

Shoulder to shoulder

The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory

NSW bushfire disaster report 2014



We're about people
finding freedom.



Shoulder to shoulder we stand

Commissioner's letter

The Salvation Army's response to the NSW bushfires: a six-month report

In October 2013, I was moved by the way Australia responded to the bushfires that swept across parts of New South Wales. Despite the worst of nature on display, I've witnessed, in the days and months subsequent to the fires, the very best of humanity as thousands of Australians generously gave financially to those in need.

Some people lost everything, only left with the clothing they wore to school or work the morning the bushfires hit. Due to the swift and immediate support shown by the Australian people through The Salvation Army's bushfire appeal, we were quickly able to provide for the immediate needs of those affected.

Your generosity has allowed The Salvation Army, through the bushfire appeal, to raise \$11.3 million. These funds are being used to provide goods and services to assist individuals, families and communities with the rebuilding process. We will continue to distribute these funds, helping those affected by the fires to recover with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Six months on, our services are still being accessed daily. We know it takes years to recover from disasters of this magnitude. The Salvation Army and our people are still providing assistance to the communities impacted by the devastating floods and Cyclone Yasi that hit Queensland in 2011. In the same spirit, **The Salvation Army will stand shoulder to shoulder with communities impacted by the New South Wales bushfires of October and November 2013 for as long as it takes.**

I recall experiencing a very special moment when I arrived at a fire-devastated street in the Blue Mountains, just days after the fires struck. Three young

siblings were seeing the ashes of their home for the first time. I was able to pray with them and offer other assistance.

Please continue to pray for those who have lost their homes, as they face the task of rebuilding their lives. May God continue to give them strength for the days ahead.

For all the devastation I've seen, I've also witnessed our Salvation Army personnel doing all they can to bring hope, rebuild lives and help people find freedom from the anxiety caused by this disaster.

Our services are made possible because of the extraordinary generosity and compassion shown by the Australian public and many members of the business community.

On behalf of The Salvation Army and those receiving assistance through your generous support, I say thank you.



James Condon
Commissioner
The Salvation Army
Australia Eastern Territory





Shoulder to shoulder with families

Hope rises from ashes

As Peter More walked down his street his heart flickered with hope. He noticed along Emma Parade in Winmalee, only the houses on the right were burnt down. His house was on the left.

But as he reached the crest of his driveway, where he could normally see his rooftop, there was nothing.

“All that was left of the house was the brickwork for the foundations,” Peter recalls. “I felt curiously detached as I watched the smouldering ruin before me. But I do remember how difficult it was ringing my children to say ‘we’ve lost the house.’”

The final moment of destruction came as Peter stood there. He watched the crown of the large eucalypt tree fall into the pool below the house.

“I practically built that house over the 19 years we lived there. Every school holiday and over most weekends, there always seemed to be some necessary project to ‘improve’ and extend our home. Overall, I felt a great sense of satisfaction providing such a lovely place for us all to live.”

On Thursday 17 October, Peter’s family was one of many who lost their home from the bushfires that ravaged the Blue Mountains region.

His was also one of the first families to come across Salvation Army officers and senior chaplains for the NSW Rural Fire Service, Majors Ian and Kerry Spall.

That Thursday, the Spalls drove towards the Winmalee Rural Fire Service station to support the firefighters. Here they first met Peter’s 15-year-old son Ashley, a cadet volunteer with the Rural Fire Service.

As soon as the fires broke out, Ashley left his school grounds at Winmalee High

and headed off to the Winmalee Rural Fire Service station, ready to support the fire crews.

Knowing his own home was in danger, Ashley continued with the job at hand. But when he received the terrible phone call from his father, he knew life could never be the same again.

“We were so thankful for Ian and Kerry at that moment,” Peter says. “While there were other people around, we felt so lonely and desolate. All of us needed a lot of comfort, and Ian and Kerry provided just that.”

