

# Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade \* No 91 \* June 2009




*Vern (Cooma) at the International Wildfire Management Conference*

## Committee 2009-2010:

**Fire Captain:** Graham Povey  
**Senior Deputy:** Nick Goldie  
**Deputies:** Bob Morison, Jeremy Mears  
**President:** Martin Hughes  
**Secretary:** Nick Goldie  
**Treasurer:** Bob Morison  
**Training Officer:** Jeremy Mears  
**Equipment Officers:** Jereemy Mears  
**Community Awareness:** Nick Goldie  
**Permits:** Graham Povey  
**NSW RFSA Delegate:** Jeremy Mears

## Call out:


A triple-zero call from a member of the public about a fire 'somewhere along the highway' on the evening of *Sunday 7 June* had Captain Graham out, but no fire was found. 

## Annual General Meeting:


The Colinton Brigade's *Annual General Meeting* was held on Wednesday 27 May. The Executive Committee was re-elected (see panel, above). There remains a pressing need for a call-out officer, especially important when there is a major or long-lasting incident. The call-out officer(s) should not be an active firefighter, should have good local knowledge, and should be based in the district. Any volunteers? (The brigade will supply any necessary equipment).

The election was chaired by Cr Winston Phillips, and was followed by a report from RFS Cooma-Monaro Team Manager Jim Darrant. Jim noted in particular:

- A successful fire season past, with 28 lightning-caused ignitions, all except one (Burrunga) being extinguished by 'first shift' crews
- Thanks to Colinton for sustained activity at the Burrunga fire
- Commendation for good relations between local brigades
- Many HR burns carried out
- Risk Management Plan for Cooma-Monaro complete, awaiting approval, and a 5-year HR burn program
- Some petrol-driven vehicles still need to be replaced, including Colinton's elderly Cat 9
- Air Operations to be developed, including air base operators, hot re-fuelling, and RAFT activities

- Jenny Roberts appointed chaplain for Monaro Team
- Junior brigade to be supported with equipment, PPE, resources
- *Colinton Courier* commended. 

## Volunteers:

We received in the mail a new and glossy magazine *the volunteer fire fighter*, produced by the Volunteer Fire Fighters Association (VFFA). This group, led by Peter Cannon, became active in 2004, and argues that it truly represents the interests of RFS volunteers (where the RFS Association contains a mix of volunteers and paid staff). The VFFA has taken a confrontational stand on a number of issues. The recruiting blurb claims "... no divided platforms of them and us ..." 



Items for **The Colinton Courier** to Nick Goldie at  
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 02 6235 9190

by the first Saturday each month, or to any  
 Committee member. For production assistance we  
 are grateful to:

\*The Sharp Corporation of Australia Pty Ltd,  
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**The Colinton Courier** is also available at

[www.michelagoregion.org.au/bushfire/brigades.htm](http://www.michelagoregion.org.au/bushfire/brigades.htm)

Views expressed in **The Colinton Courier** are not  
 necessarily those of the editor, the Brigade, or the  
 RFS.




## Liability:

A recent story in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* (May 23) suggested that RFS volunteers could be held liable if the RFS is sued. The legal team representing the RFS in the Canberra fires case were scathing


about "...the journalist's selective and out of context quotations taken from a day of very complex and technical legal argument."

Minister Steve Whan said that the NSW Government totally supported the RFS and its volunteers. His press release quoted the Rural Fires Act: "*any member of the Rural Fire Service, advisory council, bush fire coordinating or management committee is protected from any action, liability, claim or demand.*"

And in a press release Brian McKinlay, president of the Rural Fire Service Association, ('the only recognised body that represents 70,000 rural fire fighters in NSW') ... *expressed outrage at suggestions that volunteers were to be held personally liable for the deadly Canberra fires ... Mr McKinlay said in addition to the protection provided to volunteer firefighters under the law, public liability protection is also available as well as a worker's compensation scheme in the event of injury or death. "The experience, dedication and commitment of volunteer fire fighters forms a vital part in fire fighting in Australia ... our members do a wonderful job and, as President and volunteer myself, I would be the first to react if I believed members were not being provided with the protection they so justly deserve."*

Find out about the RFSA from their website, or Colinton's RFSA delegate Jeremy Mears (6100 1100). 

## Brigade membership:

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

The Colinton Brigade conducts training every month on the second Saturday, at two o'clock, at the Station at Colinton. Everyone is welcome.

