army reserve exercises, but this has now greatly improved,” he said.

The army reserves have been part of John’s life for 35 years. It is an



Above: Major General Greg Melick and CEO Jo Harrison-Ward sign the MOU.

Right: SO John Guhl in reservist mode (centre front).

association that has grown from school days when it was compulsory for students to join the cadets.

“I like the lifestyle, being out in the bush and operating weapons,” John said.

Now as Company Sergeant Major of D company CSM in the reserves, John oversees the training of all junior Non Commissioned Officers.

It was a twist of fate, however, that saw him undertake a firefighting career that has spanned more than 20 years.

“I originally applied to be an ambulance worker, but in the final stages someone made a casual remark about positions being advertised for firefighters,” he said.

“It was only this chance comment that made me apply, but I have enjoyed it ever since.”

John said the reserves provide a rewarding and interesting experience not too dissimilar from the fire brigade.



“It involves being challenged all the time and getting pushed physically and mentally,” he said.

“We work hard, then get to relax and have a good laugh afterwards.”

John’s time in the reserves has included a fully armed peacekeeping deployment mission to the Solomon Islands supporting the local Police as part of Operation Helpem Fren, a multinational intervention to prevent the country becoming a failed state.

Helping callers in emergencies

Below FESA Information Line Call Centre Team Leader Adam Boyle recounts his recent experience with the Lake Clifton bushfire.

A young mother home with her children is on the phone to me. She sounds panicked and scared.

"I'm alone here with my kids and I can see the fire is only a hundred metres from my house. Should I leave now? What do I do?"

This was just one of many frantic calls I took that night on the Lake Clifton bushfire.

Checking the map, I find this particular house is in the path of the fire and the wind direction indicated the resident was in immediate danger.

She was in the centre of an area on emergency warning level, the highest level of alert, and it was too late to leave. There was no choice but to stay and actively defend by taking shelter in her home and waiting for the fire front to pass.

"Okay," I said, focusing on keeping a calm and steady tone.

"The advice is that it is not safe for you to leave now, you will be safer if you stay indoors, preferably in a room that has a good water supply and an exit to

the exterior. This room should be away from the fire front...perhaps your laundry would be suitable.

"My laundry is at the back of the house... should I go there?"

"Yes, move yourself and your kids to the laundry and wait for the fire front to pass. If your house catches fire, you will need to exit immediately and run to an area outside which has already been burnt. Is that clear?"

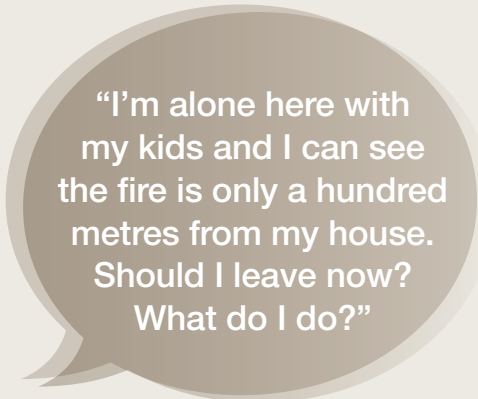
"Yes, we'll move to the laundry right away."

It is now 4.30am in the morning and I'm at home. The phone is ringing again and that's rarely good news.

The call from the FESA Communications Centre requests that I report directly to the State Operations Coordination Centre (SOCC) at FESA House.

A new call centre team is being assembled to take more phone calls about the bushfire continuing to burn out of control in Lake Clifton.

I had spent the previous evening until 9pm with another team taking calls about the same fire.



This was a significant incident and there were a large number of properties and lives under threat again.

Fortunately, there were no injuries during the Lake Clifton fire, so I know that the young mum I spoke to the previous night and her kids survived what must have been a terrifying situation.

People call FESA to get the very latest information on details about the fire, like direction and speed.

They want to know whether their house is in the fire's path, and whether they should remain and defend or relocate to a safer place, what they should do with their pets or livestock, where the relocation point is, what roads are blocked and who to call to find missing family or friends.

At the height of a serious incident such as the Lake Clifton fire our call agent teams can take more than 100 calls in an hour.

After my early morning call I headed back to the city. On arrival at the SOCC the team of four call centre agents, a team leader and a coordinator assembled for a briefing on the fire and prepared themselves for the imminent calls.

With access to the most recent FESA alerts, maps, live weather and road closure details, the team was well equipped to keep the community informed.

The FESA Information Line Call Centre is operated by staff based in the metropolitan area who are trained to answer public information enquiries.

FESA Call Centre agents promote multi channel delivery of public information by passing on website information, encouraging safe actions and assisting callers to interpret their options.

FESA staff interested in finding out more about volunteering as call takers can contact Gordon Hall on 9323 9777.



FESA Call Centre staff (l-r): Gordon Hall, Adam Boyle and Sue Eccles.

New weapon for war on arson

With an estimated half of all fires in Western Australia considered deliberate or suspicious, the fight against arson remains an ongoing challenge that FESA and other stakeholders are determined to tackle head on.

Some of the tools at their disposal include technology that provides vital real time mapping and data plotting, the use of covert cameras and monetary incentives, as well as legislation changes to increase penalties.

Manager Fire Investigation and Analysis Unit Craig Waters said FESA recently introduced new technology in the form of the Extinguish Arson Intelligence Database (EAID).

“This latest innovation means that FESA, the Department of Environment and Conservation and WA Police Arson Squad fire investigators are now better equipped than ever when it comes to dealing with arson and identifying developing fire trend locations,” Craig said.

“EAID complements existing programs used by the Arson Investigation Network.

“Among these are the Online Arson Reporting System and the Extinguish Arson Reward Program, where key stakeholders share vital information and access to data and reporting.”

The new database offers real time tracking of deliberate and suspicious fire locations, and identifies linkages between fires that may indicate a serial arsonist is operating within a particular area.

Triple zero (000) caller details can also be linked to specific fire incidents for follow up information and witness questioning. Craig said EAID had already proven its worth, with a teenage boy arrested for the alleged lighting of 14 fires in the Mandurah area.

“Seven charges have also been laid against two juvenile male offenders in relation to a series of fires in the Girrawheen area in March,” he said.

“This is a direct result of sharing EAID data and the collaborative working relationship between FESA fire investigators and the WA Police Arson Squad. In the Girrawheen case Malaga Fire and Rescue Service crews also provided excellent information.”

“Several hot spots have so far been revealed and covert operations put in place, including the use of CCTV cameras, to identify people involved in illegal fire lighting.”



Fire Investigation and Analysis Unit Manager Craig Waters uses the EAID program.

Once a fire trend has been established, surveillance is sometimes used by investigators to help identify the arsonist. Several hot spots have so far been revealed and covert operations put in place, including the use of CCTV cameras, to identify people involved in illegal fire lighting.

In the lead up to and during the 2010-11 season FESA fire investigators identified a significant number of deliberately lit fires throughout the state. Between 1 October 2010 and 28 February 2011 a total of 930 bushfire incidents were reported.

Craig said the high degree of interagency cooperation and teamwork, use

of the Arson Reward program and greater community involvement had seen an unprecedented amount of information channelled through the CrimeStoppers network.

“The result has been pleasing, with the Police Arson Squad reporting increased response rates and more charges for arson offences,” Craig said.

“In Western Australia we have an excellent clearance rate for arson of approximately 30 percent or triple the national average.”

He added that EAID was currently being trialled and evaluated by fire services in the Eastern States that had recognised its potential.

All in a day's work...

