

THE HEAT OF THE TERRITORY

In recognition of our volunteers



May 2015

WELCOME TO OUR VERY FIRST BUSHFIRES NT NEWSLETTER.....

I say "our" in the broadest term as the newsletter belongs to all of us and aims to provide a regular update of interesting stories from Bushfire Brigade Volunteers throughout the Territory.

I hope that you all feel the urge to contribute to future editions. Brigade histories, anecdotes, fire reports, volunteer stories, or information you think worthwhile sharing with the broader volunteer community.

The whole idea is create an informal newsletter that people enjoy reading, so don't be shy and have your say. Email, post or even dictate your input to Tina Holt at the Winnellie BFNT Office tina.holt@nt.gov.au or phone 8922 0802 and she will ensure your stories get aired.

The very first edition is full of interesting articles, and useful links and updates on coming events. As we gear up for the current fire season it is worth reflecting on what was achieved last year by the volunteer brigade network – a record number of wildfires, record number of fire ban days, many homes, businesses and community assets saved, and everyone safe. A truly outstanding contribution from all involved.

Moving to this year, as most of you would be aware, the mitigation program has commenced following the early, and quick, transition to the dry season. I am very proud to report that the mitigation program is on track to be completed on schedule. That's over 300 controlled burns and in excess of 4,000 km of aerial prescribed burns. A fantastic effort and my sincere thanks to all of you that volunteered your time to contribute. We are now well placed to manage the approaching Top End and Central Australian fire seasons.

This edition of the newsletter has some interesting stories; of particular note is the passing of the presumptive legislation within the Northern Territory, the Strategic Breaks Program, and the reinvigorating of the BFNT Volunteers Long and Meritorious Service Medal - all important initiatives and well worth a read.

And finally, please have a think about the name for your newsletter – Full marks to Tina for her efforts in pulling together this newsletter, but I think that someone might be able to help her out with a new newsletter name.... So have a think, enter the naming competition, and maybe win the prize and go down in history as the star that named the newsletter.

JOIN THE COMPETITION TO NAME OUR NEWSLETTER!

To celebrate the launch of the Bushfires NT newsletter we'd like to invite you to join the competition to give it a name a of course a bit of personality.

We thought a fun way to do this was to run a newsletter naming comp. And yes, you get to vote, and yes, there will be a prize! Prize to be confirmed.

We will run the comp for 5 weeks - closing date Friday 19 June 2015.

If you'd like to enter the comp please either email your newsletter name to tina.holt@nt.gov.au or telephone 8922 0802 or simply pop it in an envelope with your contact details to PO Box 37346 WINNELLIE NT 0821. Good luck!

NEW FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT TO KEEP TERRITORIANS SAFE

To mark the start of the 2015 bushfire season on the 1st of May, Land Resource Management Minister Willem Westra van Holthe handed over a new \$100,000 Grass Fire Unit and trailer to the Point Stuart Volunteer Bushfire Brigade.

Point Stuart Volunteer Fire Brigade services one of the largest areas in the Top End, looking after almost 670,000 hectares of land. The new Grass Fire Unit will be vital during the bushfire season giving crews on the fire frontline greater water capacity, increased pumping pressure and improved safety features.



NT VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Last year, Northern Territory hardworking bushfires volunteers were recognised for their service at celebrations during National Volunteer Week.

More than 100 people were nominated for the 2014 NT Volunteer of the Year Awards that recognise the tireless work done by organisations and individuals across the Territory.

It was a great outcome for our Bushfire Brigade Volunteers who featured prominently during the awards and in the words of one audience member “almost took a clean sweep”.

Fantastic recognition of Louie King who won the prestigious Chief Ministers Medal for Emergency Services for his outstanding contribution to bushfires for over 40 years. Other Bushfires volunteers who successfully received nominations and certificates of merit included Bill Grant, Ray Nicholls, Jan Murphy, Bob Wright, and Di Tynan. Bushfires NT won the SA/NT Award for Organisational Excellence (large organisation). This award recognises the work supporting volunteers and the strong fire management outcomes this achieves.

In 2015, Bushfires NT and the volunteer bushfire brigades were again recognised for giving up their time to help others and contribute to the community.

Winners included:

Chief Ministers Medal for Volunteering Achievement - Highly Commended

- Gordon Coward Gordon Coward, Douglas Daly Volunteer Bushfire Brigade, Bushfires NT.

Chief Ministers Medal for Volunteering Service

- Karl Roth, Daly Waters VBB
- David McLachlan, Lambells Lagoon VBB.

Volunteering SA & NT Award for Organisational Excellence – Small Organisation

- Darwin River Volunteer Bushfire Brigade Incorporated
- Bushfires NT Volunteer Training Brigade.

Certificate of Appreciation

- David Kokoc, Edith Farms VBB
- Joshua Clarke, Alice Springs VBB
- Susan Jones, Milne VBB.



Andrew Turner, Di Tynan, Jan Murphy and Louie King with their 2014 Awards



Gordon Coward accepts his 2015 Award from the Hon. Chief Minister Adam Giles



MINISTER'S ADJOURNMENT SPEECH - October 2014

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Katherine): Madam Speaker, as predicted, the Top End fire season has turned out to be well above average. Both the Volunteer Bushfire Brigades and Bushfires NT staff have been kept busy dealing with numerous wildfires in our rural areas. In fact, there have been more than 140 major wildfires that our volunteer bushfire brigades and Bushfires NT staff have actively controlled since late June. While controlling these wildfires, they have protected many community assets, including homes, businesses, farms and tourist facilities. The work of volunteer bushfire brigade members and Bushfires NT staff is often the last ditch effort to control fire as it threatens residents homes and assets. There is no doubt they provide an essential public safety service.