Due to the bushfires, the roads in Winmalee were blocked off and many residents were stuck in their cars for up to seven hours. Having organised temporary accommodation with friends in Springwood, the Spalls helped escort the More family out of Winmalee.

“We felt so crushed and so desolate and to know that we were in Ian and Kerry’s hands at that time was very important,” says Peter.

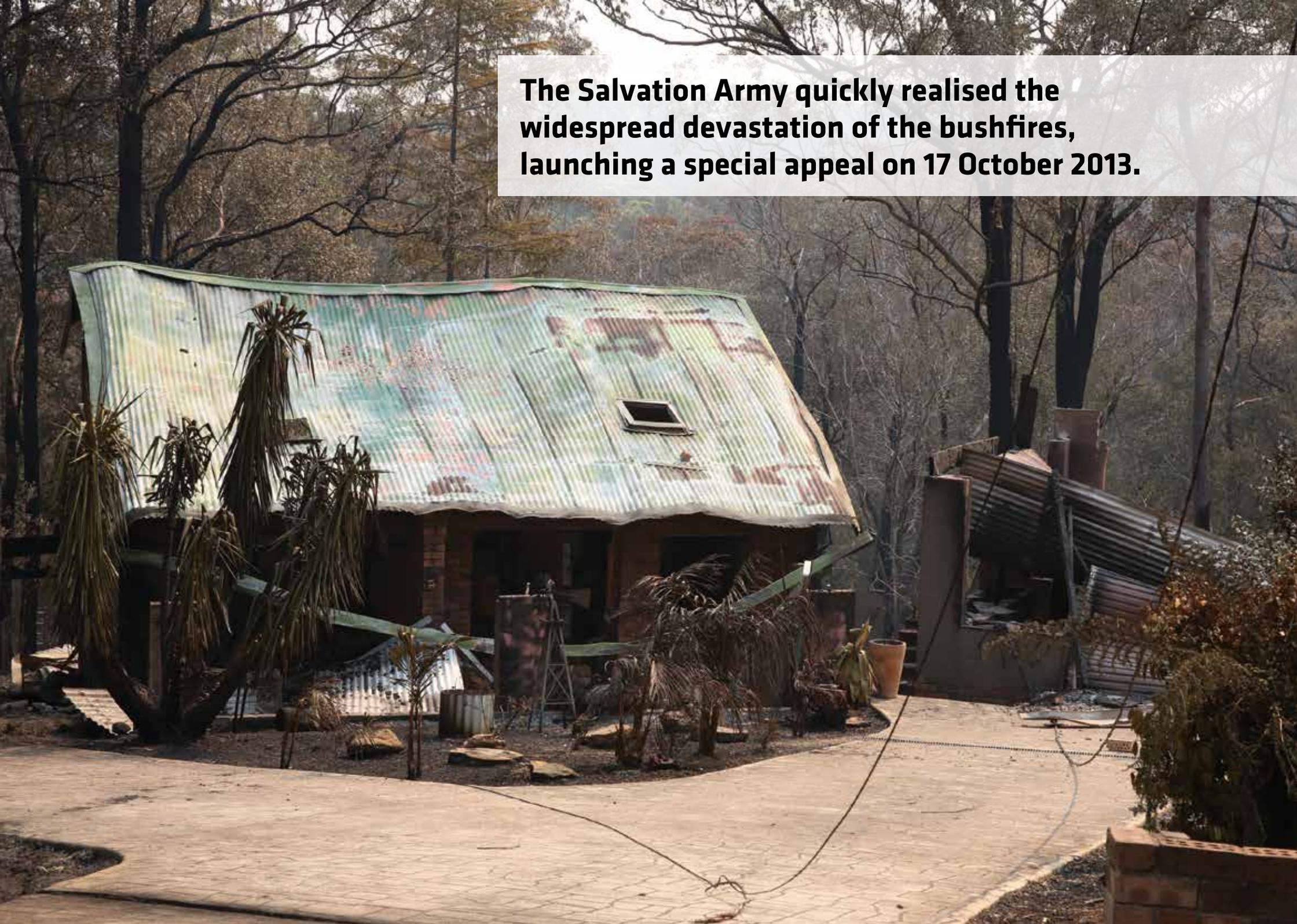
Since that day, the More family and the Spalls have kept in contact and built a long-lasting friendship despite the unusual circumstances.