Laughs, smiles and thumbs up were the order of the afternoon when firefighters from the Daglish Fire and Rescue Service Station teamed up with Perth's oldest registered children's charity Uni Camp for Kids.

Over four Fridays in January, 300 children got to spend the afternoon on a fire station as part of the week long camp program.

The visits were about bringing some cheer into the lives of children who need it most. This was certainly achieved as the kids got to clamber aboard a fire truck, hang out with the firefighters and rush down a giant 'slip and slide' during the charity's annual camp program.

Belmont Firefighter Matt Launder who liaised with the camp organisers, said

this was the second year firefighters had been involved and everyone was already looking forward to next year's event.

"The emphasis of the visits is strictly on having fun and letting kids be kids," Matt said.

"It's really great to see everyone getting behind such a great cause and the firefighters get a kick out of it as well."

Uni Camp for Kids engages hundreds of children, aged between 5 and 12 years, providing positive and proactive experiences they may not be able to have in their everyday life.



Daglish Station Officer Jon Broomhall (left) and firefighter Stuart King (right) with happy campers young Jacob, Liam, Caitlin and Keisha from Uni Camp for Kids.

State of the Service: a snapshot

The *State of the Service* report outlines the capacity of FESA and local government to respond to emergencies through infrastructure, equipment, appliances and other assets.

The report to December 2010 highlights achievements since the ESL was introduced in 2003-04. It covers all emergency services including those funded by arrangements outside the ESL, such as Volunteer Marine Rescue Services (VMRS) and Emergency Aviation Services.

Funding

- \$145 million provided to local governments to fund the Bush Fire Service (BFS) (\$118 million) and State Emergency Service (SES) (\$27 million).

Appliances

- More than 88 percent of BFS firefighting fleet (529 of 595 vehicles), more than double the pre-ESL rate, replaced or approved for replacement.

- Reduced percentage of over age BFS appliances from 32 percent to three percent.
- 54 percent of SES primary response equipment (vehicles, trailers and boats) replaced or approved for replacement.
- 69 percent of Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) appliances approved for replacement with 83 commissioned.
- 48 percent of the Volunteer Emergency Service (VES) and Volunteer Fire Service (VFS) fleet (31 of 65 vehicles) approved for replacement with 22 commissioned.
- Funding support provided to VMRS groups for 22 new and 20 replacement rescue vessels.
- Emergency Aviation Services funding increased from \$1.8 million to \$15.1 million.
- 17 new SES buildings, including two collocations with BFS, and 64 facility upgrades.
- 10 career FRS stations built.
- \$22.2 million for construction of seven Volunteer Fire and Rescue (VFRS) stations and nine facilities that collocate VFRS and one or more services.
- Seven VES stations built, two funded by Commonwealth and Royalties for Regions grants, and three VES and one VFS stations renovated or upgraded.

Buildings

- 86 new BFS buildings, including two collocations with SES, and improvements to 54 stations and facilities.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- \$5.5 million for BFS PPE, with annual spending on PPE up 40 percent on pre-ESL level.
- Almost \$4 million over the past five years for PPE for career and volunteer FRS, VES and VFS.
- \$2.5 million for new and replacement PPE for the SES used in search, rescue and community assistance.

Movie showcases miracle rescue

Tropical storms, flash flooding and daring rescues are just part of the job for many FESA State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers who often do their best work out of the public eye.

One call out that had all these elements has been made into a movie released on the big screen in February.

Sanctum, the \$30 million film produced by legendary Hollywood director James Cameron, is based on a real life caving expedition and subsequent rescue that took place on the Nullabor Plain in December 1988.

As the promotional material says: *"Sanctum follows a team of underwater cave divers on a treacherous expedition to the largest, most beautiful and least accessible cave system on Earth.*

When a tropical storm forces them deep into the caverns, they must fight raging water, deadly terrain and creeping panic as they search for an unknown escape route to the sea."

Shot on location on the Gold Coast, the 3D action thriller does focus more on the

expedition than the rescue efforts made by the SES, but without that rescue the film might never have been made.

The movie's screenwriter Andrew Wight happens to be one of the cavers trapped after heavy rainfall following a cyclonic storm flooded the Pannikin Plain cave entrance.

The cavers were stranded for up to two days before being found and rescued by the WA SES Cliff and Cave Rescue Team.

SES volunteer Jim Ridgewell has clear memories of the event.

"On the morning of 2 December 1988 we received a call directing us to be at Perth airport at sun up," he said.

"The information at that time was there were some people trapped in a cave, that was it.

"It was the first real cliff rescue the team had participated in."

After several detours due to bad weather, they arrived and were briefed by police.

"There had been a storm with an immense amount of rain and because the plains are flat, much of this water had

run into the cave, just like a sink in your bathroom," Jim said.

"There were 13 people trapped in the cave, no injuries were known, and our task was to get them out.

"We figured they might not be alive because of the volume of rock that had caved in."

Debris was cleared and the team was able to communicate with and rescue everyone in the group, one by one, over a period of around eight hours.

Miraculously there were no serious injuries.

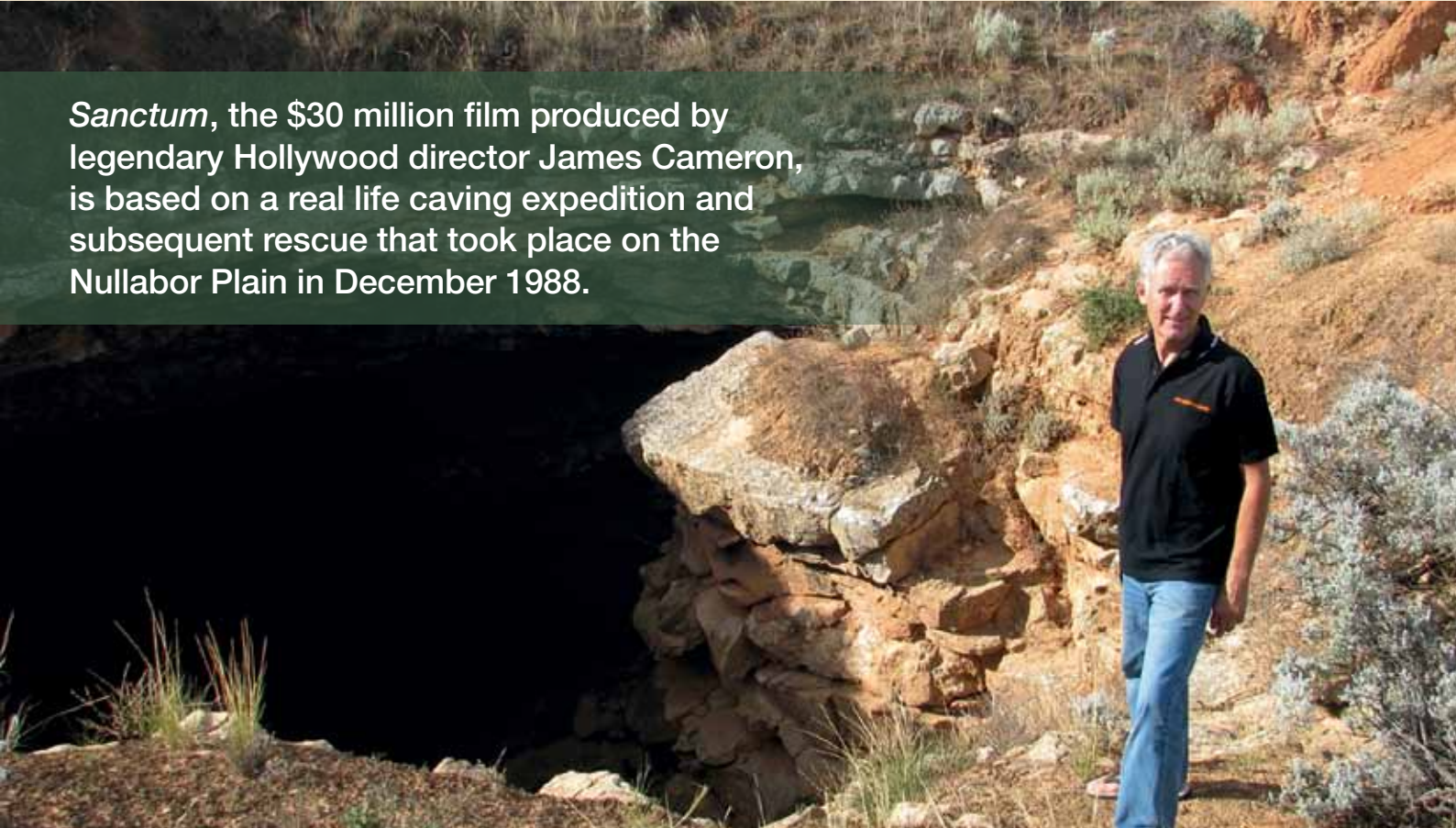
"One of the people we rescued described rocks as big as caravans falling around them," he said.

