

Four Wheel Drive Victoria Rural Response Group

Newsletter No 5 - 5th May 2009



A brief update on FWDV Rural Response to the bushfires

Overview of Activities

Many of the Clubs affiliated with Four Wheel Drive Victoria are continuing to assist in the bushfire areas at Kilmore, Kinglake, Murrindindi, Beechworth, Redesdale, Bendigo, Bunyip, Churchill, and Horsham.

As examples of assistance provided, during Easter approximately 40 members from various FWDV clubs and 4WD NSW clubs worked in the Beechworth area under the direction of the Wangaratta Club. During the Anzac weekend, Land Rover Club of ACT worked there also. During the weekend of 18th- 19th April, the Wimmera 4WD Club held a working bee at Horsham assisted by a number of clubs. Gippsland 4WD Club held a major working bee in the Bunyip fire area on May 2nd-3rd and was assisted by three other clubs.

Graeme Walsh acting as FWDV RRG Rural Response Coordinator

For a month from 6th May, Graeme Walsh will take over as Coordinator of the FWDV Rural Response. Graeme has been assisting Doug Hammerton ever since Black Saturday and has a good understanding of everything we have been doing. His email address is gwalsh1@bigpond.net.au. His phone numbers are 0418 313 074 and (03) 9884 4101.

FWDV Caravan deliveries to homeless bushfire families

The movement of caravans has continued with deliveries performed across many clubs. The Program has now been underway for just on two months and in that time we have been able to tow 103 vans in and out of the staging areas at Mooroolbark and Seymour and now into the fire affected areas.

From a very hectic start when we collected vans to bring them into the staging areas, things are much quieter and now demand is driven by recipients wanting to return to their properties.

The processes around the delivery are new and developing all the time. When someone wants a van allocated they are profiled to match the available vans, eg to accommodate three people, etc. Their site is inspected to ensure safety and that services can be provided. Once approved, we are engaged to deliver to the site where, after delivery, the facilities maintenance teams connect all the services and ensure the van is habitable.

We've faced many challenges during the deliveries, not the least being that there are no road signs, so we make arrangements with the recipients to understand exactly where the van had to be delivered, eg for them to put a bin out or meet at the front gate of the property. There's great reward in delivered a van as it's great to see those appreciative faces.

In going forward, the Program will continue to be "demand driven". As blocks are cleared and people have permission to return, they can request a delivery. Our schedule is a day to day proposition with little room

to plan. So when the call comes asking if you can deliver a van, we trust you can assist in a timely manner so that the recipients can quickly be accommodated into their temporary new home.

To all those who have assisted over the past two months, many thanks indeed, and we trust we can continue to call on your invaluable assistance as we move forward.

(Ron Reed, FWDV Caravan Delivery Program Coordinator)

Assisting the Salvos - Goods Sorting Warehouse Requirements

The Salvos are still requiring weekday assistance to sort out warehouses full of goods donated for bushfire victims. Members from a few clubs have been assisting them. The lease for the Salvation Army's temporary Clayton warehouse expired in April and that warehouse will be closed. The Noble Park facility is continuing to operate for the next couple of months at least. It still needs volunteers. The Noble Park warehouse is located at 400 Princess Highway, and operates in the same format as did the Clayton warehouse. If your club would like to volunteer some time, call the Salvo's directly on 9845 4018. Thank you all for your help over the past two months. The Salvation Army has greatly appreciated it.

Request from Murrindindi Shire's Fencing Coordinator Matt Ellis

On 5 May, Matt Ellis provided the following update. If any Clubs can assist in that Shire, contact Matt Ellis on 0429-614-441

"Let me say that the response of the 4WD movement has been tremendous to date and we look forward to continue that over the coming weeks and recognise in a significant way the great effort that has been made so far.

"There is still a heck of a lot of fencing work to be done in this shire and that work will continue on for several months. Paul McKenzie and myself are in the process of reviewing all requests for assistance and doing assessments of individual properties. As such we expect that we will have projects for your clubs to take on over the next several weekends.