“Life is interesting,” says Peter. “We lost a house and that’s terrible, but there’s an excitement for making new friends even when that wasn’t your intention or expectation. We’ve kept in contact since that time and trust this will continue.”

Temporarily settled at their rental property in Mount Riverview in the lower Blue Mountains, the More family is making plans for the future.

While they have decided against rebuilding, Peter and Yvonne say they are determined to stay in the Blue Mountains because “we still feel at home here”.

The Salvation Army quickly realised the widespread devastation of the bushfires, launching a special appeal on 17 October 2013.



Shoulder to shoulder in crisis

“Our officers and volunteers provided emergency assistance with meals, hot and cold beverages, and a listening ear for many shocked and devastated residents. When people are hurting, we’re there to support them.”

– Salvation Army spokesperson Major Jeff Winterburn

In October 2013, horrific bushfires devastated areas in the Blue Mountains and the Hunter Valley. The fires destroyed or damaged more than 350 homes, with the greatest losses in the Blue Mountains.

From the early days The Salvation Army was ready and resourced to deliver a comprehensive, long-term recovery operation.

Within four hours, our Salvation Army Emergency Services (SAES) teams had set up across 10 sites, from Picton in the Blue Mountains to Port Stephens in the Hunter region.

In the following weeks, our teams worked around the clock in 24 locations, from community centres and local parks to farmers’ paddocks 70 kilometres from the nearest town.

While firefighters battled to save homes and properties, we stood beside them. We assisted NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire & Rescue NSW officers, and offered a comforting hand to those who lost their homes.

In evacuation centres, our officers and volunteers stood ready to help people find the services they needed.

We also knocked on the front doors of 200 homes, assisting those who may not have put their hands up for help.

In Winmalee, we set up an SAES truck in the middle of the burnt-out streets. Being on the ground allowed us to help people when they needed us most. Not everyone lost a home, but power and water supply was significantly affected in the area. Some people needed a drink and hot meal, others just a smile or word of support.

Salvation Army officer Lieutenant Jon Belmonte, appointed to the Blue Mountains area at the time of the bushfires, says the teams offered “a kind ear and a good hand” to those in the community.

Once the immediate danger of the bushfires subsided, our focus turned to the future. We established a relief centre at Springwood Baptist Church, offering immediate material needs, financial counselling, referral to specialist services, and any other support we could.

The Salvation Army was there, as we always endeavour to be in the midst and aftermath of every disaster, ready and able to help the community.

The Salvation Army quickly realised the widespread devastation of the bushfires, launching a special appeal on 17 October 2013.



NSW Rural Fire Service senior chaplain Major Ian Spall and Territorial Director of Emergency Services Norm Archer, meet in the Blue Mountains to discuss our response efforts to the bushfires.

The Salvation Army bushfire response in the Hawkesbury region, the Hunter Valley and the Blue Mountains



412
Volunteer positions



10,536
Meals served (including beverage)



5,763
Additional refreshments



3,296
Volunteer hours (standard duty 8 hours)



24
Operational sites



20
Salvation Army Emergency Services teams deployed

Springwood bushfire relief centre

as at 9 May 2014:



559
Number of clients*



2,011
Number of client visits*



1,055
Hours working with people

*Number of people presented requesting assistance

**Number of times clients presented and gained assistance

Shoulder to shoulder in support

With any disaster of this scale, people are affected not only by the loss of physical possessions, but also mentally and emotionally. The Salvation Army knows people are often not aware of their emotional needs until some time after a disaster.