"They were very grateful to be out of what they thought could have been their tomb."

In 2009, 21 years after the event, Jim and fellow team member Phil Petersen returned to the site of the rescue.

"The cave didn't look much different that day, except the debris had settled, it was dry and the sun was shining," Jim said.

"It was a remarkable experience that left a lasting imprint on my life."



***Sanctum*, the \$30 million film produced by legendary Hollywood director James Cameron, is based on a real life caving expedition and subsequent rescue that took place on the Nullabor Plain in December 1988.**

SES volunteer Jim Ridgewell revisits the site of the Pannikin Plain cave rescue.



RAC Rescue takes on the sea

On call 24 hours a day year round, the RAC Rescue helicopter and its crew have saved the lives of several hundred Western Australians and clocked up well over 2,000 incidents since its inception in 2003.

In early March with pilot Mick Perren at the controls, the chopper was tasked to retrieve a man in his 60's from on board the *Pacific Princess* cruise ship. The patient was suffering from an abdominal condition that warranted urgent hospitalisation.

Flying from its operational base at Jandakot airport, RAC Rescue arrived at the location 40 nautical miles (74 kilometres) off Shark Bay, in darkness at 7.20pm.

Having assessed the situation the crew determined they would be unable to land the aircraft on the ship's deck. This meant the patient would have to be winched off with RAC Rescue hovering overhead, no mean feat at any time.

With the ship below still moving at an estimated 12 knots per hour, Mick deftly piloted the helicopter, controlling the speed and altitude with precision while all the time maintaining awareness of what the wind was doing.

"There is a limit to the size of vessels that we can winch to at night," Mick said.

"The key is the ability to safely establish and hold a good hover reference."

The crew planned the approach so the aircraft was placed in the best winch position into the wind and with the pilot having a good visual reference. Achieving a matched speed and direction, Mick

then had to match the vertical movement from the heave and roll of the ship.

Air crewman Chris Peacock had an overall view of the operation. At the appropriate time he lowered St John Ambulance critical care paramedic Brett Screen down to the deck quickly and safely despite the hazardous conditions. Once on board the ship, Brett stabilised the patient and prepared him to be winched up to the hovering helicopter.

The critical role then passed back to Chris who was controlling the winch from the back right door.

"Chris had to winch out and in to ensure there was enough wire so the aircraft movement didn't prematurely pull on the stretcher," Mick said.

"It was also important not to let too much out in case it became tangled."

By 7.45pm both the stretcher and paramedic were on board RAC Rescue. The patient was delivered to Geraldton airport where a waiting road ambulance took him to Geraldton Hospital.

After further triage the patient was subsequently transported to Royal Perth Hospital, with the rescue chopper returning to its Jandakot base by 1.30am.

In a separate incident later in March, RAC Rescue again responded to a similar call for assistance off the south west coast.



Top: *Ponto Vremon* at sea west of Augusta. Above: RAC Rescue crew undertake winching operations.

In the early morning hours a crewman in his mid 50's on board cargo ship *Ponto Vremon*, was believed to have suffered a stroke as the ship sailed west of Cape Leeuwin, approximately 100 nautical miles (180 kilometres) west of Augusta.

On their journey to the scene the crew established contact with the ship over VHF marine radio, gathering critical information that assisted with the rescue effort. This intelligence also helped to determine whether or not the speed or direction of the ship needed to be altered to assist winching operations.

"The crew conducted orbits and confirmed decisions and plans that had been discussed while en route," Mick said.

"Similar to the *Pacific Princess* rescue, conditions dictated that a winch operation would be required.

"We had one final radio communication with the ship before commencing the rescue and did not need to talk to them again until it was complete."

The ill man was winched to safety and flown to Perth for treatment at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.

JAFFA program seeks firefighters

FESA's Juvenile and Family Fire Awareness (JAFFA) program aims to minimise the impact of juvenile arson, and more officers are needed to expand the program.

JAFFA Coordinator Susannah Bilous said juvenile arson was an issue of national concern, with incidents often creating life threatening situations and costing governments and communities millions of dollars each year.

"Statistics show that children between 4 and 16 years of age are responsible for causing more than 20 percent of bushfires around Australia," Susannah said.

"FESA's JAFFA program involves support officers conducting intervention sessions with young people identified as being involved in fire lighting.

"Research indicates that juveniles are more likely to react positively to information delivered by firefighters, rather than by parents or teachers."

JAFFA has been in existence in WA since 1989 when it was established by a small group of firefighters in response to community demand.

Susannah said it was now supported by a team of specially trained Fire and Rescue Service and volunteer firefighters who give their time outside of work hours to visit juveniles at home.

"JAFFA Support Officers help juveniles to understand the dangers of playing with fire and alert them to the potential financial and legal consequences," Susannah said.

"A range of resources is provided to help the officers explain the risks and potential results of arson to juveniles and their families.

"Most children are curious about fire and it's a normal developmental phase.

"We find that JAFFA is appropriate in situations where a child's curiosity develops into playing with lighters or experimenting with fire in unsafe places, and where parental intervention has been ineffective.

"Statistics show that children between 4 and 16 years of age are responsible for causing more than 20 percent of bushfires around Australia."



JAFFA Support Officer Chris Cairns explains the consequences of deliberate fire lighting (reconstruction).

"Referrals for the JAFFA program are received from parents, firefighters and other agencies, usually as a direct response to fire incidents."

Susannah added that fire setting behaviour was often motivated by psychological or social problems which could sometimes make the JAFFA Support Officer role challenging.

"Support officers can gain a real sense of achievement and fulfilment through their involvement in the JAFFA program, knowing they have had a significant and positive effect on juveniles and their families," she said.

For more information contact the JAFFA Coordinator on (08) 9323 9488 or email: jaffa@fesa.wa.gov.au



Dwellingup memories still burn

2011 marks 50 years since the Dwellingup fires, the most destructive in WA history. Photo courtesy *The West Australian*.

The tall eucalypt forests of the south west were a bit drier than normal that January in 1961. The usual amount of rain had not fallen and hot north, north easterly winds kept temperatures above 40 degrees for five consecutive days.