While work is coordinated by Bushfires NT, there is a heavy reliance on the outstanding contribution of our volunteer bushfire brigade members. The selfless donation of their time, combined with their extensive fire management skills, continues to underpin the community's capacity to manage fire in the rural area.

Even more commendable is the sustained fire control effort they provide. During the current fire season, they have collectively donated many thousands of hours, and regularly commit to turning up at fire lines, ready to combat fires and support their rural community.

The current fire risk in the rural areas surrounding Darwin and elsewhere in the north western Top End, where high fuel loads from an above average Wet Season combine with rural residential developments, is still apparent. The current fire risk is greatest in the southern Top End, primarily in the Gulf and Victoria River Downs regions. We are all aware fire is a natural component of the Top End landscape, requiring a committed and ongoing community response. Many of our volunteers have been managing fires on an almost daily basis for several months, assisting in the afternoons when fires get what they call a run on and working well into the evening until they are extinguished.

It is not just fire response work that our volunteers do that helps make the rural area a safer place to live. Their work commenced early in the Dry Season, when all volunteer bushfire brigades contributed towards extensive fire mitigation efforts to minimise fire risk later in the season. Volunteers undertook extensive planning and consultation with landholders to develop local fire mitigation strategies to better protect their local brigade areas and manage high fire risk areas. They then completed early burning across Crown land, roadside reserves and local shire areas, which resulted in a good mosaic of reduced fuel loads that significantly decreases the current risk of fire.

To date, there have been 55 fire ban declarations in the Top End. This is a record number, and reflects the fire weather during this season. Bushfires NT staff have worked many long hours and spent many weekends responding to numerous fires. Their work is often immediate, high pressure and complex. To date, fixed wing aircraft have been used on 73 different occasions. These aircraft aim to suppress fire early and quickly to enable ground based crews to move in and extinguish fires safely. The planes fly low in smoky conditions to maximise the impact of their water drops, and their skill as pilots is to be commended.

The other vital component of Bushfires NT airborne capacity is helicopters. To date, helicopters have been used over 90 times at different fires across the Top End and savannah regions. The helicopters fulfil a dual role. They provide water bombing when required, but more often provide Bushfires NT staff with an aerial view from where they can better command the many fire vehicles on the fire line, and a plan to develop strategies for the containment of an incident.

The pilots are long-term Territorians, and their knowledge of country is a vital tool in managing the many incidents they are involved in. Currently, fire weather is abating in the north western Top End, and the fire danger will continue to moderate in the next two months, as the Dry Season's south easterlies moderate and the humidity increases in the build-up.

With the decreasing fire threat in the Darwin rural area comes an increasing threat in the Katherine region, as the fire season moves south. Bushfires NT staff members based in Katherine have been particularly busy, with large fire events affecting broad areas of pastoral estate. Several wildfires have run for a number of weeks, impacting multiple stations and stretching all available resources. Bushfires NT staff have deployed from Darwin, Batchelor and Tennant Creek over the past six weeks to assist and support stakeholders in this large, and in places, remote region.

One wildfire, which started on Murrarji Station, has burned two million hectares over 13 stations. It has involved over 100 station and Bushfires NT staff in efforts over three weeks. This wildfire has significantly impacted on the operations of the stations as well as neighbouring stations whose staff have assisted. Whilst it is now mostly passed through pastoral estate it continues to burn in the north Tanami desert. It continues to be monitored by Bushfires NT, as well as local government and police from Lajamanu and Central Land Council rangers.

The movement of Bushfires NT staff between the regions will continue as the fire season develops to the south and as mitigation efforts are undertaken. In addition, as resources including fire appliances become available from the lessening risks in the Top End, a number will be deployed to southern areas and made available for increasing risks there. That is something I am particularly proud of, having worked up with the Chief Executive of the Department of Land Resource Management to ensure the southern regions are given additional resources during the height of their fire season. The fire season is long, but our volunteers and Bushfires NT staff are well placed to deal with these threats.

I commend them for their dedication, their hard work and their tireless efforts. On a personal note, I extend to all of the volunteers particularly - and I know there are many current serving volunteers and many who have retired and moved on - a thank you for the massive efforts they put in. I have been involved in bushfires on my own properties and I see just how dangerous and difficult these situations are and how quickly they can develop.

Madam Speaker, our volunteers particularly, supported well by the NT Bushfire staff, in my view do a stellar job. They are out there every day protecting the property and assets and, potentially, lives of people of the Northern Territory. Once again, I commend their good work.

SNAP SHOTS OF BUSHFIRES NT DEPLOYMENTS

Bushfires NT staff member Lachie Fife, Regional Fire Control Officer was a part of the response team.

The first quarter of 2015 saw Bushfires NT and volunteers deployed to assist with recovery efforts to Elcho Island and Milingimbi following Cyclone Lam, floods in Alice Springs and the Lower Hotham fire 1.5 hours from Perth in Western Australia.

ALICE SPRINGS

During the January floods in Alice Springs, staff and volunteers from the NT Emergency Service (NTES) responded to 75 calls for assistance, aided by staff and volunteers from Bushfires NT and NT Police. The type of assistance required was fairly broad, ranging from sandbagging against localised flooding to Search, Rescue and Survey operations.

Friday 9 January was the busiest night, when 115 ml of rain landed in town in a relatively short period



downstream and became wedged against a tree. Fortunately the occupants were able to scramble out of the vehicle and into the tree where they waited for assistance. NTES Volunteers responded and, utilising Shore Based Rescue

Equipment, assisted the three back to dry ground.

The call outs weren't isolated to the Alice Springs area. Heavy downpours fell right across the Alice Springs and Barkly Regions, isolating communities and stranding tourists.

