

# Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade \* No 132\* November 2012



*Training – this is where we are ...*

## **Committee 2012-2013:**

**Fire Captain:** Graham Povey  
**Senior Deputy:** Nick Goldie  
**Deputies:** Bob Morison, Jeremy Mears, Barry Woolacott, Michael Burton  
**President:** Nick Goldie  
**Secretary:** Sandra Lauer  
**Treasurer:** Bob Morison  
**Training Officer:** Jeremy Mears  
**Equipment Officer:** Michael Burton  
**Community Awareness:** Nick Goldie  
**Fundraising:** Jacqui Williams  
**Permits:** Graham Povey

**NSW RFS Delegate:** Jeremy Mears

## **Call out:**

On Tuesday 6 November, an important day for tomato growers, Captain Graham was asked by Fire Control to investigate a reported grass fire near Gungoandra Gap. Nothing was found. ✍

## **Captains meet:**

On *Wednesday 24 October*, Captains and Deputies from Cooma-Monaro brigades met in Cooma. Colinton was represented by Captain Graham, as well as Barry, Michael, Jeremy, Sandra, and Nick. A number of practical issues were discussed, including the love-grass threat, the poor state of many fire trails after recent bad weather, new radio procedures, and access to the Colinton bulk water tank by other brigades in times of need.

Group Captains (Mike Lonergan, Will Goggin, Ross Sherlock, Ray Barron) and Deputy Group Captains (Warren Schofield, Peter Luton) were elected. ✍

## **NSW fears 'Black Saturday' summer:** *adapted from The Land*

NSW POLICE have reactivated a specialist bushfire arson squad, fearing that this summer the State could potentially face a situation similar to Victoria's Black Saturday bushfires.

Strike Force *Tronto* will target would-be arsonists. RFS deputy commissioner Rob Rogers says about 350 bushfires are investigated every year in NSW and about 100 of these are found to be arson. More than 3000 bushfires and grass fires have already been recorded in NSW this spring. ✍

## City firestorms:

*adapted from the Sydney Morning Herald*

Bushfire risks have been rising steadily for nearly 40 years, according to new research that shows for the first time that big firestorms near Australian cities are becoming more likely.

As NSW prepares for an uncertain fire season, the study shows risks increasing most sharply in eastern Australia, based on daily weather data gathered from 38 key sites around the country between 1973 and 2010. The study was published in the *International Journal of Climatology*.

None of the sites, which include metropolitan Sydney, was safer from severe fire conditions than a generation ago. The study is based on the Forest Fire Danger Index (FFDI), a points system that underpins the standard low-to-catastrophic bushfire rating system.

"Fire weather, as depicted by the FFDI, has increased across much of Australia since 1973," says the report, produced by researchers at the climate change research centre at the University of NSW.

"The largest absolute changes occur in the hot, arid interior of the continent, although some of the largest proportional increases occurred in coastal areas, where average annual cumulative FFDI is relatively low - Melbourne and Adelaide recorded increases of 49 per cent or more over the duration of the record."

The FFDI rating system involves tallying the data on rainfall, evaporation, heat, wind speed and humidity to arrive at a number that signifies the degree of fire risk on any given day.

Since 1970, the average temperature across Australia has increased by 0.7 degrees but in some regions that average is two degrees warmer than 40 years ago.

The trend across the country is for longer fire seasons and more fires in spring, though not necessarily more in summer.

As the likelihood of El Nino cycle fades this year, NSW is preparing for an average season, albeit one with a large build-up of fuel from the past two years that were unusually wet.



*Training – radio skills*

## Essential bushfire safety:

*This review originally appeared in the Cooma-Monaro Express. NG.*

Some years ago I was invited to assist with up-dating Joan Webster's *Complete Australian Bushfire Book* (1986, new edition 2000) I took a rather battered copy out of the library, read it, and declined the offer. "I can't improve on this," I said.

Now Joan Webster has done the job that the publisher wanted, with her *Essential Bushfire Safety Tips*.

Earlier editions of her book carried a warning from one of Australia's premier bushfire researchers, controversial former CSIRO scientist Phil Cheney. "This book," he wrote bluntly, "could save your life."

The 2012 digest of Webster's classic is written almost entirely in dot points. This makes it compelling, but not really a great literary read. This wasn't the author's intention. It's a very long check-list, and any household which goes through it step by step will have made a huge step towards asset protection and bushfire survival.

The difference in this last edition is that Webster has incorporated the findings of the Royal Commission into the Victorian Black Saturday fires of 2009. She is not impressed by the "media led mass of conflicting fears and non-facts" which followed the Enquiry. "People died staying, therefore staying means death."

According to Ms Webster, the question which was not asked, but should have been, was: "Had those died defending known thoroughly how to do so?"

Her book is a forceful attempt to fill this gap. She has no patience with what she regards as the knee-jerk conclusion that some fires are too fierce to fight, some homes not capable of being defended. More people, she says, have been killed while evacuating their homes, over the years, than by staying. But – and it is a huge but – householders must know what to do.

A new section of her book deals with township protection. At least a third of township losses, she says, are caused by embers coming from other buildings within the township. It's a media myth that bushfires sweep through townships, destroying all in their path; it is in fact a domino effect, house to house, and this can be halted by good preparation of perimeter areas, and by the determined action of well-informed residents who have stayed to defend.

"Tragedies" she says firmly "would be dramatically reduced if applicants for building permits in bushfire-prone towns were required to pass a bushfire safety knowledge test – a licence to live there."

Not everyone will agree with all Joan Webster's recommendations, but this is an important book. Just as every rural household should contain at least one person who has done basic bushfire training, every rural household should be familiar with essential bushfire safety.

*Essential Bushfire Safety Tips* by Joan Webster (CSIRO 2012) is available from Monaro Books and Music. 

### **Training:**

The Colinton Brigade conducts training every month on the second Saturday, at two o'clock, at the Station at Colinton. Everyone is welcome. ***If possible, crews are asked to arrive at 1330 to check the trucks before training.***

*Community awareness for children* is in action again, on the third Thursday of the month, at Colinton Fire Station for an informal hour or so, from 1900 (seven pm). Contact Michael Burton (0407 003 392). 

### **Membership:**

Membership: please pay by cash at training, or cheque to The Treasurer, Colinton Rural Fire Brigade, 88 Weemala Lane, Michelago NSW 2620.

Membership fees: \$15.00 for adults, \$5.00 for juniors. Donations are always welcome.

Please provide a return address so a receipt can be mailed to you. 



*Training – don't forget the extinguisher!*

**Plan ahead:**

It is the responsibility of the land-holder to ensure that their property is safe: grass is mowed, flammables removed, fuels safely stored. The RFS can help the elderly or disabled through the AIDER program: see <http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/aider> or through Cooma Fire Control on 02 6455 0455.

The Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre has published a predictive map of bushfire activity anticipated for SE Australia for the coming season. There's a nasty little finger of red ("above average") which curls around the ACT and down into the Monaro, due to the above average growth of grass.

The Bushfire CRC report, and much else beside, can be found on the RFS Monaro website: <http://www.monarorfs.org.au/>



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**Essential numbers**  
**Emergency 000**  
**Fire:**  
**Cooma Monaro Fire Control**  
**(24 hrs)**  
**1 300 722 164**  
**02-6455 0455**

**Fire:**  
**Captain and Permit Officer:**  
**Graham Povey**  
**02-6454 4150**  
**0419 406 908**

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*Items for **The Colinton Courier** to Nick Goldie at [horehound@yless4u.com.au](mailto:horehound@yless4u.com.au)  
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