Thank you

Thank you very much to everyone who contributed material to this book, including written reflections, photographs, poems and art pieces. Due to space limitations it was not possible to include every submission.

Copyright of each piece remains with the contributor.

Language warning

Some articles contain coarse language. This is noted at the beginning of the article.

This book was compiled and edited by Nicole Hall, Project Officer, State Recovery Office on behalf of the Pinery Fire Community Action Group.

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*This page and opposite: Now and then by Peter Wallfried*
Writing a foreword for a book such as this has its challenges. It is impossible in an event as large and devastating as the Pinery fire to acknowledge every person and organisation who has so selflessly supported those affected during the initial response, as well as throughout the resulting recovery program.

The Pinery fire was one of the worst fires experienced in South Australia in living memory. It was not only the size, speed and ferocity of the fire that set its place in the memory of our state, but more so it was the death, injury and destruction it reaped. The fire claimed the lives of two stalwart and much loved local people, Allan Tiller and Janet Hughes, and injured more than 30 others, five seriously. Of the injured, many of those now bear the physical result of the injury, none more than Mr Terry Lee. I know I speak on behalf of everyone who has been involved in the recovery program when I wish all the survivors well in their futures and to the family and friends of both Allan and Janet. They will always be in our thoughts for the loss and sorrow the fire brought to them.

At the beginning of the book we have documented the passage of the fire until it was extinguished. Whilst the images and words in this section may likely upset some, especially those who lost loved ones, were injured or lost their worldly possessions, I believe this section makes the next part of the book — *Road to Recovery* — even more remarkable. Making communities and individuals more resilient into the future has always been the end goal of the recovery program. I know that, for those who suffered as a result of the fire, things will never be the same. But I am sure that their faith in their fellow man has been strengthened and the sense of community in this area has reached a high point. We have focused on providing support and information to build resilience in the area with a view to this helping people through any future challenges they may experience.

I have been absolutely honoured to serve in the role of Local Recovery Coordinator, following in the footsteps of the originally appointed Local Recovery Coordinator, Mr Vince Monterola AM. I was given the opportunity to work with and support some of the most remarkable people I have ever met. Vince and I have often spoken about the amazing individuals and whole communities with whom we have engaged.

Whilst there have been hundreds if not thousands of people who have played an important role in helping the affected communities I would like to single out a few for their personal and collective contributions to what I believe has been a successful recovery program.

- Ms Zoe Bettison MP, Minister for Communities and Social Inclusion and Duty Minister, Pinery Fire
- Ms Ronnie Faggotter, Director State Recovery Office
- Mr Vince Monterola AM, Initial Local Recovery Coordinator
- Ms Sue McCormick, Deputy Director, State Recovery Office
- staff of the State Recovery Office
- Mr Paul Reardon, State Manager, Emergency Relief Services
- the wonderful committed and professional staff of the Recovery Centre (you know who you are)
- Ms Kirsty Dudley, Pinery Fire Recovery Community Development Officer
- Ms Nicole Hall, Pinery Fire Recovery Project Officer (Editor of this publication)
- the Local Recovery Committee and community Action Group. These groups are elaborated on pages 42 and 121.

Throughout the book you will see that many acts of kindness by those supporting others have been captured as part of the ‘Stars in our backyard’ program. This program demonstrated how community spirit and consideration truly comes into its own during adversity.

I trust that the words and imagery in this publication do justice to the life changing experiences of our communities and I close this foreword by expressing the most sincere thanks to all of those I have had the

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**Foreword**

*Alex Zimmermann, Local Recovery Coordinator May 2016 to May 2017*
All about people

Vince Monterola, Local Recovery Coordinator, November 2015 to May 2016

Even though my appointment to coordinate the recovery was made on the day of the fire, and government agencies were mobilised on the same day, it was members of individual communities around the fire ground who set the recovery ball rolling. The relief centres they set up in and around the fire ground were the places where people fleeing the fire headed. It was there they received understanding and compassion, and the first offers of assistance.

Government agencies and pre-arranged non-government agencies also immediately established relief centres where staff, with no less compassion, were able to offer a range of services to people who had suffered loss. They were not the only ones to benefit from this well planned and well resourced government response. Unlike when I last led a recovery, there was no need for me to spend valuable days getting recovery teams and structures and resources in place. These agencies, both government and non-government, had mobilised according to detailed plans co-ordinated by the State Recovery Committee and supervised by the State Recovery Office. They immediately became part of the resources I could coordinate locally.

Another factor which made my role easier was the abundance of people who shared my passion for doing all that was in our power to provide the best and quickest help possible for those needing it. I surrounded myself with such people and thank them for their patience and understanding. Among these people were my Project Officer and Community Development Officer, staff in the State Recovery Office, all members of the Local Recovery Committee, elected and staff members of local councils, leaders of church groups, NGOs and service clubs, individual volunteers, and many public sector employees who worked so tirelessly. It was truly a pleasure to work with so many wonderful people in often trying circumstances.

None of us, that is those who experienced the fire and those who arrived to help afterwards, will forget the fire and its destruction. However we will each have a particular memory which is recalled before all others. The most valuable memory I will keep is of the people I met because of the fire. Over time I am replacing the traumatised and weary faces seen in the first weeks after the fire with the more accepting and hopeful faces seen a few months later. Thoughtful and compassionate faces of the helpers changed a little too as time passed and they began to smile and relax more when they began to see the fruits of their labour. When I combine the stoicism and resilience of those affected by fire with the commitment, compassion and generosity of those who worked beside them in recovery I see the amazing Australian spirit.

In both my private and public sector employment I have enjoyed many interesting and challenging tasks that have provided much personal satisfaction. But even the very best of those fails to compare with the Pinery fire recovery as a truly meaningful activity.