"We have divided the shire into two areas; Murrindindi West which was affected by the Kilmore fire, this includes Strath Creek, Flowerdale, Glenburn and areas in between down to Kinglake, and Murrindindi East which was affected by the Murrindindi Mill fire and includes the areas from Narbethong, Marysville, Buxton and up to Taggerty. Paul is the new coordinator for Murrindindi West, and I will retain responsibility for Murrindindi East.

"In general across the shire, the fencing recovery has been slow to date. This has by and large been due to the nature of the damage that occurred in this shire compared to many other bushfire areas. The level of devastation of homes and buildings is unprecedented and way beyond what has been lost elsewhere. As such most landholders have not put the same priority on repairing or rebuilding their fences as folks in other areas. Secondly with up to 90% of fencing either not insured or underinsured and funding from either government grants or relief appeal sources slow to come through, many landholders have been daunted by the sheer size of their quotes for replacement fencing materials. However, some of those funds are starting to flow through and more and more landholders are getting themselves organised to repair or rebuild their fences.

Many thanks Matt Ellis "

"What to say – How to care" training session.

Club members are invited to an information session on "What to say – How to care". FWDV in partnership with Pajero 4WD Club of Victoria Inc., the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement and Compassionate Friends Victoria is providing this two hour training session. This tailored information session will provide participants with information on the following topics -

• Trauma • Communication Styles • Self Care • Referral Options • Practical Issues when dealing with Bereavement.

This information will be particularly useful to the volunteers, who will meet people affected by the fires during their work.

It will be held at the Glen Waverley Bowls Club, Cnr Waverley Road and Springvale Road, Glen Waverley, on 6th May 2009 from 7pm to 9.30pm. If you are interested, please contact Bette Phillips on 0409 788 883 or bette.phillips@optusnet.com.au

BP Australia's offer of fuel to volunteers

On 27 April, BP Australia announced a new programme that will, within a few months, provide \$250,000 worth of fuel to individual volunteers across Australia to help ease the financial burden associated with volunteering. BP's Vouchers for Volunteers programme recognises the important role fuel plays in assisting volunteers to help others, and it addresses this through helping to pay for volunteers' fuel. BP intends that many volunteers will benefit from Vouchers for Volunteers as it makes sure the benefits go to the individual volunteer who is generously giving their time to help in their own community. BP hopes that volunteers from not-for-profit organisations all over Australia take this opportunity to be part of our programme. More information on the programme, including online application forms and guidelines, is available at www.talkstoppedlongago.com.au.

BP's programme is an Australia wide programme, not a specific Victorian bushfire programme. BP did not notify FWDV or the Pajero Club regarding the program but we assume that our RRG bushfire activities may qualify for assistance.

In relation to the not-for-profit registered number required for an application, FWDV Board Member Nigel Beresford advises that anyone applying for the BP fuel offer can use the FWDV associations registered number **A0013539S**.

CLUB REPORTS

Toyota Landcruiser Club

TLC is still actively involved in fencing at the Diego property at Flowerdale. The two properties along Break O'Day Road, Glenburn have been finished. Work has commenced on another property at Dixons Creek and to date we have cleared some 60 trees. The Club was featured on Channel 7 news, two weeks ago at this property. Several additional properties have been short listed for work once the Diego property has been finished, although this may be several weeks off yet. On 2nd-3rd May, we have the assistance of the Geelong Four Wheel Drive Club at the Flowerdale property and that assistance is greatly appreciated. We have decided to suspend work over the Mothers Day weekend to give both the volunteers and the owners a break. *(Bruce Fullard)*

Wangaratta 4WD Club

Easter

We had a large group of NSW club members at Easter coordinated by Roger Sheath (Vice President , NSW 4WD Association). We had approximately 20 vehicles from 5 clubs - Blue Mountains, Range Rover Club, Suzuki Club, Sydney District and Triple Diamond Clubs. 43 was the maximum we had in the field on Friday and Saturday but overall we achieved about 110 volunteer-days of labour and approximately 20 km of fence removal or reinstatement on approximately 7 properties. As with Anzac Day there was a very strong feeling developed between the landowners and volunteers with a number keen to come back again so we could see a repeat in the future. They were also issuing Press Releases so will try to get hold of a copy.