As people arrived at The Salvation Army Recovery Centre in Springwood, our staff worked with them to see what assistance we could offer. While providing immediate necessities, such as food, clothing, and other essential items, workers assessed people's short-term and long-term needs and referred people to financial counselling and other specialist services.

The Salvos Counselling team assisted in any way possible to meet the overwhelming demand in the relief centre. The team was on hand to debrief officers, staff and volunteers, or refer them to our Critical Incident Peer Support team for employees.

Counsellors sat and talked with victims waiting for help, assessing what support they would need and guiding them to the appropriate services. In Penrith, Salvos Counselling offered affected families free, emergency counselling sessions.

Our Salvation Army personnel – officers, staff and volunteers – were also on the ground at different locations across the state.

On the front line of the bushfires, we worked with firefighters and emergency services personnel. In their role as senior chaplains for the NSW Rural Fire Service, Salvation Army officers Majors Ian and Kerry Spall worked with firefighters to help them deal with the devastation they witnessed. In the Blue Mountains, some firefighters defended houses while their own homes perished.

The Spalls also met with families who had lost their homes, and they were part of the initial phases of assistance in the Blue Mountains.

In the Blue Mountains, Salvation Army workers went into the burnt out streets and walked with people as they returned to see the fate of their homes. Our officers also knocked on the doors of homes that were spared, as many were without power and water for days.



Shoulder to shoulder with friends

Volunteer firefighters Jono and Tim Boxwell and Nathan Culpan lost their home when fires engulfed the Blue Mountains in October. But this didn't stop them putting their lives at risk to save others.

The fires came quickly, fanned by strong winds and high temperatures. Rural Fire Service volunteer Nathan Culpan left his job to man a truck based at Yellow Rock station in the lower Blue Mountains. His girlfriend, Amber Cobb was also on board.

"It was pretty scary," Amber remembers. "It was basically just 'pick a house and defend it'.... There were elderly people ... we were trying to get them into cars... It was crazy."

When the fire jumped the road and threatened properties in Yellow Rock, Nathan's crew was sent back to protect homes. Nathan arrived to find his rental property, which he shared with friends Tim and Jono, alight.

He smashed his way in to save his father's World War II memorabilia. "I can replace everything else but I can't replace those," he says. "That was the only thing I told the crew I wanted to get, I just needed to get those."

When the roof started crashing down around him, his crew pulled him to safety.

"All the hydrants were bone dry so we didn't have any more water," says Amber. "Once we went through our tank of water we just stood there and watched his house burn to the ground."

Fifteen minutes later, Nathan, Amber and the crew were back on the truck and back at the frontline of the firestorm. They saved many homes that afternoon and evening.

"I'm not a hero," insists Nathan. "I just did what anyone else would have done in that situation. It's a pretty awful feeling seeing your house burn down. If you can do anything to try and stop someone else having to go through that, it's a pretty good day's work."

Stuck in traffic on his way back from work to fight the fires, Nathan's flatmate and fellow fire service crew member, Jono, received a phone call with the news their home had gone.

"I just about broke down and couldn't drive. The shock of it, I think, hit me."

Unable to get through the roadblocks, Jono was left shocked and frustrated. "I just felt helpless – I couldn't get in and do anything for anyone," he says.

His brother Tim had been fighting fires in a nearby suburb when he was told of the loss.

"When I found out, I'd just watched someone else's house burn down. It's pretty bad watching that happen when you can't really do much about it," he remembers. "To have my own house gone – it was a bit of a shock."

Firefighting and police roadblocks kept them separated and unable to reach the remains of their home until the next day.

"Stuff was still smouldering when we got there," says Tim as he describes digging through the rubble the next day. "It was my girlfriend's birthday the day it happened and all the presents I got her were in the house as well, so I was pretty upset."

Salvation Army Majors Ian and Kerry Spall are senior chaplains to the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and supported the four friends during and after the event.



“We were there to support firefighters on the scene, especially those who’d lost their property. We helped get them back on trucks and keep them going,” says Ian.