Each time I visit the Pinery fire zone I am impressed by ongoing signs of recovery: regrowth on roadsides and in home gardens, excellent crops, new homes constantly appearing. I hope that families and communities in the area are as encouraged as I feel about the future.

American author and poet Ambrose Bierce when writing of the future said it is that period of time in which our affairs prosper, our friends are true and our happiness is assured. What more could I wish for the future of each person and family I had the good fortune to assist during the early stage of the Pinery fire recovery.

“BURNT EARTH” Limited Edition Fine Art Pigment Print (front cover image cropped)

Mandala of elements collected from the roadside of the Pinery fire-ground edge on 15 December 2015, photographed in the natural Summer light.

Artist Janelle Amos lives in Seppeltsfield, overlooking the Pinery Fire edge near Daveyston, Nain and Greenock. Janelle’s body of work includes ephemeral nature mandalas of foraged natural elements, connecting her human experience to her sense of place in the natural world. Naturally the shock and energy of both Janelle’s personal experience and indeed the collective experience of the community, weaved its way into her work through two emotive pieces. “Burnt Earth”, made from elements collected from the roadside around Daveyston, Nain and Greenock approximately one month after the event, captures the striking intensity of the burnt landscape, and “New Growth” (see back cover) reveals the hope of renewal in the gum trees lining the revisited roadside a month later. Intended as both an action of self-healing and gratitude for the firefighters, Janelle’s mandalas are also intended to honour the lives lost, the earth scarred and the communities still enduring the recovery process.

A donation of $25 is made to the Pinery Fire Community Fund via Foundation Barossa with every print sold. www.selfpollinate.com
Dedication
We dedicate this commemorative book to Janet Hughes and Allan Tiller, who lost their lives in the fire.

Janet Hughes
Janet was born 30 July 1959 in Ely, Cambridgeshire in England and emigrated to Australia with her family in November 1963. She worked for many years with Disability SA and was well respected by her colleagues.

Janet died at approximately 3.06pm on 25 November 2015, just outside Hamley Bridge SA.

She and partner Andrew Lemon, along with son Angus Lemon, were part of the Hamley Bridge Community for 14 years.

Val Hammat (Sister of Janet Hughes)
Janet Hughes was a bright and friendly member of the Disability SA Clare Team. She was well liked by staff and clients and would often find the clients popping into the office for a chat or catching up with her in the main street of Clare when she was running errands.

Janet especially enjoyed developing resources for the clients, which would make a positive difference in their lives. Janet had a strong client focus and this was evident in her work.

We all still miss her wicked sense of humour and infectious laugh.

Kellie Grzywacz (colleague)

Allan Tiller
Allan Richard Tiller. Our Dad. He was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, brother and uncle.

Our family was blessed to have had such a great role model to look up to. He was a quiet, humble and unassuming man who loved his family and farm more than anything else.

Many would fondly remember time spent together sitting around the kitchen bench, agreeing, disagreeing, laughing and fixing all the world’s problems over a coffee. Dad would often ring his mates just to find out how much rain they had, how harvest was going or even just for a general chin wag.

Dad loved the simple things in life and never made a fuss.

As his family we admired and were proud of the work he did in the Pinery, Owen, Mallala and Balaklava communities. This included the Pinery church, CFS, cricket and Hall, Owen football, bowls and Ag Bureau, of which he was a life member, as well as various school and Scout committees in Balaklava.

Dad never had a bad word to say about anyone. And we never heard anyone have a bad word to say about him. Dad gave everything and ultimately gave his life to help others.

Leon, Fiona, Teresa, Kelvin and Jenny Tiller

Right: Allan Tiller with wife Jenny
The fire struck on 25 November 2015, a day of fierce winds and intense heat. It quickly became one of the worst fires South Australia has ever experienced. Whilst this chapter serves to depict the ferocity of the fire through pictures and other information, it also includes some first-hand recollections of those who narrowly escaped the fire's deadly path.
Maps and statistics

Landsat imagery of the fire scar courtesy NASA, 15 January 2016
Progress of the Pinery fire

a. 1.22pm, 25 November 2015
b. 1.50pm, 25 November 2015
c. 3.15pm, 25 November 2015
d. 9.55am, 26 November 2015
Above: The Pinery fire scar in purple and the Sampson Flat fire scar outlined in black overlaid onto a map of Adelaide and the Hills showing the scale of the damage.

Below: Image courtesy Plains Producer and Brett Lehmann photography
A star in our backyard

Freeling Post Office

Allowing people to charge their phones.

Anonymous

A star in our backyard

Russ and Jess

For getting us out safely and staying with Leigh and Geoff to fight the fire.

Marianne

A star in our backyard

Co-workers

Helped put out spot fires and helped my neighbours put out burning shed. They were a calming influence in a very stressful situation. It was much appreciated.

Anonymous

A star in our backyard

Rhiannon – Recovery Centre

We have known Rhiannon since we met her at the Relief Centre the night of the fire. She has been there for us right from day one, caring and supportive.

Helen and Barry Childs

A star in our backyard

Tarlee hotel

A few nights after the Pinery fire the hotel at Tarlee opened their doors for an evening, providing food and drinks to those who had been affected.

Anonymous

A star in our backyard

Early Rise Café, Freeling

Providing food for people and allowing people to charge phones and offering general support.

Anonymous

A star in our backyard

Riverton

To the ladies who helped in the CFS shed and the lovely donation of cakes and desserts.

Margaret S

A star in our backyard

Mr Tim Malberg

When the Pinery fire hit Freeling, Tim led the way to safety — and I, being a ‘panic merchant’, was most grateful to him.