A tropical cyclone had formed off the northern coast of Onslow. As it travelled slowly along the Pilbara coast drenching the district, dry thunderstorms occurred in the south west of the state.

In forests thirsty for rain and heavy with fuel load, the storms provided only lightning, igniting fires that would devastate many small timber towns.

The fires blackened and burnt large areas of forest in and around the

Dwellingup township from 20 to 24 January.

Dozens of families were left homeless by the fires and the nearby small timber communities of Holyoake, Nanga Brook, Marringup and Banksiadale were so consumed by the fire they were never to be rebuilt.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of those massive fires and similar incidents at Pemberton and Karridale.

To commemorate the anniversary, past and present Dwellingup locals gathered in the township on Sunday 23 January.

The event brought together many of the families affected by the fire as well as former firefighters including then Dwellingup Forestry Divisional Officer Frank Campbell.

"It really was spectacular bringing everyone back to Dwellingup, and a

delightful experience to renew so many acquaintances," he said.

Frank recalled he had only been in the town four months when a series of lightning strikes started six initial fires on the Thursday afternoon and Friday morning.

By the weekend the number of fires had grown significantly throughout the region, isolating the town as other communities battled their own blazes.

"There was not much chance of expecting assistance," Frank said.

"We were left with the job of fighting the fires as best we could.

"Volunteers from the town and the local sawmill were enlisted to help, together with experienced firefighters.

"They fought them by back burning and with bulldozers from the local sawmills hard against the fire face.

“In forests thirsty for rain and heavy with fuel load, the storms provided only lightning, igniting fires that would devastate many small timber towns.”

“Trucks and heavy duty tankers supported gangs of men who used rakes, back sprays and available hand tools.”

Frank added that despite the best efforts of firefighters and the community, the fires continued with full force.

“By Saturday the weather was worse and we realised we were not winning,” he said.

“During the next few days those fighting the fires were pulled back to defend the Dwellingup township and help evacuate the remaining townfolk.

“We ended up running it as a survival exercise rather than a firefighting exercise.”

Ironically, the rain from another cyclone eventually extinguished the flames that had brought so much devastation to the region. Despite the extensive devastation, miraculously no lives were lost.

A Royal Commission after the incident saw a number of changes to bushfire management in WA, including preventative controlled burning in the tall eucalypt forests of the South West. With the fire extinguished, Frank, his young family and fellow residents of the town set about the task of rebuilding. “Everything burnt, we lost everything. That was very severe, but the job at hand was to rebuild Dwellingup,” he said.

“The community was generally typical of a Western Australian country village. Everyone contributed to helping everyone else and the spirit was excellent.”

The recent 2011 anniversary reunion saw a number of friends and families gather to remember. They were firefighters, farmers and forestry workers whose memories remain of the fires that destroyed 130 homes, sawmills, structures and 150,000 hectares of forest.

Bushfire items help community

Hot off the press is FESA Community Engagement’s latest release *After the Fire – Your Guide to Bushfire Recovery*.

This informative booklet outlines what people can do and who to contact if they have been involved in a serious bushfire.

Director Community Engagement Suellen Shea said one of the outcomes of the Toodyay bushfire in December 2009 was the need to provide more detailed information for people whose homes had been lost or severely damaged.

“This new booklet is a handy guide designed to help residents through the recovery process after experiencing a major bushfire and losing their home,” Suellen said.

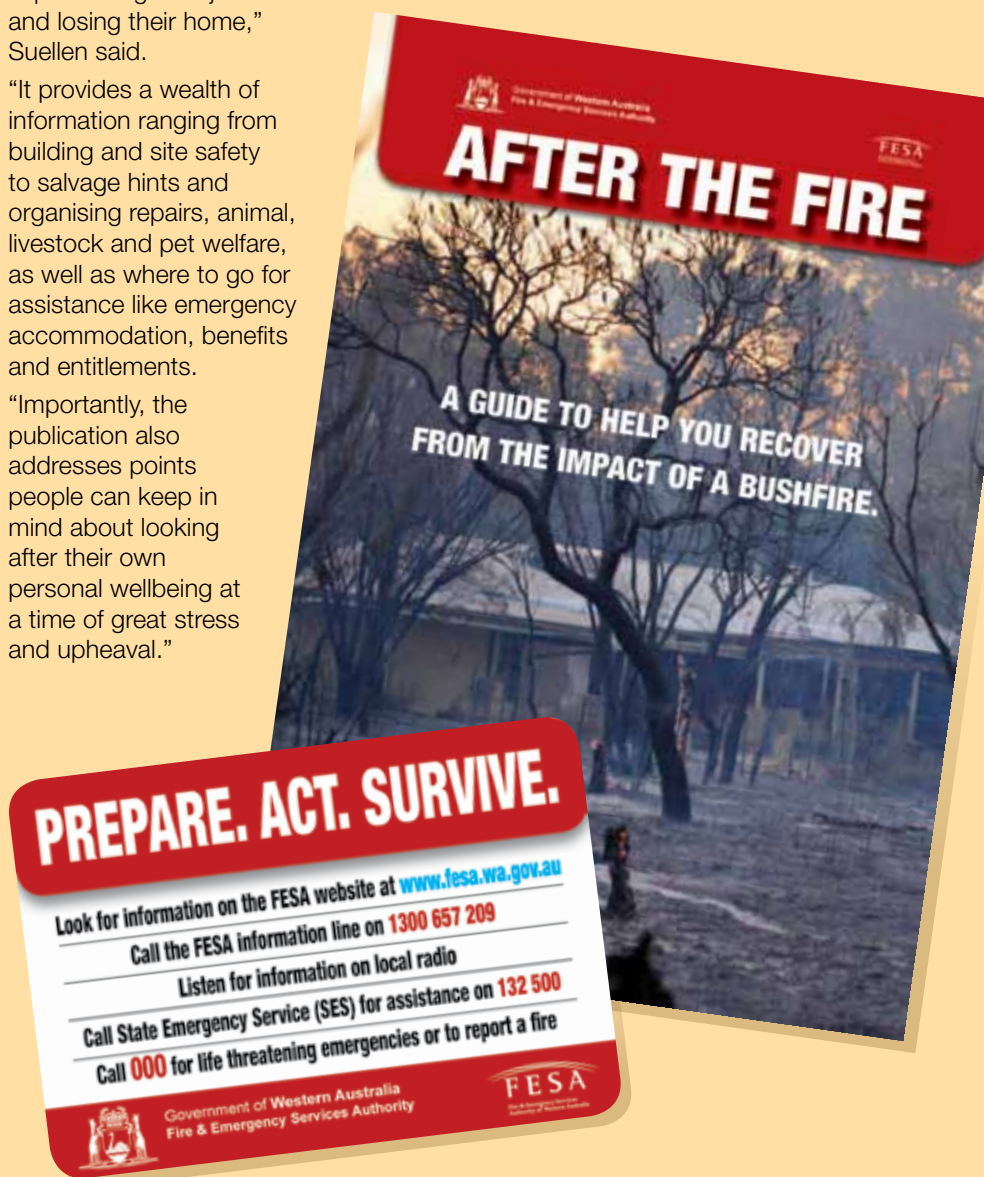
“It provides a wealth of information ranging from building and site safety to salvage hints and organising repairs, animal, livestock and pet welfare, as well as where to go for assistance like emergency accommodation, benefits and entitlements.

“Importantly, the publication also addresses points people can keep in mind about looking after their own personal wellbeing at a time of great stress and upheaval.”