When Jono lost his home, he lost his firefighting equipment along with it. The Spalls helped him find a new kit to continue his work.

“We were really concerned about getting a kit to him as soon as possible. It’s a vote of confidence that the person is a valuable firefighter if you can get them back on the truck,” explains Ian.

After the fires had passed, the Spalls also helped the four friends find their feet again. They got through roadblocks to bring a generator to Tim and Jono’s parents home to keep the household running. They organised paperwork for Nathan and helped disconnect various services. And they negotiated with Amber’s car insurers and university.

The four friends didn’t know the Spalls before the crisis, but they have since formed lifelong bonds.

Nathan says he doesn’t know where he’d be without the Spalls’ support. “They are unbelievable. I can’t say thank you enough to those two – they are amazing.”

“I’m so grateful for them and what they’ve done in the last few weeks,” says Tim.

Nathan, Amber, Tim and Jono also received assistance from The Salvation Army’s Recovery Centre in the lower Blue Mountains, which is continuing to support those affected communities.

Shoulder to shoulder with communities

Support for The Salvation Army's Bushfire Appeal far exceeded our expectations.

From our own employees and volunteers, to the general public and media personalities, the generosity of Australians allowed us to provide wide-ranging support.

At our Territorial Headquarters in Sydney, which oversees NSW, Queensland and the ACT, employees had a 'red' day at the office and donated to the appeal. Volunteers went out on the streets collecting donations, from city footpaths to venues as large as Sydney's ANZ stadium.

Salvos Stores and Family Stores in the Blue Mountains area, particularly at Springwood, received carloads of clothing, toiletries, household items and food.

Springwood's local Salvation Army church ran the Springwood Winmalee Bushfire Quilt Appeal, gathering more than 1,000 quilts donated from across Australia and distributing these directly to people who lost their homes.

Thanks to the generosity of the local Baptist community, we were able to set up a relief centre at the Springwood Baptist Church, providing a common place for bushfire victims to find assistance.

Many other fundraising efforts went toward our bushfire appeal too. In Penrith, close to the heavily fire-affected Blue Mountains, the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre hosted a fundraising concert, donating house staff and advertising. Artists donated their time, and a percentage of their merchandise sales. An auction on the night raised further funds.

On Queensland's Gold Coast, the V8 Supercar Championships' lead car, part of the Sieders racing team, placed the bushfire appeal logo on their bonnet.

Nova 96.9 breakfast radio hosts 'Fitzy & Wippa' also visited the fire-affected community. They visited The Salvation Army's relief centre and saw the burnt-out streets. More commonly known for their comedic nature, the boys were deeply moved by what they witnessed.

"All these people have been affected, but everyone is so jovial, and they're always looking to the positive things. It's been a real eye-opener and I'm really glad we made the decision to come up here," said Fitzy.

These were just some of the many generous actions of support shown across Australia.

After the fires, Governor General Quentin Bryce toured the Springwood area, spoke with victims and praised the work of all those involved in the relief effort.



Nova 96.9 breakfast radio hosts 'Fitzy & Wippa' help serve meals at The Salvation Army Springwood Relief Centre in the Blue Mountains.

The generous spirit of Australia's quilting community



As the bushfires edged closer to her home, Tracey Greenaway felt helpless. All she could do was sit in her home and wait.

Her house was spared, but many of her neighbours and friends lost almost everything they owned.

"I just felt I had to do something and use the skills I have," she says. "And I can make quilts."

On her blog site, Tracey asked for quilt donations. Within days she received three quilts from Western Australia, and then she was inundated with offers. The Springwood Winmalee Bushfire Quilt Appeal was born.

"People were looking on the internet for somewhere to send quilts, my blog



happened to be there and it snowballed into a massive movement," says Tracey.

In mid-March, an open day was held at The Salvation Army in Springwood. More than 1,000 quilts were on display. The following day, at a private event, those affected by the bushfires were each able to choose a quilt for themselves.

