



Kangaroo Island Fires Twelve Months On

AMANDA AND BEN WHEATON

Cygnets River, Kangaroo Island

At approximately 3am on 10th of January the Ravine fire reached our property and burned approximately 90% of our farm. We are incredibly grateful for the assistance of good friends and the CFS who helped us successfully defend our home, workshop, shearing shed and stored fodder. As a family, with the help of CFS volunteers and farm fire units, we continued to fight fires on the farm until the 23rd of January when a very welcome five millilitres of rain helped extinguish the last of the hot spots.

Two days after the fire front went through the Army were a welcome support. They helped us with the immediate issue of safe access in and out of the farm. With burned trees bringing power lines down and blocking roads the Army came to assess the situation. They tasked their ADF personnel and went to work, cutting trees to clear the road and then removing trees that were burning and threatening the house.

Prince Alfred College Chaplain Rev Mark Dickens who was leading the Padre team was a very welcome companion in the days following the fire. He spent time with us as we grasped the realities of the event. Rev Dickens was an especially important person in William's transition back to school in January. Mark was right there and had experienced our situation firsthand. He was the perfect conduit between us and the school. We are so grateful to the whole Princes school community for their support. We were humbled by the many calls, texts and emails that expressed love and support from the time the fires began on the 20th of December. Twelve months after the event we are still rebuilding but feel positive about our recovery journey.

REV MARK DICKENS

Prince Alfred College Chaplain and Army Reservist

As an active Australian Army Reserve Chaplain, I am fortunate to have the unequivocal support of Prince Alfred College Headmaster, Mr Bradley Fenner. Beginning army chaplaincy in early 2007, this has always been as an addition to my primary ministry appointments. I commenced my chaplaincy appointment at the College in mid-2009.



ABOVE: William Wheaton and PAC Chaplain Rev Mark Dickens

The support from the College was emphasised in January 2020 when I was called upon by the Australian Defence Force to support Operation Bushfire Assist. I was positioned on Kangaroo Island to be the Lead Chaplain, supporting the Joint Task Force Chaplain in Adelaide, who also coordinated the chaplaincy support for the Adelaide Hills. At the height of the ADF involvement on Kangaroo Island, there were an additional five chaplains. Together, our task was to provide support to the members of the ADF and the local Kangaroo Island community.

My position on the Island enabled me to be present to provide pastoral support to the Wheaton family. The Princes connection made this a personal undertaking, knowing that my role at the College would enable me to continue supporting current student, Will Wheaton, throughout the year. It was

pleasing to see him return to school and embrace his studies, with minimal affect from the experience and trauma of the KI fires.

As a result of the review of the ADF response, members of the Australian Army Reserves are now on notice to be ready to assist again in the face of future high-risk weather events.



WILL WHEATON

Vice-captain of Boarding

Amidst the gloom and emptiness of the months of this year's post-bushfire recovery there has been a sense of learning, recovering and strengthening for the Kangaroo Island community. While the fire wreaked havoc and presented a large amount of trauma, it also brought the Kangaroo Island community together, made us realise just how tough we can be and how well we can pull together and get through a tough situation as a whole community. Not only were there developments and realisations made throughout the community, but on an individual level, individuals were taught how to do things such as flagging fence lines with a laser. This is where, with lasers, we mark out where each fence post needs to go, we then place a small flag where the post will go.



College Tour

Join us for a campus tour

Tuesday, 16 March at 9.30am

Wednesday, 17 March at 9.30am

Register at: pac.edu.au