MILINGIMBI

On Tuesday 3 February a team was put together to assist

the Milingimbi community with recovery efforts following the impacts from Tropical Cyclone Lam. The team comprised of Team Leader RFCO Joshua Fischer, RFCO Damian Roebuck, FCO William Mcleod, Volunteer Fire Fighters Jazz Fipps and Michael Carter Snr.

The team were tasked to clear fallen vegetation from house yards and community infrastructure in the community utilising chainsaws and small machinery provided from NTES and the local municipal council. The team assisted in clearing 15 individual properties, removing debris to the road side in preparation for contractors with mechanical mulchers to mulch all the debris into wood chips.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

On Friday 6 February, firefighting officers from the Northern Territory travelled to Western Australia to assist with the bushfires threatening homes in the state's south. Steele Davies from Bushfires NT Katherine was part of the four man team sent to assist the Incident Management Team at the Lower Hotham fire 1.5 hours from Perth.

Steele assisted in the planning section where he relieved WA crews who were fatigued after an intense two weeks dealing with fires across the state.



Photo courtesy of Keith Lewis, NTES, Alice Springs

of time, resulting in 38 jobs. At this point Bushfires NT volunteers and staff were called on to lend a hand, along with six Police Officers.

Because of the escalation of activity, NTES volunteers put out a call for more assistance using social media, resulting in a dozen members of the public attending the volunteer unit. They helped fill sandbags and provided some much needed welfare to the volunteers.

Shortly after all the storm damage jobs had been completed, a call came through that three people were in need of rescue. They had been attempting to drive across the Charles Creek causeway when their vehicle was washed

Steele pictured in the center (in green) with members of the WA response team.



Fortunately the fire was declared “contained” early in the week which allowed the interstate deployment which Steele was part of to concentrate on patrolling, mopping up, identifying recovery works required and commencing demobilisation of crews and plant which is mandatory in such a complex incident as this one. Steele worked a five day shift rotation and return to Darwin on Saturday the 14th of February.



Bushfires NT Logistics Officer Robert Moloney

ELCHO ISLAND

As part of the Cyclone Lam recovery effort, an accommodation center was established at the community of Galiwinku.

A request from the Department of the Chief Minister sought Shift Managers for a period of eight weeks to assist in the establishment and operation of “Camp Elcho”.

Robert Moloney, Logistics Officer within Bushfires NT departed on March 3 and his contribution to the recovery team has been widely valued with his proven skills seeing to an extension to his deployment until July.

Jim Rogers, Regional Executive Director, Department of the Chief Minister passes thanks:

“I want to thank DLRM for its support to date for recovery, including for the establishment of the Camp. Without such terrific agency support we would not have got as far as we have.”



Bushfires NT helping clear trees and debris

Team Leader RFCO Joshua Fischer, RFCO Damian Roebuck, FCO William Mcleod, Volunteer Fire Fighters Jazz Fipps and Michael Carter.



GRANT FUNDING

Grant funding is vital to help strengthen a Volunteer Bushfire Brigades capacity and capability to perform their role in community based fire management and ensure its ability to do so is sustainable.

The following tips are courtesy of Megan Warry, Natural Disaster Resilience Program Manager who has a wealth of knowledge in the area of grant funding.

Over the past five years opportunities for NTES Volunteer Units to apply for money under grant schemes have increased; but we are not always successful in our bid for better resources. So why do we miss out when our cause is just (if not more) important than the rest? How can we improve our chances of success? While there is no “formula” for winning bids, hopefully the below tips may help when filling out your next Grant Application Form.

Plan

What is it you want to do? Who will manage the project? What is your time frame? When will you be ready to start? How much money will it cost? How will you evaluate the success of your project?

Always map out: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? These are the exact questions the grant assessors will be asking themselves as they read through your application. If you have a clear understanding of your project, then so will they.

Once you know your project, **determine your funding source** and not the other way around. There are many funding sources available that each serves a different purpose. Don't try to make the round peg fit the square hole; **match your project's goals with the goals of the funding program** and use words and terms from the guidelines. Make sure you review “Grant Schemes” under the Emergency Volunteers Portal on our website, there are links to many different grants programs that your unit may be able to apply under.

Prepare

Collect and read guidelines, application forms, tips, tricks, hints and details of past successful projects. This information is critical! Pay special attention to how you have been asked to submit your request, if there is a form, then fill it out, don't just write “see attached proposal”; extract relevant information from your proposal and place it into the application where requested. If there is a question that is not relevant, make sure you mark this as “N/A”, don't just leave it blank! By addressing each space, you demonstrate that you have not missed a question by mistake.

Does your project and volunteer group meet eligibility criteria? Do you need to coordinate approvals or permits? **Familiarise yourself with the assessment process and tailor your response** so that your project receives higher priority at assessment stage.

For example, if you are placing an application for lighting equipment and the assessment criteria asks whether the equipment will have a multi-agency benefit. Don't just write “yes”, justify your statement through explanation, “The primary use of the lighting equipment would be XYZ, these operations are often performed in conjunction with Organisation 1 and Department 2. Agencies such as A, B and C will also benefit in events such as 1, 2 and 3 where lighting equipment is required.”

Write

Set some time aside and **never rush an application.** Remember that there are many people competing for limited funds, a little like a competition, so you want your application to be the stand out. **Type your application** wherever possible; **avoid specialised terms** that require definition and **use short, concise and accurate responses.** It is always a great idea to get a second person who is unfamiliar with your project to read the proposal and provide you with honest feedback.

Does your application make sense? Have you answered the questions correctly? Have you communicated your project proposal clearly? Is your spelling and grammar correct? Should you **provide supporting documentation**? Have you provided a list of what your supporting documentation is within the application form?

Supporting documentation takes time to put together, so never leave this to the last minute. Quotes, approvals, permits, letters of support, etc; these could be the key documents that set your project apart from a similar application.