Mrs D Bowkett
A breakdown of the Pinery fire

Provided by the Country Fire Service

On Wednesday 25 November 2015 a fire started at Pinery in South Australia’s Lower Mid North. The fire became the largest crop and grass fire in the Mid North since Tarlee in 1996.

In just one afternoon the fire burned 82,600 hectares. Tragically, two lives were lost and five people suffered critical injuries.

The fire ran in a south-easterly direction and covered nearly 50 kilometres before the forecast wind change, at which time its northern flank became a 40 kilometre long fire-front driven by winds gusting in excess of 50 kilometres per hour. During its south-easterly run, it was reported as spotting one to two kilometres ahead of the fire-front. By about 1800 hours, after the weather change, winds had eased at which time suppression became practical and the fire was contained.

The extreme weather of 25 November, the high fuel loads presented by both standing crops and retained stubble, the terrain and large paddocks all contributed to create a fire that escalated with extraordinary rapidity and which could not be fought.

Many SA Country Fire Services (CFS) resources were dedicated to battling and containing this blaze including more than 1,000 CFS volunteers, staff, farm fire units and hundreds of vehicles, supported by SA Metropolitan Fire Service, SA State Emergency Service and more than 300 fire fighters from Victoria plus aircraft from New South Wales.

The Pinery fire was declared contained on 27 November and controlled on 1 December.

The perimeter of the fire scar was 265.4 kilometres.
Counting the cost

Two lives lost
31 people injured, including five severely injured
82,600 hectares of land destroyed
265.4 km fire scar perimeter
97 houses destroyed
10 houses with major damage
39 houses with minor damage
546 sheds and outbuildings destroyed or incurred major damage
34 sheds and outbuildings incurred minor damage
413 vehicles and pieces of machinery destroyed or incurred major damage
18,000 sheep confirmed lost
54,000 poultry confirmed lost
600 other stock confirmed lost
$30m crops, hay and straw plus paddock feed of $0.25 million (estimate).

As at 30 May 2016, 2,030 insurance claims totalling $172 million had been lodged. 28% of the value of claims was domestic and 72% was commercial.

Support services for bushfire victims

The assist and support those affected by the Fynery Bushfire, the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) have announced its emergency relief centres and commenced home visits. The Gawler Emergency Relief Centre, located at the Gawler Recreation and Sports Centre on Nixon Terrace will remain open 24 hours a day until further notice.
DCSI staff have partnered with Red Cross personnel to offer home visits to meet with those affected by the fire in their homes or accommodation.
Communities, Families, Saved

WAKEFIELD Plains deputy group officers (from left) Glen Bubner, Andrew Ostrum and Todd Robertson, with group officer, Syd Martin. Mr Martin said everyone who assisted with the fires in any way should receive acclaim for their efforts. PHOTO: LIBA REDPATH

Pinery blaze one for the record books

Despite two lives lost and about 90 homes ruined, the toll from last week’s tragic fire could have been so much worse, but for the actions of our local CFS, private fire fighters, and community volunteers. LES PEARSON reports:

An electrical fault on an unused truck is thought to be the cause for last week’s bushfire, which started at Pinery and burned as far as Roseworthy in the south and nearly reached Kapunda in the east.

Wakefield Plains CFS group officer, Syd Martin, confirmed the blaze was not deliberately lit and was completely accidental. It came on an absolute nightmare of a day, as temperatures hovered in the mid to high 30s but wind speeds were recorded between 60 to 80km/h and gusts up to 90km/h.

At a consumption rate proudly estimated at about 300 hectares per minute, last week’s fire sparked at Pinery rewrote the record books as the fastest and most furious in the state’s history.

"There are no ifs, buts or about it," Mr Martin said.

"Some old blokes have talked about the Kalibura-Matilda fire but no many more would say it’s no comparison.

"It’s one of the most horrific things I’ve ever seen and I would like to think no one will ever see anything like that again.

"In the first 14 minutes, I initially thought we might be able to do something with it.

"No matter what resources we had at our disposal at the time, we could not have prevented it burning with the speed and fury that it did."

Continued Page 39
Truro CFS members, Karl Nitschke, Senior Firefighter 2, Rachel Smith, Senior Firefighter 3; Hannah Ziegeier, Lieutenant 3 and Scott Murphy. Brigade Caption are proud with the efforts of the CFS during the bushfires.

Feeding CFS members Wayne Klingberg, Jacqui Malkin, Jack Wingfield, Trevor Heaps, Jodie Klingberg and Greg Martin with (front) Charlie Fletcher and Frank Meaney. They are part of a 30 strong brigade they view as family, growing in number from just eight volunteers before the Sainpol Flat fires.

Images this page courtesy The Leader

Strike team leader, Captain Steve Moan is shown briefing strike team members before their departure.

Victorian strike team.

Background image courtesy Clare Duffield
Our local heroes

FROM THE EDITOR
BY CARLA WEISS-SMITH

Just after midday last Wednesday, CFS reported a grass fire at Pinery in the Lower Mid North.

Little more than 24 hours later, 82,565 hectares — with a local perimeter of 226.6 kilometres — had been decimated by unrelenting flames which mercilessly tore through paddocks and towns.

The destruction would result in the loss of Pinery’s Allan Tiller, 60, and Harley Bridge’s Janet Hughes, 56, and would see 67 homes destroyed or rendered uninhabitable, as well as 366 farm sheds.

Close to 200 vehicles and farm machinery were destroyed, and the rest on animal lives continues to be assessed.

The community rallied immediately after evacuation orders were delivered, those in “safe” areas in the Barossa, Gederie, Light and Mid North regions — and well beyond — opened their homes, and hearts, to the victims of tragedy.

Donations of food, clothing, toys and books flooded in to collection points.

Offers of services for victims to help rebuild have been extended.