Suellen added that an emergency contacts fridge magnet had also been produced and distributed.

“The *Prepare.Act.Survive.* magnet was developed as a quick and easy way of informing people of key contacts to access during an emergency such as a bushfire,” she said.

“It has been made available to the career and volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, Bushfire Ready facilitators, State Emergency Service and regional staff.”



StateAlert wins national recognition



StateAlert, Western Australia's electronic equivalent of an emergency door knock, has been highly commended in the Australian Safer Communities National Awards.

This emergency warning system uses mapping technology and telephone data to send alerts direct to people in locations where lives may be in danger. It can target an area as small as a suburban block or as large as a whole district to send information to landlines, mobiles and emails.

The joint FESA and WA Police project was the first of its type to be developed in Australia.

StateAlert can be used for any type of life threatening emergency including fires, cyclones, chemical spills and tsunamis. This bushfire season it was activated to send 23,000 messages to save lives and alert people to bushfires in Lake Clifton, Red Hill and Roleystone-Kelmscott.

State Hazard Operations Manager Mike Klenner said StateAlert was used to warn communities but emphasised it was not designed to replace any of the current public information tools.

"StateAlert is used for life threatening emergencies," Mike said.

"It can only be activated when authorities are aware that there is an emergency happening and there is time to issue a warning.

"The system is an additional tool used to alert people in a specific location where there is immediate danger.

"People should always look after their own safety by monitoring local conditions, taking preventative action and accessing information from other sources such as radio, websites or telephone information lines, where possible."

Mike added that ABC radio and other local stations also provide information during emergencies and a portable radio with charged batteries should always be kept ready in case of power outages.

"The system is an additional tool used to alert people in a specific location where there is immediate danger."



Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department Roger Wilkins (left) presents FESA State Hazards Operations Officer Mike Klenner with the Highly Commended award.



Rebuilding has gathered pace in Toodyay. Photo courtesy of *The West Australian*.

“The mood has changed from sadness to positivity and people who were struggling are now smiling.”

Toodyay one year on

It has been just over a year since bushfire ripped through Toodyay burning 2,900 hectares and destroying 38 homes.

While the emotional scars remain, many residents have rebuilt their homes and lives, and are hopeful for the future.

Recovery Coordinator and Shire of Toodyay Councillor Charlie Wroth said the majority of people impacted by the blaze had decided to rebuild or were in the process of construction.

“You can still see traces of the fire, but a lot has been achieved in terms of clean up,” he said.

“The community is happy to be able to move on and get back to normality, even those who were really battling.

“The mood has changed from sadness to positivity and people who were struggling are now smiling.

“They appreciate the support they have been shown and have really come back from adversity.”

FESA Community Emergency Management Officer Yvette Grigg said the number of people rebuilding and returning home after one year was a good sign.

“To put it into perspective, with the Victorian fires there was nobody back in their homes after a year,” she said.

“The fire has raised awareness and has had a major impact on the amount of planning, both general and recovery, at a local government level.”

A year after the event Councillor Wroth said because of the increased level of awareness, people were better prepared.

“It has taken a while to recover and it’s been a great community effort,” he said.



Members of Toodyay VFRS at the open day.

“Our initial focus was on people’s welfare and in the early days we held recovery meetings every day.

“Now focus has shifted to revegetation and after close to 100 public meetings over 11 months, we held the last public recovery meeting in December 2010.”

The Shire of Toodyay Recovery Committee continues to meet.

Milestone centenary

Not long after the town of Toodyay experienced the 2009 devastating bushfire, the local Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service marked one hundred years since its first call out.

“Toodyay’s volunteer firefighters have been an important part of the

community for a long time and we are proud of our history,” said Brigade Captain Ian MacGregor.

The brigade invited the Toodyay community to an open day at the station to mark the centenary. Current equipment and historic items, records and photographs were displayed for visitors showing the range of incidents the brigade has attended over the years.

Ian said that in terms of property damage the December 2009 bushfire was the biggest the brigade had faced and it was stretched to the limit.

“The fire was unimaginable, very fast moving and very hot,” said Ian.

“Something as big as that fire really hits the community hard, but Toodyay is well on the road to recovery.”

Clean sweep for School 68



Front (l-r): Senior Firefighter Clive Mann, Station Officer Neville Baker, Acting District Officer Mick Gillham, Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes, CEO Jo Harrison-Ward, Manager Training and Development David Evenis, District Officer Rob Forster, Station Officer Lexie Bowring, and Station Officer Stephen Pilton. Middle (l-r): Graduates Ryan Glamuzina, Adrian Jones, Paul Roberts, Paul Mercieca, Brett Edwards, Stephen Lamont, Mark Walsh, John Oakley, Matthew Bowles, Cheyne Tully, Damien McDonald, and Damien Porter. Back (l-r): Matthew Roach, Kevin Lube, Stuart King, Dave Musca, Dominic Reay, Joshua Duncan-Brown, Tyrel Stedman, Michael De Rossi, Marc Royall, Steven Adams, Shaun Leavy, and Daniel Clement.

Western Australia's firefighting capacity recently received a boost when 24 new graduates from Firefighter Training School 68 completed their training and were welcomed into the career Fire and Rescue Service.

As with previous intakes, the trainees came from diverse backgrounds including business, finance, trades, teaching and firefighting in other jurisdictions.

They received their Certificate II in Public Safety, Firefighting and Emergency Operations, from Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson.

"You have undergone a comprehensive 14 week training course to prepare you for a range of emergencies," Mr Johnson said.

"As firefighters you share a common desire and willingness to help others.

"This commitment will be tested many times throughout your career as you attend bush and structure fires, vehicle rescues and other emergency incidents."

Three graduates received special awards for outstanding achievement.

The United Firefighters Union of WA Bob Woods Award for highest results in practical assessments went to Firefighter Ryan Glamuzina.

The Institution of Fire Engineers WA Group Award for highest academic results was won by Firefighter Tyrel Stedman and the FESA Dux Award for overall highest achiever was presented to Firefighter Daniel Clement.

FESA Training Centre Manager David Evenis said the course instructor team was a key to the success of the school.

"The team of nine led by Coordinator District Officer Mick Gillham was complemented by specialist instructors," David said.

"All were dedicated to their task and worked hard to pass on their expertise to the trainees who were extremely keen to learn and do well.

"They also created a realistic environment to ensure that training reflected workplace standards."

"As firefighters you share a common desire and willingness to help others."

In their farewell message the graduates recognised the valuable contribution of their instructors and thanked the team for their advice, support, knowledge and patience - including dealing with the unique marching styles each of the 24 had brought to the school.

The graduates are now based at Perth and other metropolitan fire stations with one serving at Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

Two schools of 24 trainees each are planned for 2011 with School 69 set to graduate in July and School 70 in November.

The first Firefighter Training School graduated in 1967.

Regional vehicle fleet gets a boost

A \$2.8 million investment will see Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie-Boulder Fire and Rescue Service receive advanced model replacement pumpers.

Manager Fleet Engineering Garry Kravainis said each of the stations now has a new \$720,000 pumper, three years ahead of schedule.

“The appliances were part of a standardisation program with the new series of urban pumpers replacing the metropolitan Series 3 medium pumpers,” Garry said.

“A project action team developed a standard locker configuration for the four country urban pumpers as part of their heavy rescue capability.

“The new design enables the full complement of heavy rescue equipment to be carried on the appliance, eliminating the need for trailers.”

Fleet Engineering Officer Ken Bullen said FESA had liaised closely with the manufacturers throughout the project.

