

Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade * No 175* June 2016



Giving directions, correctly; Jeremy at the RFD course

Committee 2016-2017:

Fire Captain: Graham Povey
Senior Deputy: Nick Goldie
Deputies: Bob Morison, Jeremy Mears, Michael Burton, Barry Woolacott
President: Michael Burton
Secretary: Sandra Lauer
Treasurer: Bob Morison
Training Officer: Jeremy Mears
Equipment Officers: Michael Burton, Karl Higgins
Community Awareness: Nick Goldie
Fundraising: Gill Robinson
Permits: Graham Povey

NSW RFSA Delegate: Jeremy Mears

Call out:

from Michael B

Mid-afternoon on *Sunday 22 May* crews were requested to assist Michelago at a grass fire on Micalago Road.

Seven *Alpha* (Michael B, Tony R) were quickly on the road with Kieran in Seven *Bravo* following.

The fire was about an acre in size and was located in the pine needles of a small pine plantation. When crews arrived there was little active flame, just lots of mopping up was required to ensure piles of needles didn't re-ignite and work their way into the plantation; a whipper-snipper in long grass was the cause of the fire. Crews were home by five-thirty.

On *Monday 13 June*, there was a mid-morning call-out for "a car fire on Ryrie's Hill Road". *Alpha* (Nick) headed up the road, while Michael B and Jeremy went as far as Micalago property in a private vehicle, finding nothing. Proceeding down the Highway, a late-model Subaru was discovered by the side of the road. It had suffered a blown seal in the rear differential, which had caused some smoke and flame. *Alpha* was joined by *Bravo* (Graham) and a Michelago vehicle, traffic cones were placed on the Highway closing one lane, and an M&T tow truck was called while crews returned home. ↪

Annual General Meeting:

The Brigade AGM and election of office bearers (see panel) was held on Saturday 14 May. The Brigade wished farewell to Julith, who is planning to leave the district and is standing down as

Welfare Officer; and to Noreen, leaving the role of Call-Out Officer. 



Julith and Noreen at the AGM

Courses:

A *Rural Fire Driver and 4WD* course was held at Berridale on *Saturday 21 May*. Colinton members who attended were Jeremy, Sandra, Michael E, (with Graham as one of several instructors.)

The final day of an *Advanced Firefighter* course was held on a Murrumbucca property on *Saturday 28 May* (instructors including: Graham, Nick). All trainees gained their certificates. 

Report from Albury:

from Nick

Getting to Albury from Cooma poses some interesting problems. In the event, I took the route a brave crow might fly, by way of Thredbo and Khancoban. After Thredbo the road becomes narrow and winding, and there was gale-force mist. An interesting drive.

The *Australian Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Conference* was held in the Albury Entertainment Centre over two days (19-20 May).

More than five hundred delegates attended, mainly RFS members and RFS staff. The Conference took the usual form: keynote speakers addressing a packed auditorium, and then a series of smaller concurrent sessions.

During the first morning I was kept busy as assistant to the session moderator, carrying the roving microphone during the question sessions. That night, I found myself in a crowded “Irish” pub with a large group of RFS members from the Southern Highlands. They were emphatic that community *Engagement* takes over where community *Awareness* finishes. As one of them said, it’s about fighting fire without using a hose or water.

At times I felt like a very rural fish out of water. *Engagement*, they said, means walking down the street talking to members of the community. Well, yes, but that implies that there is a street – even that there is a community.

One of the stars of the Conference was Kerry McSaveney, a slight young woman from New Zealand, with close-cropped hair, very informal dress, an engaging grin and a thuck eccent. She turned out to be Emergency Manager for the City of Wellington. Her keynote presentation was gripping, funny, occasionally moving - and she used simple language!

Taking the Christchurch earthquake as her reference she made important points: find out what people have, and make use of this - don’t tell them what they need! - accept help from people who may not be members of any recognisable organisation (she mentioned the “student army” who became essential members of the team, and some fearsomely helpful bikies who would certainly not have passed a police test).

RFS officer Matthew Reeves gave a vivid account of his time in January on the burning west coast of Tasmania, and emphasised the resilience and self-reliance of the local people.

He also praised the media, who played a vital role during and especially after the crisis, sharing essential information – though the primary “data node” was the one local shop which continued to supply bread, milk, and information.

Stuart Ellis AM, Chief Executive of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council told a good story.

He was visiting a South Australian brigade, he said. A woman, rather poorly dressed, came up to him and said: “These are good people”, and went off. He asked the Captain what it was all about. The Captain explained. They had been called out late one night to the woman’s home. She opened the door, on a safety chain, and said there was a prowler.

“Why did you call the fire brigade?” asked the Captain. “Well”, she said, “you are the only blokes I can trust!”

And that, said Stuart Ellis, is how the community sees the RFS.

Training:

The Colinton Brigade conducts training every month on the second Saturday, at 2.00 pm at the Station at Colinton. Everyone is welcome.

If possible, crews are asked to arrive at 1330 (1.30 pm) to check the trucks before training.



RFD course : L&D Officer Tim with recovery equipment

Protection for NSW Volunteers:

from Michael Eburn, Australian Emergency Law

With the recent severe weather and many volunteers responding to help their community, NSW Premier Mike Baird drew attention to the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* (NSW), which states:

An employer must not victimise an employee for being absent while taking part in emergency operations as a member of an emergency services organisation.

“Victimise” means much more than just dismiss. According to the Act:

An employer victimises an employee if the employer:

- (a) dismisses the employee from employment with the employer or terminates the engagement of the employee by the employer, or*
- (b) alters the employee’s position in his or her employment with the employer, or*

*alters the circumstances of the employee's engagement by the employer, to the employee's prejudice, or
(c) otherwise injures the employee in his or her employment with, or engagement by, the employer.*

In other words it is unlawful in NSW to sack or otherwise adversely alter the terms of a person's employment because they were on emergency service duty.

Employers face penalties up to \$3300 plus costs.

Michael Eburn says "I have not heard of any NSW employees being victimised because of their decision to help the community as volunteers, but at least those that are responding to the current emergency have, with the Premier's declaration, added legal protection." ❧

Robotics:

When human hands are not enough ... a Dutch Fire Brigade is experimenting with a fire-fighting robot, made in France, called a Scarab. It is remotely controlled, and can be fitted with foam and water cannon, cameras, measuring devices, and stretchers. The Amsterdam Brigade which is using the Scarab says that the robot will be an effective fire-fighting tool in the many tunnels and industrial and harbor areas of the city. ❧



The Scarab



Items for **The Colinton Courier** to Nick Goldie at nickgoldie@bigpond.com
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Views expressed in The Colinton Courier are not necessarily those of the editor, the Brigade, or the RFS.



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