Volunteers have banded together to capture and treat injured wildlife, and local vets have thrown most of their resources into caring for pets and livestock.

Community — we talk about it a lot, and there it was. But the true heroes of this district have been the state’s emergency services.

The Country Fire Service, Metropolitan Fire Service, State Emergency Service, SA Police, SA Ambulance — not to mention their interstate colleagues — worked tirelessly around the clock to bring the blaze under control and ensure local residents’ safety.

While the fire has been contained, the site continues to be monitored at hour-long intervals.

Many of the interstate firefighters have now returned home, but their thoughts remain in SA.

One Victorian firefighter told the Herald she had been on several strike teams, but this was the most heart-breaking.

“I cannot stop thinking about the people affected by this tragedy,” she said.

“I spent 26 years as a police officer and I thought I was tough — clearly not. I am currently undertaking studies but could not continue today all I could think of was getting on a plane and returning to Adelaide.

“All the very best to the victims, unite people in the fire-affected areas.”

Volunteers have banded together to capture and treat injured wildlife, and local vets have thrown most of their resources into caring for pets and livestock.

Mr Ken Jenkins, editor or Gannawarra Times, Victoria last week contacted The Leader to kindly provide details of support from firefighters from his area.

He said about 30 of his district firefighters had gone in one of the 10 Country Fire Authority strike teams - 60 trucks and 200 firefighter overall - to Nuriootpa to support the CFS teams and the Barossa and nearby communities.

District firefighters have joined the fight against a deadly bushfire in South Australia.

A Country Fire Authority strike team of 31 firefighters left Kerang last Wednesday morning under the direction of Pyramid Hill brigade captain, Steve Mann.

The strike team comprised five tankers, a field command vehicle, a field operations vehicle, a quick-fill vehicle and a bus headed to Nuriootpa to support South Australian colleagues.

The local strike team is part of a contingent of 200 firefighters and 90 trucks provided by Victoria.

Strike team leader, Captain Steve Mann said that firefighters from across the district had volunteered to assist.

The volunteers come from Bridgewater, Echuca, Fentons Creek, Girgarre, Kerang, Kyabram, Pyramid Hill, Rochester and Rushworth.

CFA Operations Manager, Mr Peter Taylor said that it was humbling that firefighters had volunteered to help provide interstate colleagues with a much needed rest.

The fire tragedy was an ominous warning days before summer following recent fire fatalities in Western Australia.
Who helped out?

1700 personnel including volunteers and staff from the CFS, MFS, SES, Victorian CFA volunteers and farm fire units.

Hundreds of appliances and vehicles, 16 aircraft, including NSW aircraft.
Close calls, emotions and memories

“You never forget the feeling of being trapped in your house as it burns down. And you never stop being grateful to the person that rescued you”.

Ashlee Morgan, Hamley Bridge
A star in our backyard

Ashley Gardner
For staying behind at the Freeling Primary School and keeping the students that couldn’t get home during the Pinery fire, even though his property sustained some damage.

Cindy Ruediger

A star in our backyard

Major Darren and Katie Cox
We would like to thank Major Darren and his wife Katie for giving us a place to sleep and also Katie organising Barry’s medication and getting it to us the next day.

God Bless you both.

Anonymous
Lush recalls his ‘lucky’ fire escape

BY JACINTA ROSE

Fire ripped through John Lush’s property, destroying everything in its path, but the Mallala farmer still says his family is “luckier than we could have been.”

The former SA Farmers Federation president managed to save his home, but the fire destroyed his son’s house next door and took out most of his farm machinery and unharvested crops.

“It’s probably one of the worst fire days I’ve seen in my lifetime. It was pretty horrific – the winds were catastrophic/counter running.”

Despite initial attempts to fight outbreaks in paddocks, he had to flee to safer ground when the firefront approached.

“It burned across the countryside that quick we couldn’t fight it so we just regrouped back at the house.”

“We lost the first house so we moved on to the second one and we were able to save that, just. We’ve lost all our crops, most of our machinery and our house. It’s not good.”

Mr Lush was first aware of the fire not long after it broke out near Penney.

“As it got level with our place the wind turned and came in from the south-west and blew it straight towards us and that’s when we knew we were in big trouble.”

“We tried to fight it as best we could – we’ve got pretty good firefighting gear, an ex-Army fire unit that’s fairly equipped, but we had no hope of fighting this fire, it was just too strong.”

“We drove onto our grain pad which is all gravel and hunkered down and waited until the fire went over, which was horrific.”

“When the actual fire front went through, you couldn’t see the bullbar on the front of the ute when you were sitting in it – the visibility was zero. The wind speed, my guess is 60km/hr. It was just howling through and took dust, embers and flame and everything with it, and for that period of time you couldn’t move, couldn’t see, you couldn’t do anything.”

Once the firefront had passed and some visibility returned, attention turned to extinguishing blazes all around the house.

“We were lucky – or we were luckier than we could’ve been.”

He said neighbours in the surrounding area had fared much worse.

“My son lives next door and he lost this house. Two or three of our neighbours lost their houses on the eastern side, and on the western side there was another five or six houses gone.”

The family was well into its 2000-hectare harvest, but 1000ha of unharvested crops were wiped out. Just one tractor escaped the fire, while several were burnt, along with a header, chaser bin and mother bin.

“He said the road to recovery would be long and hard, but the community spirit was alive and well.”

“Country people and city people have been ringing up and offering any assistance they can. Something like this really brings people together.”

This picture was taken of us reunited at our property at Shea-Oak Log. Our crops were gone and everything was on fire, except our house.

We were so thankful to still have our home and each other. No words will ever describe this day, this feeling.

