



Bush Fire Recovery NEWSLETTER

The Road to Recovery

Farmers Breakfast This Friday!

The Waroona Lions Club have offered to cook us all breakfast on Friday the 5th of August on farm at 997 Somers Road.

We will start the morning again at 7:30am and have the urn on for tea, coffee and milo. The fire drums will be lit again for a bit of warmth to stand around and chat.

We would like to hold these breakfasts on the first Friday morning of each month and hopefully at different sheds and farms, so let Donna know if you would like to hold one. As a group, we have the chairs and tables on loan from John Marchetti, a couple of fire pits, an urn from the Snell Family and the essential portable toilet on loan from Harry Carna which are easy to get to anyone's place. There is always a company happy to sponsor and cook for the morning so it is pretty easy to hold.

Can you let Donna know so we can start planning future events.

Tell us your story!

Next edition we catch up with Joe Comisso to reflect on his story and the fire.

Want to share your story contact the recovery coordinator on 97337800 or email:- frc@waroona.wa.gov.au



Special Offer

We have received an offer to anyone affected by the Waroona fires earlier in the year a 25% discount on our refurbished Metters wood stoves. This is only available to fire affected properties, at present they have several to choose from. Our website is woodstoves.com.au, or if people would like to contact us, Phone: 93996934.



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You're invited! Parents Morning Tea

Being a parent after a fire is different. The changes in yourself, your life and your children can be challenging and hard to understand. These changes can effect whole school communities. Having a chance to share experiences with other parents can help alleviate some of these concerns.

Did you know that the best indicator of your child's wellbeing following an emergency event is YOU?

If you take time to socialise, relax and connect with others, you will be better able to support your family.

All members of school communities from the Harvey area are invited to join us for morning tea and enjoy a warm cuppa, cake and good conversation.

Date: Thursday 4th August 2016
Time: 9am
Venue: Harvey Primary School Assembly Area

For more information call Colin Anker on 0427 904 501 or canker@redcross.org.au

redcross.org.au follow us



Meditation

For the fire affected communities 4 x 1 Hour Meditation Sessions are being offered.

Starts Sunday 31st July—10 to 11am

every Sunday until 28th August 2016

Held at the Waroona Rec Centre

Learn simple breath meditation, Mindfulness—attention Training Transforming problems into happiness.

No registration required, Entry by Donation with all contributions going to local Charity

Enquiry welcome : Ph Paul 0452 553 891



The Shire has a New Kid on the Block

Brad Vitale has joined the team at Shire of Waroona on a fulltime basis as Community Development Officer.

He said, "*its great to be back in Waroona full time after working in Harvey for five years*"

"I have lived in Waroona for 24 years, since I was born and been an active community member belonging to a variety of groups such as Waroona Amateur Basketball Association and Waroona Agricultural Society".

He was actively involved in the previous two fires, in particular the previous one in Hamel where he assisted with fire breaks and using fire units to protect properties and livestock as the fire passed through.

The Shire welcomes Brad on board and you will be seeing a lot of him getting out and about within the community and at events.

Department for Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS) Waroona Bushfires Recovery Information

The CPFS Recovery Team is available to help and support you or someone you know. Whether you are single, are a couple, have children or don't have children the Recovery Team is for all residents of the Yarloop, Harvey and Waroona communities.

Lori, David and Patrick are working in the Harvey and Waroona areas and can offer a listening ear as well as information, practical assistance and accessing services.

Patrick works Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday in the Waroona area and you can either meet Patrick at the Waroona Community Resource Centre or arrange an outreach visit.

If you would like to see a counsellor at no cost to you ring **David on 0417 457 583** or
Patrick on 0437 223 299.

The Team are here to help you so come and visit us or ring Lori, David or Patrick for a chat or an appointment.

Prioritise your wellbeing.

You are going through a highly stressful experience. It is normal that you might be having strong emotional reactions such as sadness, anger, anxiety and frustration. You may also be finding it hard to concentrate, think clearly or make decisions, this is also normal after an emergency event. It takes time, but stress reactions will fade if you have the right information and look after your wellbeing. Get more information by visiting:

<http://redcross.org.au/self-care.aspx> Or if you feel you need more individual support contact the Emergency

Service resilience officer on; **0417 457 583**

Get in Touch, Stay in Touch

Shire of Waroona is located at 52 Hesse Street,
Waroona, WA 6215

Postal Address: PO Box 20, Waroona WA 6215

Phone: (08) 9733 7800

Fax: (08) 9733 1883

Email: warshire@waroona.wa.gov.au

Website: www.waroona.wa.gov.au

OUR Resilient Community — *this is our story*

Bushfire leaves its mark on farms and families

By Anne Chamberlain with Vicki Fitzpatrick

DAIRY farmers burnt out by the devastating January bushfire around the shires of Waroona and Harvey and the subsequent Harvey bushfires in February will need assistance and support for some time to come.

Life changed greatly for the Fitzpatrick family when their 140-hectare 3-generation property at Waroona became one of the 20 dairy farms in the path of the January fire.

Vicki Fitzpatrick recounts the family's experience from the moment they woke to the smell of smoke on the morning of Wednesday 6 January and watched the fire build over the escarpment.

"The smoke cloud started its own eerie storm cell with thunder and lightning. About 6:30 pm Luke came back from milking carrying a burnt banksia leaf that had fallen next to him. We knew from the cloud and glow over the hill this wasn't good, it was coming and we had to be ready.