“WA based companies designed and programmed the functional requirements and completed the build program on time,” he said.

Ken also conducted familiarisation training at each of the four stations in conjunction with FESA Training Centre staff.

Bunbury was the first station to receive a replacement, with its new pumper commissioned in January.

“The new appliance brings many service delivery improvements to the Bunbury and south west community,” Bunbury Fire and Rescue Service Station Officer Larry Friend said.

“Its increased capacity and ability to carry heavy rescue equipment allows immediate turn out.

“The configuration of the lockers, hoses and reels also make it user friendly.

“It’s a valuable addition to the station.”

Fast facts about the new pumps:

- Scania P310 cab chassis.
- 4500 litre/minute Waterous CM pump.
- Extensive use of LED lighting to improve locker, pump panel and under vehicle illumination. Lighting has the added advantage of reduced electric current draw.
- CANbus ‘Class 1’ digital pump operation system.
- Adjustable mast lighting (tek-lite).
- Series specific locker fit out enabling a full complement of heavy rescue equipment to be carried on the appliance.



Bunbury Firefighter Travis Regan with the station's new pumper. Photo courtesy of the *South Western Times*.

Hills brigade grateful for new trailer



“It is ideal for blacking out operations after hazard reduction burns.”

Wooroloo Bush Fire Brigade's new firefighting trailer donated by Acacia Prison.

Wooroloo Bush Fire Brigade recognise a great opportunity when they see one.

Brigade Fire Control Officer Jim Hoekstra said when members learnt that inmates at Acacia Prison Industries were constructing firefighting trailers as part of their rehabilitation, they immediately saw how valuable the equipment could be for their own brigade.

“We identified several uses for a trailer capable of providing an extra 600 litres of water,” Jim said.

“It is ideal for blacking out operations after pre and post fire season hazard reduction burns.

“In a fire prone area like Wooroloo any hazard reduction is a good thing, but sometimes landholders are reluctant to do their own burns because of a lack of access to sufficient water supplies.

“A purpose built trailer with good water capacity is also suitable for hiring out to residents for this purpose.”

Jim said Acacia Prison was subsequently approached and asked if they could

assist the brigade by supplying a subsidised trailer.

In a show of community spirit Acacia Prison General Manager Paul McMullen responded immediately, offering to provide the brigade with a fully equipped trailer completely free of charge.

Jason Signs then donated the stripes and signage.

The Wooroloo Brigade is more than happy with this equipment and extremely grateful to Acacia Prison for their generous support.

Action on key training commitment

FESA has acted on its commitment to train staff on equal opportunity, bullying and harassment, accountability and ethical decision making.

Manager Workforce Management Steve Musson said the roll out of training to all metropolitan and regional staff was well under way.

“The training which is compulsory for all FESA employees, covers their rights and responsibilities as well as those of volunteers under legislation,” Steve said. “It looks at the FESA code of conduct and policies, as well as the Public Sector code of ethics.

“Attendees are made aware of avenues for support and assistance, including advice and resolution of grievances.”

Monthly training sessions commenced at FESA House in March.

For enquiries contact Acting Grievance Coordinator Gabrielle Bird: gabrielle.bird@fesa.wa.gov.au or phone 9323 9312.

Sea search heats up

In a region affected by six metre tides and cyclones, where everyone's driveway seems to have something parked in it that floats, Pilbara volunteer marine rescue crews often face tough conditions.

With the delivery of a new patrol boat *Pilbara Seeker 3*, the Port Walcott Sea Search and Rescue Group in Wickham will be better able to service their boating community.

Commander Dave Roberts said the new vessel has been a welcome addition.

"Since its commissioning crews immediately began training on *Pilbara Seeker 3* and taking advantage of the new onboard features," he said.

"It has all the 'fruit' for safe navigation, making rescues far more efficient, and our volunteers really enjoy taking her out," he said.

Dave said the Port Walcott volunteers now had access to Forward Looking Infra Red (FLIR) cameras.

"This heat seeking technology improves detection on water and has already proven its worth in a recent rescue, providing high quality thermal images," he said.

"We had a midnight call out after a six metre boat hit a reef, capsized and sunk. FLIR was used by our members for the first time in a rescue situation and the detail of its imagery was amazing."

The efforts of the crew and use of technology combined to locate the sunken vessel's exhausted 60 year old male owner who had safely made it to a nearby beach.

Dave noted that locals were now logging in more than ever prior to setting out to sea, knowing that assistance from Port Walcott's 36 volunteer members was close at hand.

Acquisition of *Pilbara Seeker 3* was made possible through funding provided by FESA, plus fundraising by the group and local community.

The group's previous vessel *Pilbara Seeker 2* was relocated to the Coral Bay Sea Search and Rescue Group.



Pilbara Seeker 3 is officially christened by Sharon Saunders who helps Port Walcott Sea Search and Rescue by often manning the Group's radio. Photo courtesy *Pilbara News*.

Deserving volunteer chalks up life membership

Ian Anderton, who can lay claim to 23 years of volunteering with Port Walcott Sea Search and Rescue, is now the group's inaugural Life Member.

He was presented with the award at the same time as the new *Pilbara Seeker 3* was officially welcomed last November.

A marine rescue veteran, Ian recalled using his own 20 foot tinny in the early days, as well as an extended rescue performed by the group a few years back.

"It was memorable for being a 36 hour operation and also because the search was for two young men who were known to us," he said.

"The rescue was massive, involving 20 boats as well as planes and helicopters.

"Fortunately the missing men were found safe and sound. They had been caught in mangroves, having drifted about 50 kilometres up the coast."

Another of Ian's valuable contributions to the community has involved training sailors for their Skipper's Ticket.



Ian Anderton (right) is congratulated by Port Walcott Sea Search and Rescue's Brad Dean. Photo courtesy ABC.

He has helped around 400 people to prepare to set off safely on the water, with donations for the service going back to the group and helping to purchase equipment.

As a fly-in fly-out Rio Tinto employee, Ian now resides in Cairns, so his involvement in the group has necessarily changed.

Karratha VFRS happy to bus on

Karratha Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) has been given a mobility boost courtesy of a bus donated by Rio Tinto.

Brigade Captain Brett Treeby said the 24 seater valued at \$60,000 was very much appreciated by the brigade.

“We’d been looking for transport of this type for some time and it was a great day for brigade members when we took delivery,” Brett said.

“Previously volunteers had to drive their own vehicles to attend training and exercises in other parts of the Pilbara.

“With large distances between centres it’s been difficult to get to events outside Karratha.

“The bus has made travel far easier for our volunteers and this will help us to retain members.”



Karratha VFRS firefighters with their new bus courtesy of Rio Tinto.

Rio Tinto Communities Manager Robyn Sermon said donating equipment was an important part of the company’s community investment program.

“This bus donation achieves twice, by giving assistance to Karratha VFRS as well as using resources in a more sustainable way,” she said.

Extinguish the risk

Having a working fire extinguisher could mean the difference between losing your entire home or just minor damage.



“The first few moments of a fire are absolutely critical,” said FESA Safety Training Officer Tom Goodlich.

“A whole room can be engulfed in flames within two minutes of a fire starting.

“That’s why it’s so critical to have a working fire extinguisher because if you can attack the blaze when it first begins, it will be much easier to fight and bring under control.”

Tom said it was not uncommon for someone to knock a fire extinguisher, causing it to leak.

“Accidents happen, but you can protect your home and family by checking your extinguisher every three months,” he said.

“It’s also important for boat and caravan owners and people who drive long distances to have a working fire extinguisher.