Anzac Weekend

Despite extremely cold and windy conditions, (even hail at times), a wonderful effort was provided over the Anzac weekend to assist farmers affected by the fires in the Mudgegonga area. 20 vehicles from three 4WD clubs in ACT (the Land Rover Club of ACT the ACT 4WD Club and the Southern Tablelands 4WD

club) met with nine members of the Wangaratta Club for a safety briefing and to form work parties on Saturday morning. Work continued on Sunday to complete a rewarding weekend for all.

A total of eight properties were assisted, with volunteers developing a close rapport with the farmers they had the privilege of working alongside. Most of the work completed consisted of pulling up damaged fences, digging out burnt strainers, clearing fallen trees from fence-lines, and carting damaged materials to community skips. Fence repairs and new fence installation involved steel post driving, wire stringing, tensioning and tying off. Those involved in the work quickly learnt new skills and terminologies. 'Twitching' for example was found to be not only a facial expression!

As in previous working parties to this area, those involved have come away from the weekend with a real sense of gratification through helping those affected by the fires. To complete a fence and see the bulls in the yard released into a long awaited paddock, gave those involved a lot of satisfaction. Not only was valuable physical assistance provided, but also invaluable moral support.

Unfortunately some of the work, especially in the steeper areas was halted due to the weather conditions. Although all the farmers are extremely happy with the rain over the weekend, many are now faced with the added problem of new fences being pushed over from the mud slides caused by the heavy runoff down steep, bare ash covered slopes. The main concern for these farmers at present is to complete external fences and yards so that stock can be returned to their properties.

Many volunteers have expressed a desire to continue assisting with these tasks, including a number from the ACT who have already started making arrangements to return in the near future. David Blore (Wangaratta 4WD Club) will continue to work with the Shire in the Mudgegonga area to offer co-ordination support for anyone interested in assisting farmers in this area. *(Noel and Irene Ham)*

Clem Tozer, from the ACT 4WD Club commented on the wonderful coordination effort and great club hospitality in testing circumstances provided by the Wangaratta 4WD Club. He said that his members really appreciated the opportunity to help the Victorian farmers in some small way and it was gratifying to experience the appreciation offered by the farmers they assisted. They clearly enjoyed and appreciated our small contribution.

Wimmera 4WD Club

The Club organised a cleanup day in the Horsham fire area on Saturday 18 April. They were assisted by members from the Ballarat, Portland, Warrnambool and LROCV Clubs. A great deal of work was done and the Horsham Rural City Council informs me that the major part of the cleanup is now complete. The Wimmera 4WD Club thanks all members who came to help with the cleanup. There may need to be another working bee at a later date, and if we require any further assistance we will let you know. *(Ron Jardine)*

Idlers 4WD Club

Seventeen members have just completed another successful week in the Buxton area. We were again grateful to the Bait & Tackle shop for the loan of three 'Farm Boss' Stihl saws which are on loan to the shop from the manufacturer. We spent quite some time this week with these saws and not only did it make our job easier, we had the added bonus of just taking them back to Mark at the shop who gave them a sharpen whenever they needed it. He deserves a pat on the back at some appropriate time in the future. We managed to clear the fencing on a number of properties as well as clearing most of the merlot and chardonnay grapes from a 12 acre vineyard. *(Allan Marshall)*

Melbourne Jeep Owners Club

In a joint community venture with the Strath Creek CFA, MJOC has been assisting farmers in the Strath Creek area by cleaning up and undertaking minor repairs after the devastating Black Saturday bushfires. Northern Motor Group is also on board with 11 volunteers and vehicles and also a large vehicle to assist in the movement of materials. The Toyota 4WD Club has also been keen to help out. They have had other groups and companies that they have approached, so it is sure to be a productive community project.

Rural Repsonse work has been some of the most rewarding efforts I have ever made. All the kids who have been involved in this Rural Response work so far have been just as rewarded as the adults and extremely helpful and welcome. The thanks, smiles and tears from the people I have helped is so moving and makes the effort worthwhile. Sometimes the residents are just pleased to have a good chin wag which just brightens up their day.