Budget

It always comes down to money... **Know your budget** and be able to communicate this clearly within the application. Often application forms will provide a budget template for you to complete; however if they do not, then keep in mind the following tips:

- **Separate income and expenditure;**
- **List a \$ value for all income sources** (ie grant funding sought, other agency contributions, in-kind contributions, donations, other income, etc);
- **Itemise expenditure with a \$ value for each item** (eg consultant fees, equipment item A, postage and handling, etc); and
- **Ensure your income equals your expenditure.**

Does your budget contain sufficient detail (eg “office stationary” vs. “2 x whiteboards, 5 x markers and 1 x coloured printer”)? Do you need to justify the expenditure of an item or demonstrate cost efficiency? Are you required to match the funds offered? Does your expenditure follow the funding “rules” or “limits”?

CONTINUED GRANT FUNDING

Submit

Once the application has been written, leave it for a day before proof reading. Check that your application addresses all assessment and eligibility criteria, all questions are answered, all additional information is attached and all signatures and dates are filled in. This is also the perfect time to ask that friend to read your application again; a second set of eyes may pick up something you may have omitted.

Ensure that you copy the application and all supporting documentation for your own records, always submit the original application, lodge on time and using the lodging methods specified on the form or within application guidelines and register your hard copy if submission is via mail.

Feedback

Sometimes we are successful and sometimes we are not; **always ask for feedback!** What were the strengths of the application? What were its weaknesses? Are there recommendations that the grant assessors may be able to provide you? What would they like to see on your application before applying again? Are there any other funding streams that they may be aware of?

It may also be worthwhile calling the program/funding manager for some verbal feedback or further clarification, chances are they have seen many of the applications and would be able to impart some tips and tricks; there may also be advice that they might not have been able to provide in a formal written response.

There are also training courses available to assist with learning the skill of grant funding application writing available through Volunteering SA & NT.

For more information visit their website:

www.volunteeringsa.org.au/training

Links to help source grant funding opportunities:

NT Government Department of the Chief Minister: www.dcm.nt.gov.au/volunteers

NT Government Department of Business: www.dob.nt.gov.au/business/Pages/grants-assistance.aspx



Djurrubu Rangers at the completion of their Fire Fighting 1 NT training course at Kakadu with trainers Wendy Coghlan (back row green shirt), Christine Platell (very front green shirt) and Ray Nichols (blue shirt).

2014/15 TRAINING UPDATE

Fire Fighting course for Djurrubu Rangers at Kakadu, March 2015.

Fire Control Officer Christine Platell leading a group of Djurrubu Rangers constructing a fire break using hand tools as part of their Fire Fighting 1 NT training.

The Bushfires NT training unit plays a key role in helping communities across the Territory to deal with the threat of bushfires. The unit's first priority is the training of volunteer firefighters, although it also provides firefighting and fire awareness training to many other groups around the Territory. 35 courses were delivered in 2014 with 380 people completing training.

The training unit is led by full time Training Officer Wendy Coghlan with support from Fire Control Officer and part-time trainer Christine Platell and part-time training manager Ken Baulch. A number of volunteers also contribute their time as trainers, in particular volunteer trainer Ray Nichols from Wagait Beach contributes many hundreds of hours each year traveling to training delivery throughout the Territory. Other volunteers who assist regularly include Ian Stewart and Kevin Natt in the Top End and Petra Yan in Alice Springs. Many of Bushfires' senior operational staff are also qualified trainer/assessors and they often help out with training delivery in their regions.

The training calendar is based on seasonal fire expectations – where possible training is completed prior to the early season fuel reduction burning programs in each region. A recent course was held in Kakadu for the Djurrubu Rangers.

For more information telephone 8922 0844 or email:

Wendy Coghlan wendy.goghlan@nt.gov.au or
Ken Baulch ken.baulch@nt.gov.au.



WELCOME TO ALL NEW BUSHFIRES NT VOLUNTEER RECRUITS

Becoming a Bushfires NT brigade volunteer is a dynamic, important, and sometimes dangerous role. The dedication and skills of past and present volunteers provides an invaluable guide for any new recruit. We are indeed fortunate to have such mentors to guide new recruits as they begin their new adventure.

Each new volunteer recruit provides Bushfires NT and the community with a stronger means to help collaborate and enhance our ability to improve fire management across the NT and make the NT a safer place to live and enjoy.

We thank you for getting behind our brigades and helping us achieve our goals.



BUDGET 2015-16

Strategic Regional Firebreak Program

The Territory Government handed down the 2015 Budget last month that included a continued \$1 million of funding to be used to make our communities safer from bushfires, enabling Bushfires NT staff and volunteers to fight fires from the ground and the air. Population growth has led to more fires and greater areas of residential development and infrastructure requiring protection. The spread of high fire risk weeds such as gamba grass has led to more dangerous fires that can only be fought safely with aerial fire fighting support.

New funding of \$550 000 per year for two years will support a network of strategic regional firebreaks and improved bushfire suppression operations. This strategic regional firebreak network will improve community safety and significantly improve the ability to manage and limit the effect of wildfires. A series of panel contracts in regional areas will provide standby earthmoving equipment during periods of high fire danger. The installation and maintenance of significant firebreaks and the supply of standby equipment will provide economic benefits to regional and remote communities through regular contract work for local businesses.

INTRODUCTION OF PRESUMPTIVE FIRE FIGHTERS LEGISLATION

On 26 February the government introduced the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 to amend the [Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act](#). As part of those amendments, presumptive legislation was proposed for NT firefighters.