“The vibration from a boat, caravan or car can affect the powder in a fire extinguisher, so they need to be checked once a month.”

Top 10 fire extinguisher tips

- Seek professional advice about the best size and type of extinguisher to suit your needs.
- Ensure it meets Australian Standards.
- Ask the supplier to show you how to use your extinguisher.
- Check your home extinguisher every three months and your boat, caravan or car extinguisher once a month to ensure they have not been accidentally set off.
- Make sure the yellow needle is in the green section. If it is in the red section it means it has leaked.
- Ensure the safety pin and plastic seal are in place.
- Gently rock the extinguisher from side to side to see if the contents have settled and become hard, and if so gently tap the base with your hand.
- Have the extinguisher professionally serviced once a year.
- Place your extinguisher within easy reach in your car, boat or caravan, but near the door or exit.
- In your home place the extinguisher in or adjacent to your kitchen, but not too close to a potential hazard.

For more information visit:
www.fesa.wa.gov.au

New safety resource targets firefighting risks

Being aware of how your body is responding out in the field, considering what you need to do and acting on it, is the message behind FESA Health Safety and Welfare's latest initiative *Aware Assess Address*.

Acting Manager Health Safety Welfare Leah Parlour said a DVD and poster package encouraged staff to support the concept, especially during the warmer months.

"*Aware Assess Address* is an important reminder for staff to take care of their health and safety as well as that of their colleagues," Leah said.

"This important resource targets heat illness, fatigue and smoke management, and highlights the increased risks that career and volunteer firefighters and fire services staff can face during the warmer months.

"We are encouraging everyone in the target group to embrace the message, display the posters and watch the DVD."

Aware Assess Address packs are available on loan from:

- FESA Regional Offices
- Career fire stations
- Volunteer brigades



- FESA Training Centre
- WA Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services Association
- Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades of WA
- Volunteer Emergency Services Association

Additional copies of the DVD are also available through the Information Resources Library at FESA House and the Health Safety Welfare (HSW) branch.

Information is also available on the HSW page of the FESA Intranet and Volunteer Portal to support the release of the DVD.

Volunteer members can access the portal by going to: www.fesa.wa.gov.au and clicking on the Volunteer Portal link from the homepage, under Quick Links.

For additional information regarding the DVD, please contact the HSW branch on (08) 9323 9754.

HSW summit explores way forward

FESA's Health Safety Welfare Summit was the perfect opportunity to bring together like minds committed to best practice in this area.

Elected safety and health representatives, along with management, discussed ways to work together to improve safety and wellbeing at FESA. Acting Manager Health Safety Welfare (HSW) Leah Parlour said the three day program focused on dynamic topics in the safety and health arena.

"The summit was supported by a number of guest speakers, all specialists and leaders in their respective fields of expertise," Leah said.

"It was an interactive program with delegates having the opportunity to participate in group discussions and provide direction about health, safety and welfare priorities."

The summit took place at the Perth Convention Centre and covered a broad range of topics including:

- safety management system audit
- health monitoring
- accident investigation
- Bellevue chemical fire 10 year review
- fatigue management
- maintaining good mental health.

The excellent group of presenters included Dr Michael Logan from Queensland Fire and Rescue Service,

Consulting Occupational Physician Dr Steven Overmeire, Consulting Occupational Hygienist Dr Laurie Glossop and Andrea Roelofs from People Impact.

Other activities included a charity fundraising event, complementary skin cancer screening, a health check and relaxation treatments.

The HSW branch has created a box set of DVDs featuring the presentations as they were delivered during the summit. They can be borrowed from regional offices or the FESA Information Resources Library.

For more information about the summit, please contact the HSW branch on (08) 9323 9754 or go to the Volunteer Portal.

Plucky volunteer shares national award

Skill, experience, bravery and luck all played a part in a dramatic sea rescue that led to Esperance volunteer David Dodge receiving the 2010 Australian Search and Rescue (SAR) Award.

David, an Esperance State Emergency Service and Sea Search and Rescue Group volunteer, along with local helicopter pilot and owner-operator of Esperance Helitours Bob Kent, were both recognised for their life saving assistance.

The pair's role in locating and rescuing a father and son in distress at sea was judged worthy of the award. The incident occurred after their fishing boat capsized following a hit from a king wave.

When the vessel's registered EPIRB was detected off Cape Arid east of Esperance, the AMSA Rescue Coordination Centre raised the alarm.

David and Bob were deployed and soon airborne, reaching the search area two kilometres off the coast in little over half an hour.

"Sea conditions were very choppy, with lots of white caps making it difficult to locate the men in the water," David said.

"Bob thought he saw a sunken canoe straight away, but we quickly identified it as a large shark."

After just a few minutes into a grid search David spotted the men about 700 metres from the helicopter.

"They were waving, and looked tired and distressed," he said.

"Their position was 300 metres from rocks which were too dangerous to climb and they would have had to swim a kilometre to a spot where they could safely get ashore."

Coming to the rescue, David dropped two flotation life ring grenades into the water.

This gave extra buoyancy and stopped the men's lifejackets from slipping over their heads.

As luck would have it, the grenades had arrived at Esperance Sea Search and Rescue Group just three days before.



"The helicopter doesn't have winch and rescue capabilities, so we were limited in what we could do."

Esperance SES/Sea Search and Rescue volunteer David Dodge (left) and pilot Bob Kent received a National Search and Rescue award for their role in saving two men whose boat was sunk by a king wave.

"The helicopter doesn't have winch and rescue capabilities, so we were limited in what we could do," David explained.

"It was a very long and frustrating 57 minutes from the time I spotted the men to settling them safely on the beach.

"We indicated the direction they should swim and landed our chopper on the shore.

"When they got closer we stripped down and swam out to help them through the waves and rips in what was exceptionally cold water."

David said that while the award was an honour, many other volunteers had also played important roles in locating, rescuing and treating the stranded men.

"Boat crews, SES Communications, ambulance officers and the four wheel drive crew all turned out to lend a hand in the rescue operation," he said.

This prestigious SAR award recognises outstanding contribution to search and rescue within the Australian region. The award recipients are considered to have made a significant contribution to Australia's search and rescue ability or to the saving of a human life.

David is an Agriculture Department biosecurity officer. He spends a lot of time searching the region for starlings which are considered pests, to stop them getting established in WA. He believes this work plus completing several SES aerial observer courses helped him to spot the men quickly.



Five named in Australia Day Honours

Standing on the steps of Parliament House in Canberra on Australia Day, Her Excellency the Governor General Quentin Bryce AC announced the first group of honour recipients for 2011.

Among the Western Australian contingent were five personnel from FESA including Craig Hynes, Rodney Eyre and Tom Brown who were awarded the Australian Fire Services Medal (AFSM), with Graham Fixter and Connie Eikelboom receiving the Emergency Service Medal (ESM).

Chief Executive Officer Jo Harrison-Ward said that all those honoured had made a significant contribution to their communities.

"It is with a great deal of pride that we congratulate Craig, Rod, Tom, Graham and Connie for their dedication to serving others and commitment to achieving their best," Jo said.

"All are outstanding role models who have made their mark in the field of emergency services."

Craig Hynes AFSM

As FESA Chief Operations Officer, Craig is responsible for the coordination and management of FESA's Operations portfolio. He was awarded the AFSM for his commitment to innovative change and has been instrumental in the development of Western Australia's contemporary emergency services model. With more than 25 years service to his credit, Craig is dedicated to ensuring FESA is at the forefront of fire and emergency preparation, planning, response and recovery.