"Luke loaded the fire-fighting unit onto our ute and parked it next to the house. I put Ben (8) and Holly (5) to bed telling them that if I woke them they were to bring their cuddlies, one toy and come to the front door.

"By 9pm burnt leaves were falling from the sky and hitting the roof. We made our plan. If the fire came through the farm I was to take the kids and head west in convoy with Luke's parents Darrell and Helen. Luke would stay and defend.

"Luke set off to help with a fire on a property just south of us. I packed a few basics into the car (passports, camera, blankets, food and drink, the computer containing the farm records), set up sprinklers around the house, and started putting out spot fires around the house with water bucketed from the kids paddling pool.

"Luke was soon back – the fire had started on our place, with flames twice the height of the trees in our north-eastern corner. I called Luke's parents to say the fire was here, that they needed to evacuate now, and where to meet me down the road.

"Our worker Lee turned up to help – he'd seen the fire, brought his fire-fighting clothes, knocked on our door to check we were leaving, shifted animals away from the fire and went to help Luke.

"On automatic I remembered the routine – close all the windows, unlock the doors, turn off the air conditioner. The kids were terrified but did exactly as asked. We walked to the car, got in and drove away. As I waited for Luke's parents and his sister Sharon at our planned meeting point, it became very dark and smoky but I could still see the flames and was very afraid for Luke. Sharon turned back to help defend the family farm.

"The rest of us drove away, keeping our cars close as it was hard to see. We parked a few kilometres away and waited. When the flames came around behind us we drove further north. The next day we learned the fire had come right through where we had first parked and burnt out the bridge behind us. Parked safely next to a mate's house for the rest of the night, the kids slept while I watched the glow of the fire-front spread across the night sky from our place to the coast. I believed we would lose everything.

"By 5.30 am we were all awake and wanting to go home, travelling by the back roads. The sides of our road were still on fire, but I wanted to check on Luke and our home. The kids didn't recognise him in flame-proof clothing, his face and hands covered in soot. But he was OK, and unbelievably we still had a home, dairy, cows and sheds. I don't know how, but with support from friends Luke had saved our place.



OUR Resilient Community — *this is our story*

"The next few days were hard as the fires kept burning. Luke didn't sleep for 3 days. He, Sharon and our neighbour Harry kept fighting, patrolling and defending our farm and neighbours' and friends' places. Our farm was water-bombed as the fire crept closer to Darrell & Helen's home."

Vicki said the hardest parts – apart from the initial fear and danger – were being on high alert for so long and dealing with the fact that home was no longer a safe place.

"We didn't sleep properly for 3 weeks or so and we were exhausted, with all the normal farm jobs still to be done. We had neither power nor time to milk for the first 3 days. We'd just herd recorded on the Wednesday evening and didn't milk again until Friday night, borrowing a friend's generator that was big enough to run the dairy. Without power for 2 weeks, we managed with another borrowed generator to run the fridge; we have gas cooking and solar hot water and had torches for light."

Vicki said Farmwest were still able to test the 6 January milk samples a couple of weeks later when outside vehicles were allowed in again, but reckons the samples must have been 'pretty high'.

She said the Western Dairy team helped to get fuel to them to run the generator at the dairy and phoned regularly to provide ongoing support, as did WAFF. "There were many things that really made a difference and stopped us from retreating into shock.



"Luke's mates turned up with utes, tractors and fire-fighting gear when he called for help. It's thanks to them that we still have a home and livelihood. There have been many calls offering support and help; we've received donated hay from Margaret River farmers; "Baked Relief" biscuits from families in the wheat-belt; friends helping to pick up sticks, lend generators and an ear; Milne Feeds giving us 10 tonnes of pellets and an esky of food to help feed our helpers; BlazeAid offering to help with fencing; and our fencing-contractor friend donating his time."

"The kids and I spent one night in Pinjarra – after leaving to buy a replacement fire-fighting unit for the farm and not being allowed back through the roadblock. The evacuation centre gave us the number of someone offering accommodation; Emma and Jonathon gave us a home for the night, hugs, conversation, toys for the kids to play with, showers, support and a night of normality amongst the chaos."

As well as losing about 50 ha of dry feed; 5 kms of fencing; 3-days' milk and ongoing loss of production; a cow to black mastitis; and lots of trees, the Fitzpatricks also lost their peace of mind.

Vicki says they now have a boundary fence, but still need dividing fences in many paddocks. They need to reseed all the burnt areas where the only visible thing left is the lime they put out last autumn.

"We've had a bit of mastitis since the fire and were only a few weeks out from mating when the fire started, so expect our submission rates and in-calf rates not to be great. We'll be short of feed going into autumn with so much land burnt. We don't have many paddocks to put the cows in so they are a bit dirtier than normal. We can't put them in a black paddock in the summer sun with no trees for shade."

Vicki says the fire has changed their lives and outlook. "We now consider ourselves to be in a bushfire-prone area. We've bought a proper generator to run the dairy in power outages. We are looking at the place differently. How would we defend it in the next fire? What needs to change?"

"I've cut out most of my native shrubs around the house. A tree lopper has cut down blue gums beside the house. We need ember screens, an alternative water supply, are looking at alternative irrigation systems, and have added fencing to our insurance policy. The list goes on.

"At some point we may all need counselling. The kids seem OK, settled back into school and Holly is now sleeping in her own bed, but they fear clouds and are nervous if they see smoke from fires – of which there have been many in the last few weeks."

Thanks Anne & Vicki for sharing your story.

Contact the shire Fire Recovery Coordinator and share your story **0403 410 651**.