Nathan and Helen Kalleske
A UNIVERSITY professor used his smart phone to turn on a sprinkler system 3000km away to save his home from a raging fireball which tore through a regional South Australian town.

Charles Darwin University vice-chancellor Simon Maddocks watched the inferno come closer to his farm through webcams set up around his Hamley Bridge property, 80km north of Adelaide.

Yesterday afternoon he became concerned as he watched the thick smoke move closer to his farm.

“I was in meetings yesterday, but I started to take an active interest at around 3pm. I saw the smoke on the cameras and watched it get thicker,” he said.

“When I saw the smoke getting thicker I went and turned on the irrigation system around the house to stop the embers from catching alight.

“I've always had an interest in technology but I wanted to keep an eye on the place. That and some very helpful neighbours is why we still have a house,” Prof Maddocks said.

He said within three minutes the thick smoke darkened the sky and tore through the farm.

Prof Maddocks set up the surveillance system to keep an eye on his property after taking up a position at Charles Darwin University.

He flew to Adelaide yesterday afternoon to survey the damage and support his family.

One person was found dead in a car at Hamley Bridge and fires continued to burn around the township yesterday afternoon.

Prof Maddocks said the damage to his farm was insignificant compared to the loss of lives.

“People have lost their lives so we don’t have a lot to worry about. We had help from neighbours and my heart goes out to the people that are dealing with a lot more,” he said.
Escaping the flames

Larry Sullivan

Note: contains strong language.

On 25 November 2015 I drove unintentionally into the Pinery fire. I left work a bit early as I thought there was thunder and lightning coming. I thought I would try to avoid driving through it by outrunning it. How wrong I was.

I turned onto Daveystone/Freeling Road thinking it was topsoil blowing away. I realised I was in trouble when a big black cloud approached and started moving faster than I was. I turned and headed towards Nuriootpa and that’s when the first firestorm came.

There were accidents in the flames ahead of me and it has become pitch black. I could only follow the tail lights of the car in front of me. I phoned my wife to tell her I loved her and the kids so much, and to say goodbye, as I wasn’t expecting to get out of this alive. As I was driving through the flames, a couple of cars ahead of me rear-ended each other and came to a halt. I then ran up the back of a car, and another one hit me from behind, so I was wedged in. BANG! Out of nowhere there was a head-on collision to my right between a little Corolla and a LandCruiser ute, which just kept driving.

Flames were going over my car, the road was on fire and I couldn’t go anywhere. I just kept yelling to my wife on the hands-free phone, ‘I’m dead. I’m dead. I’m dead. I’m dead. I’m dead. I’m dead.’ My wife kept yelling, ‘Keep moving. Just keep moving!’ I now have that phrase tattooed on my wrist, along with the date it happened.

To this day I don’t know why I did what I did next. I turned the steering wheel into full lock, right hand down, and planted my foot. I wound up facing the other way. The heat and the roar of the fire is something I will never forget as long as I live. So powerful is Mother Nature at her worst.

The Corolla involved in the head-on collision was smashed in at the front and wasn’t going anywhere. The people inside – a man, his young son and their dog - jumped out of their car. I positioned my car passenger side close to them, leant over and opened the back door and yelled at them, ‘Get in, get in!’ We found a paddock at Belvedere Pony Club and waited there, along with another family in another car, until the CFS came and told us it was safe to head back to Freeling.

I have been receiving counselling since the fires and have been diagnosed with PTSD. This is now a part of who I am and I will never again be the person I was before. I have seen things that can never be unseen and been through the unimaginable. But so have many others, some not as fortunate as me. I got through and continue to live. Some did not.

They say everything happens for a reason. I was where I was at that moment for a reason: a five year-old boy, his dad and his dog.

Two days before the fire I named my new dog Jackson, the same name, I would later discover as the man’s son. I was meant to be there!
Reflections

Sharyn Cocks

Our family would like to acknowledge the courage and bravery of Larry Sullivan from Wallaroo. An outstanding individual who put himself in harm’s way to assist others in need. He overcame his own fears and challenges on the day of the Pinery fire, it is only fitting that he is acknowledged for his heroic act even though he doesn’t consider himself a hero.

Paul, Jackson, our dog Mia and bird Harley were in a head-on car crash in Freeling. Larry was at the right place at the right time and unknowingly heading to where he was supposed to be.

Paul was driving on Daveyston Road, Freeling towards Nuriootpa. He saw headlights through the thick smoke on his side of the road, hit the brakes and the car slid on the melted bitumen and into the stationary car. The car reversed and left the scene of the accident, we are sure they were scared for their safety.

Larry witnessed the accident and managed to forcefully break his car free from the other, driving over towards our car to save himself from the flames and save our family from a life threatening experience. Paul saw Larry doing a U-turn and stop so he jumped out, got Jackson out with one arm around him, Mia under the other, making his way to Larry’s open car door. They all got in the back of the car, Larry said there was fire behind where he came from, but there was fire in front too.

Larry was determined to keep moving and drove to a burnt out area, waited and kept watch with Paul while the fire raged around them. The fire front came and went, burning all in its path, our whole vehicle and contents were gone. The CFS cleared a safe passage home 90 minutes later. We thank the CFS for their actions and reassurance.

While the fire took our car, our bird and possessions, we have gained many gifts of friendship and a stronger connection to the community. Due to the actions of Larry and Paul on the day of the fire, our family is still together one year later. Forever grateful, we count our blessings every day.

Reflections

Paul Cocks

Our family would also like to acknowledge the actions of Chris and Vince from Armaguard, who led a convoy on the Sturt Highway at Shea-Oak Log, to the Daveyston intersection, then back onto the highway towards Greenock. Thank you for your bravery and courage to get Sharyn to safety.