Under the presumptive legislation, if a career fire fighter is diagnosed with one of the cancers listed in the legislations schedule, and served as a fire fighter for the relevant qualifying period, it will be presumed that the cancer is an occupational disease and is therefore compensable. The changes make the process of claiming workers compensation less cumbersome for fire fighters, and recognizes that fire fighters are at a greater risk of developing certain types of cancer as a result of exposure to hazardous substances while performing firefighting activities.

Government has had two meetings with United Voice to discuss the proposed presumptive firefighter legislation. As a result of the discussions, The Government agreed to backdate the introduction of presumptive firefighter legislation to 4 July 2011 to be nationally consistent. They also proposed a three-month sunset period to give living career firefighters a window in which to make a claim under the presumptive legislation as if the presumptive legislation had an open commencement date.

The Act comes into effect on 1 July 2015.



LIVINGSTONE VOLUNTEER BUSHFIRE BRIGADE - A community affair

Just one of 22 great Brigades across the Territory to get involved with.

Livingstone Volunteer Bushfire Brigade (LVBB) was established back in June 1979, originally called the Berry Creek Fire Protection Group. Shortly after in

September 1980 it was known as the Berry Creek Volunteer Bushfire Brigade. Then in May 1984 the Brigade's name was changed once more to what it is now known today as the "Livingstone Volunteer Bushfire Brigade".

The Brigade covers 14,520ha with over 500 properties and growing every day. LVBB has 50 Members, 19 currently active on the fire line. In 2014, LVBB was granted an extension of its current HQ boundary on a 22 year Lease agreement. A great outcome for the Brigade, allowing them "room to move" expanding their operational capacity. The Brigade is now looking to source funding to help in the construction of a new shed that is to house its Grass Fire Units and Medium Attack Truck and allow for a training facility and community space. A prosperous future lies ahead.



Future recruits get amongst the Anzac day celebrations

LVBB has a number of community interaction events each year with the annual ANZAC Day Cricket match being a favourite for the community and its families. Kids love it and following on for the big kids is the two up tradition. The Brigade also holds regular social nights for its members and the broader community is always more than welcome to join. For the football fans the Brigade holds televised State of Origin nights (Go Queensland), NRL Grand Final nights (Go Cowboys) and AFL Grand final nights. The licensed bar is available for these events.

A real sense of community is felt through the LVBB and the passion of its members is clear to see.

EDITH FARMS VOLUNTEER BUSHFIRE BRIGADE - Proud Achievers

The Edith Farms Volunteer Bushfire Brigade (EFVBB) management committee came together as a completely new face for its first year in 2014. The Brigade is very proud of its achievements and particularly grateful for the community's support.



Dave Kokoc, Captain with trophy for Best Community Engagement for 2014 and Campbell Elliott, Vice-Captain with the Brigades certificate of Appreciation 2014.

"We were very excited to have made the achievements we have and impressed with the way the community got behind us" Tarren Morris, Secretary.

EFVBB looks forward to further improvements to their Headquarters and looking forward to a co-operating fire season ahead.

The following is a great shot of a controlled burn managed by the Brigade on a landholder's behalf.



KATHERINE VOLUNTEER BUSHFIRE BRIGADE - there to assist

Katherine Volunteer Bushfire Brigade (KVBB) received a call from a local landowner requiring assistance on his property after a fire escaped his control. The fire was thought to have started from the spark off the machinery used to bale the hay. The landowner was well prepared, being fully aware of the dangers, however fires are always unpredictable and after running out of water the landowner made the right decision to call for back up assistance.

Hay fires are often difficult to control and suppress as hay has a tendency to re-ignite effortlessly adding to the unpredictable nature of these fire.



*Michael Bartlett, Bob Wright and Rod Usher
Photos courtesy of Peter Shepherd, Fire Control Officer Savannas*



Lambells Lagoon Volunteer Bushfire Brigade captain David McLachlan wants to eradicate gamba grass in the Northern Territory. Picture: ELISE DERWIN
Source: News Limited

GAMBA GRASS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WRAP UP

The Assistance Program for 2014/15 commenced on Monday 10 November 2014.

In November 2008, Gamba Grass was declared a weed in accordance with the [Weeds Management Act 2001](#). In 2013 the Weed Management Plan for *Andropogon gayanus* (Gamba Grass) was reviewed. All landholders are now required to meet stipulated management obligations of the updated plan.

Assistance, including herbicide and spray equipment loans, is available for control throughout the Darwin, Palmerston, Litchfield, Coomalie, Dundee and Katherine regions between November and April.

The Gamba Grass Assistance Program has wrapped up for this season as of the 1 May 2015.

Department of Land Resource Management District Weed Officer, James Newman, said more than 1000 people had already accessed the herbicide program and treated significant areas of gamba grass across the Top End.

“Hot and destructive gamba grass fires can put lives and the environment at risk and action taken now will reduce the intensity and severity of the looming fire season,” Mr Newman said.

“That’s why assistance with herbicide is being made freely available, so that landholders are better able to protect themselves and others from the destructive potential that gamba grass has,”

“Gamba grass has just started to flower and it is imperative that control occurs before the gamba grass seed matures in May, as each plant can produce thousands of seeds.”

The herbicide is best absorbed when gamba grass is green and actively growing, so needs to be applied before the plant dries off at the end of the wet season.

This is the fifth year the Territory Government has provided seasonal assistance for gamba grass management and participation rates have grown from just over 200 during the first year to well over 1000 so far this year.

Members of the public are urged to spray their gamba grass in these last critical days of the control season to limit the risk of wildfire damaging your home, property and putting lives at risk.

FIRE RISK OF WET HAY - Spontaneous Combustion

Spontaneous ignition is a type of combustion which occurs by self-heating.

Combustion is a chemical process where a fuel combines with oxygen to produce heat and light, resulting in a fire. Both the fuel and ignition source are usually well known.