Rodney Eyre AFSM

Rodney is Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer for the Shire of Mundaring and received an AFSM for his outstanding leadership and dedication to developing strategies to protect the community and provide a safer place to live. He has built



FESA Australia Day Honours recipients (l-r): Graham Fixter ESM, Connie Eikelboom ESM, Rod Eyre AFSM, CEO Jo Harrison-Ward, Craig Hynes AFSM and Tom Brown AFSM.

excellent relationships with a range of stakeholders and shown a sincere willingness to help his community in times of need. Rodney has also served on the Bush Fire Service Consultative Committee and Bush Fire Advisory Committee.

Tom Brown AFSM

Tom has had a long and positive involvement in volunteer firefighting. His dedication to the role of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer with the Shire of Esperance has seen him engage the community, actively promote bushfire safety messages and build strong sustainable relationships with stakeholders. Tom has also been instrumental in developing many new initiatives across the Esperance Shire and played an instrumental role in the formation of the Mount Beaumont Bush Fire Brigade in the late 1970's.

Graham Fixter ESM

Graham was recognised with an ESM for his strong commitment to the State Emergency Service (SES) over the past 21 years. He currently holds the

role of Unit Operations Officer and Administration Officer with Gosnells SES, is on the unit's Executive Committee and is a founding member of the FESA SES Peer Support program. Graham has shown great dedication to training new volunteer members and local emergency services cadets. Several years ago he initiated the modern day SES Metro Challenge, an event that has gone on to become a valuable and popular activity on the SES calendar.

Connie Eikelboom ESM

Connie is a volunteer with Armadale SES who has received the ESM for serving the City of Armadale and community of Western Australia with distinction for more than 20 years. Her outstanding service which started as a 16 year old in the unit's Welfare Section, saw her go on to become an exceptional rescue team member and leader, and then training manager. Connie has shown strong leadership and her dedication and commitment have helped the unit to deliver timely, quality and effective emergency service.

Re-appointment of FESA Chief Executive Officer

WA Public Sector Commissioner Mal Wauchope has announced that Jo Harrison-Ward has been re-appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority for a term of five years, effective from 7 August 2011.

Tom Price cadets celebrate milestone with a win

“It encourages students to be community minded, develop leadership skills, work in teams and use initiative.”



(Above): Senior cadets enjoy a camping trip in Karijini National Park.

The tenth anniversary of the Tom Price Emergency Services Cadet Corps (ESCC) was the perfect occasion to announce that host school Tom Price Senior High had won the inaugural Emergency Services Cadet Unit Support Award.

The announcement was made to the cheers of current and former cadets, their parents, instructors, school staff and community leaders.

Deputy School Principal Nicole Kelly is the cadet unit leader.

“Receiving the award is fabulous, especially as it recognises the school’s staff and student support of cadets and instructors over the years,” Nicole said.

“ESCC is an initiative I believe should be in all schools.

(Left): Tom Price senior cadets and instructors tackle a section of the Miracle Mile gorges in the Pilbara. Photo courtesy of *Canning Times*.



Top cadet award well deserved

Cannington Community Education Support Centre received the Emergency Services Cadet Corp (ESCC) Unit Achievement Award for their action, initiative and contribution.

"It encourages students to be community minded, develop leadership skills, work in teams and use initiative.

"Problem solving and persisting when situations are difficult are also a valuable part of the cadet experience."

Understandably Nicole is particularly proud of the local ESCC.

"The unit has earned a strong reputation in the local Tom Price community as a very positive activity for the town's young people," she said.

"We had a membership of 62 teenagers in 2010 and this year another 25 new members have signed up.

"It's also been great to see many former cadets from the Tom Price Unit joining FESA's volunteer emergency services after completing their schooling."

Manager Volunteer and Youth Services branch Wayne Fanderlinden said Tom Price Senior High School were worthy winners of the first ever host school award.

"This award was introduced to recognise the importance of effective, ongoing support in the success of cadet units, and Tom Price exemplifies this," he said.

"Eligibility criteria include having a management committee that takes a proactive role in the unit, providing assistance and guidance to the unit leader and instructors, and promoting the cadet program.

"It also involves recognising the achievements and contribution of cadets and supporters of the unit."

Wayne said it was inspiring to see the Tom Price ESCC go from strength to strength and know that FESA continues to play a positive role in managing the ESCC program.

Director People and Organisational Development Karen Roberts was pleased to present the award to a unit who are committed to helping others.

"Cannington was chosen for its inclusive cadet program which ensures all members have the opportunity to experience a variety of activities," Karen said.

"The unit participates in regular community service work including tree planting and cleanups of local areas such as suburban wetlands in the cities of Belmont and Canning.

"Cadets tackle these projects with a lot of enthusiasm and a desire to leave the area in a much better condition to benefit the ecosystem and the surrounding community."

The centre has also gone out into the community to display its achievements

at the Abilities Expo and encourage others to get involved.

Information was provided to the public and stakeholders who had the opportunity to learn about the inclusion and success of school aged young people with special needs in the cadet program.

"Participation in the Expo led to contact from other schools interested in implementing similar programs, and is another example of the unit's willingness to share its expertise and time to help others," Karen said.

The Unit Achievement Award is part of the wider ESCC awards program to recognise cadets, instructors, units and host schools whose actions, programs or initiatives make a significant contribution to the ESCC, FESA and their local community.



Chief Cadet Instructor Peter Greenhough (at back) with (l-r): Cannington Emergency Services Cadets Kain Lymbrey, Jenny Bos, Lee Sun and Jesse Lally. Photo courtesy of *Canning Times*.

Ladder of success for Juniors

A group of young volunteer juniors are helping to keep firefighting traditions alive through a combination of heat, sweat and determination.

Thanks to their commitment and skill the next generation of volunteers likely to step up and serve the community will keep us all in very safe hands.

The 33rd running of the Western Australian Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services (VFRS) Association State Junior Championships took place at Gilbert Fraser Reserve in Fremantle.

It provided invaluable experience to more than 300 of the state's best and brightest as they contested a series of events with the aim of being declared state champion brigade.

Twenty teams from across WA, plus one Victorian team competed in a number of challenging events that included use of hoses, stovepipes, branches and breeches.

A team from Northam won the overall champion brigade, edging out close competition from Armadale and Mandurah.

Champion Junior Firefighter was awarded to Victor Bermingham from Kambalda, while James Barker from Guildford took out the Sub Junior Champion award.

Association Executive Officer Max Osborn said it had been a fantastic event and while congratulating competitors for their high level of sportsmanship, he commented on the importance of youth involvement in volunteer brigades.

"The Championships not only foster healthy competition, but allow the next generation of firefighters the opportunity to meet and interact with their peers," he said.

"They also get to test their skills, be part of a team and serve their community.

"The importance of juniors can't be understated, as these excellent young people are our future.

"There have been many outstanding juniors who progress through to active adult volunteers and this year another group of sixteen will move into the senior ranks."



Overall Champion Brigade Northam VFRS.



Esperance Juniors give it everything at the Championships.

Max also thanked those behind the scenes who helped make the event a success.

"The Championships are the culmination of a lot of hard work from coaches, families and supporters," he said.

Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson attended the Championships and praised competitors for their efforts.

"It was great to see such a strong contingent of competitors go head to head in a range of activities that tested their endurance, agility, coordination, speed, teamwork and leadership," the Minister said.

"I congratulate everyone who took part in the event, particularly our winners from Northam who earned a well deserved victory in their categories."