I was heading to get Lachlan from care at Hewett after a phone call notifying me of an evacuation as the fire was travelling towards Roseworthy. I travelled along Daveyston Road towards the Sturt Highway as I heard Thiele Highway was being closed. The white smoke appeared on my right, then it turned black, a sign that it was too late to turn back. I got onto the Sturt Highway, after a few minutes the sky started to turn black, my headlights failed to work in the thick smoke to see any cars in front. I saw a vehicle on the side of the road, in the intense conditions I decided to pull off the road to see if the person was okay.

I felt an intense heat and the blackness of the sky glowed red, then lit up, with a huge wall of flames, this was the fire front. I yelled to the lady to turn her car around. Not only were we positioned next to a wheat field, we had no escape as barriers on the highway and big ditches separated us from the other side of road. There was no way I was driving towards a fire or waiting for it to reach me. I, and many others, drove into oncoming traffic, I saw many headlights, It felt like forever. Flames were jumping the road onto the median strip. I managed to get off the road and hit into some road signs, kept driving off the road waiting for a ‘Sign’. It was like hell, a hell full of cars, heat, wind, ash and fire.

The words ‘Today’s not my day’ were repeatedly pouring out my mouth. I heard large pieces of ash hitting my car, the crackle of fire and realised it could be my day. I contacted my family to get Lachlan from care as the fire was heading that way and I was terrified. They managed to organise a friend to pick him up and keep him safe. The feeling of not knowing if your child is safe was the worst feeling in the world. I just couldn’t get to him.

Chris and Vince, I saw your Armaguard van come back up the highway, it was the ‘sign’, the shining light of confidence that I could get through this. I joined the convoy up the highway until I got to Greenock.
Fire, Fire You are a Liar
Jackson Cocks and
Rhianon Marshall

Fire, Fire, You are a liar.
You said you were going to burn me,
But you didn’t.

I thought my car was gone forever,
But I got a new one.

On the day the fire made me feel scared,
But I don’t feel as scared any more.

Larry saved me, Dad and Mia,
Even though he felt lots of fear.

Larry is a hero.
I am so happy to be alive,
I feel like I am swimming in chocolate icing.

The memory garden

The Memory Garden (shown below) in our backyard is a permanent, beautiful and positive reminder that we can nurture.

The colour red and orange (our vehicle and the fire) plants with names like ‘blaze’ and ‘flame’. Lavender for calming, Aloe Vera for healing. A flourishing fig tree represents our combined family’s strength. Blue and white represents Harley, our much loved budgie. Symbols of the heart remind us to smile, dream and hope again. A piece of melted alloy from our vehicle collected on the anniversary day by Larry and Paul that still remained at the scene was a touching addition.
"It can be all fixed"

FREELING’S Kris Taylor was in Angle Vale when he received a call informing him the Pinery fire was heading towards Wastleys.

Mr Taylor, who has rented a property on Templers Road for 17 years, raced home to collect his three dogs, and as he went to leave, the fire was already in a neighbouring property.

“I went into Freeling, and by then, the town was black and you could hardly see,” he said.

Mr Taylor travelled to Kapunda, Ruidunda and then Nuriootpa, before he returned to his home on Thursday afternoon, where he discovered all of his personal belongings had been destroyed in the fire.

“I was given conflicting stories as to whether the house was burnt to the ground, but it certainly did a good job of going through the house,” he said.

“There were a couple things that were sentimental to the family, but I’m okay and the dogs are safe. It’s only materialistic things that have gone up, but that can all be fixed later on.”

Freeling’s Kris Taylor rushed home to find it had been destroyed.

Tremendous bravery

TREMENDOUS bravery from staff working at the Hamley Bridge Memorial Hospital last Wednesday saved the facility from burning in the Pinery fire.

Hamley Bridge Memorial Hospital executive officer David Adcock praised his staff for their courage as the fire burned within metres of the back of the building.

“The staff took all measures required that they had learnt from the training provided, but still had to physically fight this fire without support, as the emergency services were caught on the other side of the fire,” he said.

“There were no injuries to clients or staff, just some very sore bodies from fighting the fire.”

Some damage was sustained to the building, as a small fire broke out in the corner of the laundry roof, however this was put out when a water pipe in that area gave way.

Mr Adcock also thanked the community for its support over the past week.

Amelia Dawkins

Pure luck

BARABBA’S Sophie Haigh says it is pure luck her house is still standing after the ferocious Pinery fire burnt through her property.

Ms Haigh lost her three horses and a hay shed in the blaze, but was amazed to find her cat and dog had both survived when she returned to her property.

“I didn’t even think it was going to come here at all, everyone said it was going the other way,” she said.

Ms Haigh, who was at work near Roseworthy when the fire began, managed to meet up with friends near her property, and the group eventually reached Balaklava.

“I was on the phone to mum bailing my eyes out because I was driving in pure darkness,” she said.

“No-one had time to grab a thing, we literally had nothing, except the cars we were driving.”

Sophie Haigh lost three horses and a hay shed in the Pinery fire, but her house near Barabba was spared.
Canola stubble no aid for Rohdes' lost stock

JOHN and Angela Rohde, who live near Tarlee, are counting their stock losses after the Purney fire ripped through their property last Wednesday.

While they lost about 1,000 hectares of crop, they also lost 1,500 sheep, 1,000 ewes and 600 lambs. They had finished weaning their lambs and had brought out machinery from the paddock and as it was a bad day, one worker had gone home to protect their own homes near Wistow, John said.

The lambs were on the best stubble and the ewes on canola stubble on paddocks south of the property.

When the wind changed that afternoon, the fire headed straight toward Rohde's property.

“Smoke was so bad we couldn’t see, but once that cleared and we could actually see the fire, we could then fight it,” John said.