In some circumstances, however, the trigger that ignited the fire is not a definite source, like a match, but a complex, hidden, process. Seeming to have sprung up spontaneously (hence the name), these fires are often the result of long-term chemical reactions.

Plant reactions and bacterial growth combine to raise temperatures in even the driest hay bales, although most never catch fire on their own. However, when hay is packed tightly, and enough moisture gets in, the conditions may be right for spontaneous hay combustion.

Dry hay, stored at 15 percent moisture or less, is safe for long-term storage. However, if the hay becomes wet the quality has been permanently changed and the potential fire hazard from spontaneous combustion increased.

It is estimated that dangerous heating will occur in hay that contains a 25 percent moisture content or greater. The common numbers of fires occur within 2 to 6 weeks of storage with the majority occurring at 4 to 5 weeks.

The wet hay stimulates bacterial growth (fermentation) and as the bacteria’s grow they produce heat while drying out the surrounding surface of the hay for energy. This process intensifies as the drying of the hay increases. When the bale temperature reaches about 65.5 C the bacteria starts a process of chemical change that rapidly increases the temperature to the point of spontaneous combustion.

A recent fire in the Savanna’s region, pictured below, shows the costly effect of what was suspected to be a result of spontaneous combustion.





BUSHFIRES NT VOLUNTEER LONG AND MERITORIOUS MEDAL

The Bushfire Volunteers Long and Meritorious Service medal is to be presented to a member of a Northern Territory Volunteer Bushfire Brigade in recognition of their provision of a long and meritorious service to the Brigade and the Community. BFNT auxiliaries and volunteers who are not paid employees are eligible for the medal in the order of ten years regular service.

A deserving initiative that honours the dedication and commitment of those awarded.

Nominations will be sought and endorsed through the Captain of a Northern Territory Volunteer Bushfire Brigade.

Medal presentations are to be held annually in May in line with the National Volunteer Week.

Nominations close 31 January each year.

For a copy of the Fact Sheet outlining the criteria and Nomination Form please contact Tina Holt on telephone 8922 0802 or email tina.holt@nt.gov.au

PAST RECIPIENTS



Sam Griffin, former Captain of Beatrice Hill Volunteer Bushfire Brigade

Sam has been involved as a Bushfires NT volunteer since the 70's starting out in Central Australia and ending up with the Beatrice Hill VBB in the Top End. As a long standing volunteer Sam has seen his fair share of highs and lows. Through volunteering he has met some wonderful people and has many memorable stories to tell.

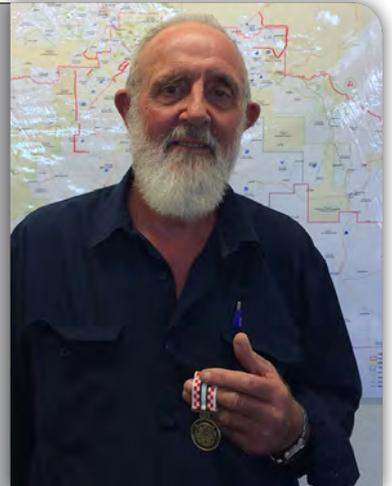
Volunteering to fight fires is not brave in Sam's eyes; it's just something that has to be done. It's an important role within the community that should always involve the community. Providing advice to the community is key to the best fire management outcomes.

One of the greatest challenges of being a BFNT volunteer is managing rural landowner's awareness of fire risk and fire management. As the population increases so does the challenge in getting the message across.

Sam has a very modest nature and felt guilty to receive the BFNT Volunteers Long & Meritorious Service medal, commenting that a lot of other volunteers were more deserving.

Quote from Sam:

"My heroes are the people who look after the incurably ill and disabled children"



John Weatherhead, former Katherine and Edith Farms Volunteer Bushfire Brigade

John moved to the Katherine region with his wife Wendy in 1989 and he and his wife have always tried to be "good citizens", helping the community as best they can when they can.

John has taken on many roles within the brigades over the years such as secretary, treasurer and vice captain, also becoming a member of the regional bushfire committee.

His first interest in joining the Katherine Brigade was after a fire went through their block. This quickly created the desire to fight fires on someone else's property rather than his own which I think we can all appreciate. Through the brigade John and Wendy have met some wonderful people and had some interesting times, never to be forgotten.

Apart of John's past achievements was a development plan proposing the development of the Edith Farms Volunteer Bushfire Brigade which was duly formed. A great outcome for the Katherine region.

Now in their 70's John and Wendy plan to enjoy their future years nearer the grandchildren in Queensland and if they are to leave this great Territory they will have more than memories to take with them.



FEATURE BRIGADE

Darwin River Volunteer Bushfire Brigade

The Darwin River Volunteer Bushfire Brigade (DRVBB) is located on Darwin River Road, approximately one and a half kilometres from the entrance gate to Darwin River Dam. The Brigade is comprised entirely of volunteers with over 50 financial members at the time of writing. The total membership is over 100.



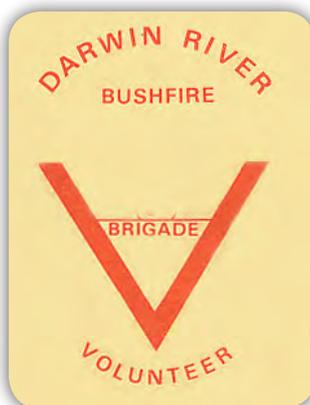
DRVBB Vehicles 1983



The Old Days

The "old days" photo above was taken at Adelaide River Showground in 1979 on the very first competition day. Darwin River did well and won a new drop on unit for their group. (L to R) Mike Rowell, Hec Shuker, Garry Paar, Ron Hammond, Fred Luff (Front) is Ray Bailey the first Captain of Darwin River

The Brigade is involved in conducting numerous mitigation burns pre-fire season in order to reduce fire fuel loadings, and conducts controlled burns for private land holders. The majority of man-hours however, are spent fighting wildfires. Not only does the Brigade attend fires within the Darwin River allocated boundaries, it also provides assistance to other brigades and station holders right throughout the Northern Territory. In fact the majority of wildfires that the Brigade attends are actually not within the Darwin River area of responsibility as supporting other brigades helps to get wildfires under control more quickly. The DRVBB is also incorporated into the NT Disaster Response Plan and is called upon to provide assistance to communities during times of natural disaster. Brigade volunteers also attended the Victorian fires over their 2006/07 fire season.