MJOC has managed to acquire a number of plants. It is our intention, after consultation with the local organisers, to choose a particular resident, property or community area to create a garden to not just return the community to normal but to add to it. This is a gift from us to them letting the community know they haven't been forgotten. I would love to see some of the Club's green thumbs out there helping on this worthwhile project. Some of us saw a similar project occur in Narbethong and the response was nothing short of overwhelming. *(Rohan Dodd)*

Dandenong Ranges Four Wheel Drive Club

At the request of the Shire Council, we organised a club trip to begin the cleanup of the Wandong Light Steamers property. Programmed Maintenance Services had donated the use of a small tip truck and two caged trailers for the day. WLS are a group of older people who lease a property off the DNRE and have built a sophisticated 1 km long 5 inch gauge model train railway. The model trains have live working steam engines that they have built themselves mostly from scratch.

They had put considerable effort into the site over the years, and although the track itself, their toilet block, and the two full sized railway carriages they use as kitchen and office had survived, much of the support infrastructure including sheds and water tanks had been destroyed, and the site was littered with burned and fallen trees. Because of their circumstances, much of the help being provided to home owners and farmers would not be forthcoming to them. We cleared up and made safe an enormous spreading gum tree, collected the twisted steel and plastic of destroyed sheds and water tanks and carted it to the tip, cut up logs and winched them out of the creek, and generally pulled fallen trees out of the creek to help mitigate the next flood. The collected wood was stacked into bonfires to be lit later during the winter.

A couple of us also assisted at an adjoining property where they were routing their power cable underground. They had already laid the cable in the trench and were threading the conduit over the cable for about 500m. *(Derek Turner)*

Yarra Valley 4X4 Club

Our club has conducted several working bees at a residential property in Kinglake where we cleaned up fallen and dangerous trees over 10 acres, and assisted another residential property in Steels Creek where we did a site clean. The Club has several members helping out at the wildlife centre at Chum Creek during the last month. *(Jase Chivers)*

Mudgee & Districts 4x4 Club Inc

Hay was collected by the Mudgee Club and distributed to farms in the Beechworth fire area. The Club thanks Jeff and Jan Doyle of Albury Wodonga 4WD Club, and all their members for the monies raised for the fuel for the hay carting trucks. Without the help we would not have been able to do two trips. Please let them know how much we truly appreciate their help. This has been a massive achievement for the Mudgee Club and was not possible with out your help. *(Graham Bourke)*

Pajero 4WD Club

On April 4th-5th two crews working on properties in the Kinglake area. It is likely that there will be a trip to assist property owners in the Kinglake area on the weekend of 9th-10th May. Further properties are being considered for assistance. One is a cattle property, one horse property and one is a project for the Murrindindi Shire Council in fencing an area for a temporary village in Kinglake.

In the Churchill fire area, the Club has now held five trips assisting in the Callignee area. On 4th-5th April members worked on approximately seven properties allocated by the Victorian Farmers Federation. On another trip on 18th-19th April members worked on another eight properties. Members of the Overlander and Subaru Clubs joined us on these trips. On May 2nd-3rd, the Club had 20 members assist the Gippsland 4WD Club at Labertouche in the Bunyip fire area. *(Doug Hammerton)*

Land Rover Owners Club of Victoria

The month of April saw five work days for its members, two at Strathewen, two at Glenburn and one day at Marysville. This is down on the regular tempo due to Easter and Anzac day. Strathewen and Glenburn have been on the regular calendar of its activities with crews out at these locations every weekend since the start of our work in response to the February bushfires. Marysville is the Club's most recent venture having only been out there once and we hope to be back out there again on 9th May.

The work has been very rewarding for the volunteers and the victims of the fire have certainly appreciated the effort people are putting in for them. Our work has mostly been cleaning up fallen trees, fences and sheds, and the work at Marysville has seen the team out cleaning up the trout and salmon ponds public area. In coming weeks we hope to see more building activity and less clean up which I am sure the volunteers will appreciate as reconstruction will be so much more uplifting than cleaning up damage and destruction left by the fires. *(Gabriel Orzeszko)*

Doug Hammerton *(Pajero 4WD Club of Vic)*
FWD Victoria Rural Response Coordinator
Email: dhammerton@optusnet.com.au - **Mobile: 0409 381 699**

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to your Clubmembers and other interested people