Around 300 knitted and crochet blankets were also donated, along with pillows, sewing kits, cushions, magazines and wall hangings.

"These quilts have come from all over Australia," says Tracey. "Quilters are very generous people."

Shoulder to shoulder with business

On 17 October, on one of the worst days of the disaster, we launched The Salvation Army bushfire appeal. From individual donations to large corporate partnerships, the Australian public generously gave a total of \$11.3 million. These funds allowed us to begin immediate assistance to those affected.

Woolworths partnered with us, offering a point-of-sale donation facility and matched every dollar donated by the public. This brought Woolworths' overall contribution to more than \$4.5 million.

Westpac set up special codes in store, allowing the public to make donations at any of their branches, and in addition donated \$200,000 for our appeal.

The Daily Telegraph, in partnership with the Commonwealth Bank, Crown Resorts and Qantas, donated \$1 from every paper sold on Saturday 26 October to our appeal. Network 10 also partnered with The Daily Telegraph, providing free advertising for the Saturday paper. They were able to raise more than \$300,000.

The Western Australian Government also showed their support, donating \$250,000 to the appeal.

Generous nation-wide donations were made to The Salvation Army via their website and 13 SALVOS. Additional donations were received through Woolworths stores, Westpac branches, Westfield centres, Target outlets, Bunnings Warehouse and other independent fundraising initiatives.

Salvation Army NSW bushfire appeal – as at 9 May 2014

Income	\$ Amount
Bushfire appeal	11,310,008
Other donations	10,857
Donated gift cards	12,900
Total income	11,333,765

Expenditure	\$ Amount
Gift cards – purchased (EFTPOS, IGA)	2,440,000
Gift cards – donated (IGA, Lowes and Amex)	12,900
Welfare payments	2,964,648
Administrative costs including staff and resources	91,407
Springwood recovery project (committed)	4,133,205
Allocation for further grants for individuals and families (committed)	1,691,605
Total expenses and commitments	11,333,765



Photo: Newspix



Photo: The Daily Telegraph

Left: Woolworths offered point-of-sale donations for customers, matching all donations dollar for dollar.

Top Right: Managing Director of ABC Tissues (Quilton), Henry Ngai (right) and wife Jenny, who donated \$100,000 to the bushfire appeal and 450 cartons of tissues

Bottom Right: The Salvation Army Chief Secretary Colonel Richard Munn, centre, accepts a cheque for the Bushfire Appeal from a consortium of benefactors who supported The Daily Telegraph appeal. (From left) Ten Network CEO Hamish McLennan, Qantas CEO Alan Joyce, Crown chairman James Packer, The Salvation Army's Colonel Richard Munn, CBA CEO Ian Narev, News Corps NSW executive general manager Brett Clegg and The Daily Telegraph editor Paul Whittaker.



Shoulder to shoulder in recovery

“Long after the fires are gone and the smoke has cleared, The Salvation Army will still be in these communities, standing side-by-side with those affected. We will help these communities pick up the pieces and begin the long process of healing and rebuilding. We’re committed to walking alongside these hurt communities for as long as it takes.”

– Salvation Army spokesperson Major Jeff Winterburn

The Salvation Army knows that the recovery process after a disaster can be lengthy. We are still working with communities affected by the 2011 Queensland floods and Cyclone Yasi, and the 2013 Bundaberg floods, to help rebuild these broken communities. This will be the same for the bushfire recovery in the Springwood area.

The Australian public invested in us to provide not only immediate crisis assistance, but also long-term support for people affected by these fires. They trusted we would use the money to directly assist those communities. We are honouring that trust.

Six months after the disaster struck, we are moving into the second phase of the recovery effort, with a strong focus on the community.

We are supporting individuals and families who have experienced the total loss of their homes as a direct result of the bushfires.

Grants to assist with rebuilding are available for people choosing to build on their existing block of land. And setup grants are providing people renting outside the disaster area the opportunity to purchase the furnishings they need.