Original '80's Brigade Logo



First Land Cruiser GFU

The DRVBB is currently equipped with four Grass Fire Units and one Heavy Tanker, although it began from very humble beginnings. It was originally formed by a collection of dedicated resident volunteer's in 1978/79 as the Darwin River/Berry Springs Fire Protection Group.

Over the coming years, as the area became more populated, new brigades were formed and they now protect the entire rural area south and east of the Stuart and Arnhem Highway intersection.

In 1980 the Group officially became the first volunteer brigade under the banner Darwin River/Berry Springs Volunteer Bushfire Brigade. In June 1982 the brigades were split by Bushfires Council, with one half moving to Darwin River and becoming gazetted as the Darwin River Dam Volunteer Bushfire Brigade on 10 August 1982. It was later renamed the Darwin River Volunteer Bushfire Brigade in March 1986.

CONTINUED.....

Darwin River Volunteer Bushfire Brigade



Wild Fire Containment 2014



Fuel Load Reduction Burn 2014

The other half of the brigade became known as the Berry Springs Volunteer Bushfire Brigade.

A crown lease was acquired at Section 2300, 630 Darwin River Road and work commenced on the DRVBB station. The majority of the building was constructed from recycled and salvaged materials by the volunteers and was officially opened on 28 May 1983 by Ian Tuxworth. It still stands to this day.



Wild Fire 2014



Night Time Fire 2014

DRVBB was initially equipped with one Bedford Heavy Tanker and one International Grass Fire Unit. It is interesting to note that DRVBB was responsible for the maintenance of fire breaks within their area. The Brigade had numerous “track-worthy” vehicles donated to it over time for the purpose of fire fighting, until eventually government funding allowed for the issue of Land Cruiser utes as dedicated Grass Fire Units.

A large majority of the original founding members still reside in the area. Some are still serving as committee members, while others are major contributors in terms of donations in monetary or material form.



“Scorched Earth” Wild Fire 2013



Back Burning 2013

CONTINUED.....

Darwin River Volunteer Bushfire Brigade



Kids Christmas Party 2013



Smoke Cloud Behind Darwin River

The rapid spread of unchecked or unmanaged Gamba Grass is proving to have enormous impacts on fuel loadings and fire management within the Top End. The number of wildfires and man-hours spent fighting them is steadily increasing each year.

The Brigade is always in need of new members, and actively encourages anyone within the community to join as it can be very satisfying. Whilst the purpose of the Brigade is to prevent and fight fires, there are many other roles within the Brigade that need to be undertaken. Firefighting may be the crux, but do not be put off from becoming a member because you are unable to be on the fire line. There are committee positions to be filled, logistic requirements (equipment maintenance, food and drinks for the fire line etc), fund raising activities, grounds maintenance and a plethora of other tasks that you may be able to assist with.

The Brigade holds general meetings at the station on Darwin River Road on the third Sunday of every month, commencing at 4:00pm, and followed by a social BBQ. The Brigade believes in actively encouraging community spirit, so please feel free to attend.



Chasing Spot Fires



Original Tanker 1981

This article cannot be finished without a plug from your local fire fighters; please, please, please, ensure your fire breaks are adequately maintained, and do not light a fire without permit. The effects can be deadly, and your (yes, your) volunteers place themselves and their equipment in grave danger every year because of those that don't comply. It just may be your house and property that we can't save.

Anyone wishing information can contact the brigade by email: drvbf@bigpond.com, or via the Captain's mobile phone: 0428 815 807.

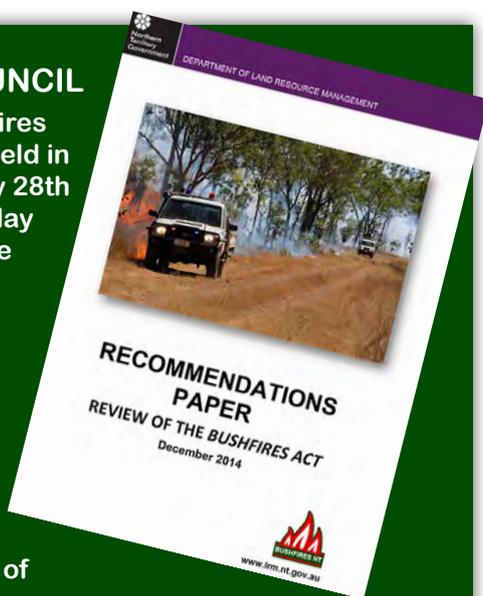
Note: Information for this article was obtained from archive documents and first-hand accounts from long serving members of the brigade.

Tom McIntyre
Deputy Captain (DR8)
DRVBB

BUSHFIRE COUNCIL

At the 109th Bushfires Council meeting, held in Darwin on Tuesday 28th April and Wednesday 29th April 2015, the Council welcomed the opportunity to once again have the opportunity to review the draft [Bushfires Act Recommendation Paper](#) especially after the outcome of the latest round of consultation.

The passing of Presumptive legislation compensation for firefighters: special thanks to the Hon Willem Westra Van Holthe, the Hon Kerzia Purick, Mark Ashley, Ken Baulch and Di Tynan (to be included in Communique). At this stage only state not involved are NSW and Victoria.