While many people think canola stubble would be less of a fire risk than this year's wheat stubble, the fire disproved that myth.

The early fire was ferocious, particularly through the canola stubble where the ewes were.

John estimated about 80 per cent of the ewes died in the fire, while the remaining 20 per cent were humbly put down and buried by John and some neighbours the next day.

“We have had great support from the locals here, particularly with the stock losses,” he said.

Thankfully, their home, machinery and large chicken sheds were not destroyed by the fire.

Kochs provide community with vital break

WERE it not for the outstanding work of the SES, a hastily erected firebreak by local farmers, driving the George and Dicky Kochs, Stockport residents were having none of it.

Dennis and Dianne Berman both described the survival of the town as miraculous.

“It was as if someone had taken a pen and marker and drawn a line around the town, right up to each house,” Dianne said.

Dennis said while the Kochs were doing the firebreak around Stockport their own homes were surrounded by fire. They lost several sheds and a lot of machinery.

Dennis had fled with his son and grandchildren to Kapunda, before their car ran out of fuel.

“Without this firebreak the town would have been destroyed,” he said.

Dianne said while the fire was burning they were having a great time.

“We had some good times, but there was no point in being sentimental,” she said.

There was also a great deal of support from the community.

“People have been wonderful, they are looking after us,” Dianne said.

“Without their help, the town would have been destroyed,” Dennis added.

The SES, local farmers, school children and many others worked tirelessly throughout the night.

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The SES, local farmers, school children and many others worked tirelessly throughout the night. 
"The worst ever"

HAMLEY Bridge CFS volunteers say the Pinery fire was the worst they have ever battled.

One crew, whose truck caught on fire twice on Wednesday, once in a wheat paddock near Pinery and again in Barabba, could not believe the sheer ferocity and speed of the fire.

Hamley Bridge CFS volunteer Steve West said his crew, like so many others, was probably lucky to be alive.

"Because we had so much wheat underneath the truck, it just set it alight," he said.

"The sprinklers worked fantastic for about 30 seconds and then the pump seized."

"Fortunately, the fire front was moving that fast, otherwise we might not be here today."

Mr West, who has been a CFS volunteer for eight years, said he had never seen anything like the Pinery fire.

"There’s no comparison, none whatsoever," he said.

"I’ve talked to people that have been in the CFS for 30 years and they’ve never seen nothing like this."

"I said to our group officer that this will probably go down in history, because it just burnt so much."

Mr West added there was no way the fire could be stopped on Wednesday when it began.

"What we really needed was a break in the elements, but we just never got that," he said.

"We got that last year with the Sampson Flat fire, but we just never got that here."

- STEVE WEST

ADVERTISEMENT

Pinery fires

The Pinery fires have been devastating to the Adelaide Plains and Mid North communities. My thoughts and condolences are with all those who have lost family and friends, have suffered personal injury or have lost property, pets and livestock.

The Country Fire Service (CFS), other emergency services and the local community have done a tremendous job fighting the fire under extreme pressure.

It has been encouraging to hear stories of the community rallying together and putting themselves out to assist others in need.
The morning of November 25, 2015 was a morning the same as any other. I prepared my animals for the high winds predicted and kissed my now husband goodbye as he left for work. Driving out the driveway, I wouldn’t have thought I would have to prepare for what happened that horrible afternoon.

I left work after receiving the terrifying news about the ‘wildfire’ in Pinery making its way to Wasleys. It really hit me when I met my husband at home. Pitch blackness, thick smoke, animals racing around frantically. I just knew I had to save my pets.

I loaded the car with the two dogs and my cat and tried ever so hard to catch my five mini horses as quick and calmly as possible. They were pretty much shoved onto the float. I looked over to see our beautiful, beloved pet cows huddled in a circle. In the middle of that circle were the pet sheep, calf, my mini goat and donkeys. It was truly the most heart breaking thing to watch the large animals take care of the little ones, preparing themselves for the worst day of our lives.

Having to say goodbye to my husband has to be the most painful time I have ever had to endure. After being trapped and almost being lit ablaze, we managed to turn around and were told to sit tight. For the next four hours we sat in the middle of the intersection 50 metres from home, not knowing if my husband was alive, or whether we’d make it out.

It has almost been a year since the Pinery fire came through our property. Paddocks have now been sown, tractors and sheds replaced, sheep have lambed, trees have started to reshoot and the ute is definitely muddy!

You can never truly prepare for something like the Pinery fire, but it is truly amazing the friends you make and how close communities can become after such a nightmare.

I am looking forward to a fresh season with luscious hay for the horses, cows and livestock, while preparing ourselves for the dust storms and memories of what happened almost a year ago. There is a light at the end of the tunnel and hope that soon things will start to go back to normal.

To the CFS, ‘thank you’ will never truly be enough for the pain you have suffered helping others who needed it most. Almost one year on we are all still dealing with the outcome of this dreadful day but making more out of the days we get to spend on Mother Nature’s grounds.

During the fire and one year on

J Standish

Above left: The blaze in the wheat paddock opposite the house. Above right: Limited vision. Images courtesy J Standish
Reflective Embers

Angie Henbest

The talons of a relentless heatwave ravish dominion over all.
Searing heat, rendering all creation parched and sweltering:
A perilous pervasion of all in its grasp:
Indomitably poised, yet dangerously pulsating.

Then, as though conspired in a calculated strategy of destruction,
A blistering wind unleashes its fury; wild and malevolent:
Inviting calamitous demons to consummate the hazardous union.
Scourge of all living; igniting danger to erupt in unbridled devastation.

Whipped to ferocity: A blazing, accelerating inferno.
Tower walls of flame devouring all in their path:
Indiscriminately squandering life and livelihood.
Overpowering and outwitting the cleverness of mankind.