The Junior brigade is in action, every second Thursday night. Contact Bob Morison or Tony Campbell for details. ↪

## Radio replacement:

Fire vehicles are equipped with UHF (CB) radios for local conversation, similar to the hand-held radios used by many brigade members. The vehicles are also equipped with the more powerful PMR radios, for official use only, normally linking individual tankers with Fire Control in Cooma. Brigade captains and deputies also carry hand-held PMR sets, enabling them to communicate directly with Fire Control in the event of an incident.

Technology does not stand still, and all RFS vehicles in the Cooma-Monaro district have been recalled in recent weeks to Berridale or Cooma for an upgrading and replacement of the aging PMR radios. ↪

## International Wildfire conference:

Members from Colinton (Nick, Jenny) and Cooma (Vern, Craig) attended the *International Wildfire Management Conference* at the Sydney Convention Centre in Darling Harbour, 18-20 June.)

A very long program of presentations over two days kept the five hundred delegates off the streets. Presentations were in three streams – *Research and Technology*, *Challenges We Face*, and *A Safer Community* – as well as plenary sessions, so that it was impossible to hear more than a third of the speakers. *Nick reports:* Keynote speaker **Tim Flannery** discussing the science of climate change, and the alarming news that at a conference in Copenhagen last week, 2000 climate

scientists concluded that the world is "tracking the worst case scenario" and heading for a temperature rise of 5-6 degrees, a catastrophic amount.

Keynote speaker Supt **Rod Collins** of the Victorian Police on what he called the 'Savage Saturday' fires, noting that there had been 374 deaths from the heat-wave even before the fires, and the problems of registering 23,000 evacuees (including the registration of one dog), the need to search 5743 properties, twice or more. Supt Collins also made the ominous point that "the places that burned were not the ones we thought were going to burn. They are still there ..."

**Tom Esgate** from Lassen County in northern California, noted the success of linking the fire safety council with other agencies dealing with water and forest health.

**Roy Bishop** of the London Fire Brigade described dealing with 300 languages, 50 distinct communities in 33 boroughs, and 66,000 false alarms a year (mostly from automatic systems). A London message: "get a smoke alarm for someone you love".

**David Ward** of Curtin University, with an elegant mathematical formula based on the Four Colour Theorem for safe and effective mosaic burning.

**Lemmie Briedis**, all the way from Wamboin, where a population of 3100 regularly sends hundreds to public meetings, pump demonstrations and community safety events.

Psychologist **Danielle Clode** of the CFA (Vic) on the need for 'the firefighting response' to become as automatic and habitual as good driving behaviour.

**Art Craighill** of Yuba County in California observing that major losses occur when agencies are overwhelmed, as in severe electrical storms with dozens of ignitions. Like his colleague **Tom Esgate**, he urged the inclusion of water and forestry agencies in any firefighting strategy. (He also noted that, should any delegates be visiting California, the city of Chico in Yuba County has a particularly fine independent brewery.)

*Jenny reports:* **Will May** of Alachua County, Florida, said if firefighters are to avoid the 'fog of war' – the confusion that results when intelligence is lost - they must have information. This can come from helicopters flying around the perimeter of a fire; from low-altitude unmanned planes with infrared cameras connected to computers on the ground; or from high-altitude unmanned planes for major fires.

**Jeremiah Ramontsho** of Botswana said in his large, land-locked semi-arid country there is little capacity to fight large fires. They have fewer than 200 trained firefighters and inadequate and inappropriate resources for suppressing fires. Australia will send trainers over the next five years.

**Alex Stefan** of Telstra described how the latest generation of wireless broadband technologies (3G) can be used to augment radio in fighting wildfires – within four years 3G and radio will be totally integrated.

**Mark Crossweller** of NSW RFS head office spoke of the problems of declining volunteerism at a time when demand is increasing.

**Scott Callan** of Mulbring attended a course in Kuala Lumpur. Australian fire-fighting volunteers are held in the highest regard overseas, he said.

**Anthony Marks**, a solicitor and Queensland volunteer, has looked at all the inquiries into major bushfires in Australia in the last 15 years and found there has been too much emphasis on suppression and not enough on prevention – fuel management is becoming a lost art.

**Kevin Johnson** and **Kyle Overly** from Oklahoma described the evolution of fire policy in the US. Vegetation clearance around buildings is critical – 90% of homes with 30 feet of clearance survived the 1980 Panorama fires in southern California in which 300 homes were lost.

**Adam Leavesley** from Bushfires NT described approaches to fire management by Aboriginal, conservation and pastoral land managers. Fires always come a year or two after wet years, so paradoxically, the drier the climate the fewer the fires.

There were also scientific poster displays and an exhibition of equipment ranging from big red trucks to fruit-flavoured electrolyte drinks for thirsty firefighters.



*At the Exhibition ...*



### ***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***