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, Available to all

The Department provides free and confidential counselling and support service to employees, volunteers and their immediate families.

The Employment Assistance Program (EAP) offers all NT Government employees, their spouse/partner and immediate family or dependents five short term counselling services at no cost.

Counselling can help with emotional difficulties, work related issues, grief, career issues, relationship and family issues, interpersonal conflict, anxiety, depression, alcohol and other drug issues.

Under the EAP counsellors use a short-term solution orientated model to offer strategies and support to employees and their immediate family members, who are experiencing either personal concerns or work related issues. Appointments are usually 1 hour and can be made in or outside of normal work hours. For appointments during normal work hours employees are reminded to follow their standard workplace practices for notifying their direct manager of their absence.

Main Features of EAP:

- Problem resolution
- Totally confidential
- Always voluntary
- Professional and experienced counsellors
- Available in Darwin and NT regional centres
- Female and male counsellors usually available
- After hours appointments available in most centres
- After hours emergency service
- Toll free number.

Employees can seek assistance through HR Services or contact a provider directly to arrange counselling sessions. The current EAP providers are:

- Employee Assistance Services Australia (EASA) - Freecall: 1800 193 123 or Darwin 8941 1752, Katherine: 8971 2764, Alice Springs: 8953 4225, Email: easadarwin@easa.org.au. EASA counsellors regularly visit Tennant Creek, Jabiru, Groote Eylandt and Nhulunbuy. Telephone counselling can be arranged in other locations.
- Darwin Consultant Psychologists - Freecall: 1800 289 129 or 8941 5369, Email: dcp@dcpnt.com.au
- MAXIS Health - Freecall: 1800 629 277, Email: support@maxishealth.com.au
- Wisemind Psychology - Telephone: 8981 5392, Email: admin@wisemind.com.au



ALICE SPRINGS

Station and community visits

Bushfires NT can provide expert advice on protecting your property from fire and assist with fire management plans.

Local Regional Fire Control Officer, Lachlan Fife (Locky) and Operational Support Officer, Dorsey Debney (Dorsey) will be starting their station and community visits soon. They would appreciate landholder assistance by providing up-to-date maps of your property lease, and preferred times to discuss concerns that you may have regarding fires for this coming fire season and where BFNT may be able to assist.

Alice Springs contacts

Alice Springs Office - 8952 3066

Acting Senior Fire Control Officer - [Troy Munckton](#)

Local Regional Fire Control Officer - [Lachlan Fife](#) (Locky)

Operational Support Officer - [Dorsey Debney](#)

Reception - [Denise Edwards](#) (Flo)

Training and Extension Officer - [Wendy Coghlan](#)

SAFETY ALERT

Beware of wondering stock on Northern Territory roads. Please take care.

VOLUNTEER CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE - Call for Nominations

Dear Volunteers

Our volunteers are the great strength of BFNT. Your gift of time and commitment to BFNT is invaluable.

As the Executive Director of BFNT I am keen to continue to advance the interests of volunteers through increased funding, upgraded equipment, training and better protection and conditions.

I am committed to continuing this work to ensure our volunteers and staff alike have the resources and skills they require to undertake their roles within a safe and prosperous workplace.

As part of my commitment to our volunteers and to advance the management of our organisation, I want to ensure our members have a mechanism for providing BFNT with feedback to help identify priorities and actions.

I am now establishing the Volunteer Consultative Committee to provide volunteers with a greater opportunity to provide input to the organisation's decision-making processes.

The Committee will comprise of 12 members from across the NT and will meet several times a year at the BFNT Darwin Headquarters or as required.

It is a special purpose committee of Bushfires NT. The BFNT VCC is not a standing committee of the Bushfires Council but acts in an advisory role to Bushfires NT. It is to provide advice to the Chief Fire Control Officer (CFCO) on the volunteering component of programs within the role of Bushfires NT relating to:

- Volunteer Program development
- Benchmark standards – Territory and National
- Review operational aspects of the standards of volunteer use of Personal Protective Equipment; Volunteer Fire Fighting Appliances; Volunteer Training; and Volunteer Work Health and Safety
- Review Bushfires NT Risk Register.

The function of the committee is to:

- Foster and encourage volunteer participation, safety, and relevant standards
- Seek partnerships to develop new volunteer programs
- Evaluate the volunteer program and make recommendations to CFCO if required
- Advise CFCO on strategic direction and policy relating to volunteer programs.

Volunteers who are interested in joining the Volunteer Consultative Committee are now invited to nominate. To obtain a Nomination Form and Draft Terms of Reference please contact Tina Holt on 08 8922 0802 or by email tina.holt@nt.gov.au.

Nominations close 21 June 2015. I will be determining the successful applicants in consultation with the Assistant Director of Operations, Regional Fire Control Officers and Community Engagement Officer.

The Committee members will be announced in June.

I look forward to working with the members of the Volunteer Consultative Committee and am confident they will represent their fellow members' interests and concerns constructively and in good faith as we all work together to achieve our objectives.

Yours sincerely

Mark Ashley

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

14 May 2015



DEPARTMENT OF LAND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Northern Territory Government

Thank you Bushfires NT volunteers

Success through partnership

A big thank you goes out to all **Bushfires NT volunteers** who provide their valuable time and support in helping us improve fire management throughout the Northern Territory.

Bushfires NT together with Volunteer Bushfire Brigades work with landowners and the wider community to protect life, property and the environment from the threat of wildfire.

This could not be achieved without the continued support from our volunteers.



BUSHFIRES NT
www.nt.gov.au/bushfires

**For some people volunteering is about giving
But for the likes of you it is a way of living
Thank you**

Source unknown (WishesMessages.com)