Grants are available for families who wish to send their children to non-school camps. There are grants for people who want to engage in further education to re-enter the workforce because of financial hardships due to the bushfires. Respite grants are supporting families who haven't

been able to get away from the Blue Mountains since the bushfires hit, as well as those who care for elderly or disabled family members.

To help support and oversee our operations during this second phase, we have employed a Recovery Team Leader. This position will be funded through funds raised through the bushfire appeal. We will continue to be transparent in how we distribute this assistance in the long-term.

At the heart of this long-term recovery process are whole communities. We are placing a strong emphasis on community-led recovery in Springwood accessing appropriate local services, building resilience and restoring social functioning using strong support networks.

At our initiative the Springwood community has created a community advisory board, which is assisting the community to rebuild in a functional and healthy way. The board includes representatives from different parts of the community, including the church, health, education, council, and local community members. It will also provide advice on the distribution of donated funds, eligibility criteria, needs identification, governance, terms of reference, a communications strategy, donated funds management and legal processes.

Disasters worldwide have shown that informal social networks and community connections are the most significant source of support for long-term, effective recovery.

We are moving in to our third phase operations, addressing the long-term needs of clients and meeting people at their point of need. This includes rental assistance, house furnishings, tuition fees and further counselling to provide healing and restoration.

The Salvation Army has been in Springwood for more than 50 years providing spiritual, emotional and physical assistance and we will continue to do so even when the bushfire recovery relief is no longer required. We will continue to meet people at their point of need.



Shoulder to shoulder in recovery

Bushfire relief is music to Harry's ears

17 October 2013 is a day Harry and his family will never forget.

Harry was living with his parents in the small town of Winmalee in the Blue Mountains. He was coming to the end of a gap year and getting set to pursue his love of music through a Bachelor of Music at the University of New South Wales.

On that fateful morning, Harry was home alone. His parents were at work in the city, and fire fighters were battling bushfires in the Blue Mountains area.

"I saw all the wind outside and it was pretty crazy. I didn't think there was anything around but I thought I'd better check the website and there was nothing," Harry says.

Throughout the morning, he kept refreshing the NSW Rural Fire Service website page, watching the nearby fires increase in threat. Eventually, he decided to consult with his neighbours, who advised him to contact his parents.

"I called up mum and dad and they said they'd come home, but that it would be fine."

Just 10 minutes later, the knock came at the door to evacuate. Harry grabbed photo albums, a couple of laptops, one of his more expensive guitars, and their pet cat, and was evacuated to the Winmalee shopping centre.

When he left his home, he thought it would be about an hour before the fires would reach his property, if they did at all.

"Turns out I had 15 minutes or so before it came in to my backyard," he says.

Those few precious items Harry took with him were all that survived the fire.

The family home was destroyed, along with precious artwork, holiday memorabilia and important documents. Harry lost his collection of instruments,

including a double bass piano, four basses, guitars, ukuleles and sheet music.

In the days following, his family heard about The Salvation Army relief centre in Springwood but weren't sure what to expect. But thanks to the generosity of the Australian public through the bushfire appeal, they received assistance the moment they arrived.

The family received petrol and gift vouchers to Woolworths and Kmart, and Harry was later able to replace some of his lost instruments through a case grant.

"I've been able to replace two ukuleles and a keyboard that plugs directly in to my computer so I can write music," he says.

Belinda Marriot was the caseworker assisting Harry and his family through the relief centre. This support allowed Harry to start his university studies as planned.

"University is expensive. Harry needed textbooks, a computer and musical instruments to practice for his degree," says Belinda.

Harry has now moved closer to the university, while his parents are planning to rebuild on the same property in Winmalee.

Harry was stunned at the way the community had pulled together, and was thankful to the Australian public who responded to the bushfire appeal.

"All of the support is quite incredible. I really didn't expect it. I thought to myself when I got the assistance, 'does this really happen? What's the catch?' It was just an amazing deed.

I don't think you can express how grateful you are. I can really only say thank you."



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