Billowing pinnacles of smoke, ash, death and darkness,
Like the wrath of hell unleashed: The breath of fire.
A raging furnace, all devouring; all consuming.
The dread of the Australian summer in all its fullness.

A residual smouldering path of destruction
Testifies to the terror and plight of all that have succumbed.
Lives perished, homes destroyed, communities lost –
And so it is them, in the midst of tragedy:
Lest it could be us – But by the grace and mercy of God.

In rural areas none of us are immune from the threat of fire in the heat of the Australian summer.
Personally, living in a neighbouring area of open bushland, the harsh reality of such a wildfire ravaging across vast expanses of farmland affecting communities and livelihoods brings heartfelt thoughts and reflection:
It could so easily happen to any of us.

Angie Henbest
Lost Memories

*Maurissa Watson*

They sat bewildered contemplating their loss
A lifetime of memories they felt so cross
Their eyes filled up flooded with tears
Things they had treasured for many years
Gone from their grasp in a blink of an eye
They sat there trying to understand why
The children’s first favourite toy
A little car belonging to their boy
Photos of wedding day. Babies first born
Gone forever feeling so forlorn
It’s hard to imagine what they are going through
Feeling so terribly sad and blue
They have to start again to rebuild their life
Try to get past this terrible strife
But with all the heartache and pain they endure
They will plod on, of that I am sure.

A star in our backyard

*Wendy Williams*

Endless fundraising. Joined the Pinery fire Recovery Committee to help those in need. Whilst her work commitments include running a café and organising meals for Habitat volunteers, she still finds time for the Pinery Fire Recovery Committee.

*Ricky Huckshold*
Ordinary Heroes
Zoe May (15 years old)

November 25 will be forever eternal
The grave surprise that we will remember
As the tragic disaster that we survived
The terrible fire that travelled faster and faster
And aggressively covered more land
Than the previous

How it began, nobody knows
But everyone knows the disaster that arose
When the flames burst up
And whipping wind took hold
Causing the biggest fire between near and far
On the dreadful day in 2015

It began in a paddock slightly north west
From here came the tragic onslaught of damage
With intense orange flames
And immense black smoke
Annihilation of homes from there to Aerodrome road
And it still burned

There was a lack of knowledge
Confused and worried
Crackling flames a soundtrack to the madness
Avoiding the fire tornadoes swirling nearby
Some 40 feet high
Live stock alight, trembling with fright
Utes frantically searching for water with embers raining down
Driving around in endless circles
Evacuation rush huge fear
Of a brush with death
Clouds of smoke, starting to choke, vehicles going for broke

The road was like dodgem cars
But it was real and dangerous
Collapsing nearby were trees and buildings
Sirens in a symphony, sounded by interstate furies
Helping ours defend towns and homes
Fighting mother nature at her strongest
Brothers in arms united by the danger
Threatening us

When it was gone and the damage was done
The devastation had only just begun
The land was like a desert, topsoil creating dust storms
Truly unrecognisable and utterly depressing
Dozens of families went home to ruins
Communities coming together
To support those in need
To lend a hand and offer a feed
Or offer a bed and a warm shower
But we could offer no light as the power was out
And out it stayed for two nights and days
But we survived

My best friend’s home burnt down
It became a pile of tin on the ground
Generations of farming lost in minutes
They lost everything but the clothes on their back
For there was no time to pack
But she found the good amongst the bad
She said with a sad smile
“At least now we can get a new house”
And until they get a new house
They are living with us which is great
As we give love and shelter
Friendship and optimism
And support when needed
Ordinary Heroes (continued)

But the true inspiration stems from them
Demonstrating courage to last a lifetime
Creating hope in hopeless times
Finding light in the darkest hour
Shining bright like a star after midnight
Their strength is admirable
Their qualities are invaluable

The heroes of that day are unduly recognised
Helpful acts that are truly kind
Donations to save animals
And locating lost loved ones
Giving much needed Christmas gifts
And Blaze Aid still contributing
These small deeds mean so much

And they demonstrate
The comradery and Aussie spirit
That we value
Resulting from this desolation
I have come to the realization
That heroes come in different forms
A teacher, a parent or even a child
They only need one thing in common
A selfless act towards someone
Donation, assistance or volunteer work
These deeds turn an ordinary person
Into a hero

November 25 will be forever eternal
The grave surprise that we will remember
As the biggest fire between near and far
On that dreadful day in 2015
Nan and Pappy’s house and sheds after the fire had passed

Pappy with the burnt roof timber

Some of the damage to Nan and Pappy’s farm

The roof being replaced after the fire
My Pappy and the fire

Will Patterson

Thank you to Newton and Sue Lines’ 10-year-old grandson Will Patterson for sharing the presentation that he gave at his school in 2016.

On 25 November last year the Pinery fire devastated the Adelaide Plains. Investigators are still solving how the fire started but by the time the fire was finished 85,000 hectares was burnt out, 91 houses and 300 sheds were destroyed, and two people died in this tragic event.

My grandparents are farmers and their farm was in the fire. This is how my grandfather, or Pappy as I call him, saved their home from the fire.

When Pappy realised their farm was in the line of the fire he had 45 minutes to act. He said he wasn’t scared, he just went into survival mode and did what had to be done.

The most critical thing was to save the house. He did this by putting sprinklers on the lawn, shifting furniture away from windows, rolling up blinds, and filling the gutters with water.

The farmhouse has wide brick walls so Pappy knew the safest place to be while the fire passed was inside the house. As the fire approached Pappy waited in the kitchen and watched it come towards him.

After the fire had passed Pappy went outside and the heat was unbelievable. Something was stinging his legs and he realised that it was hot embers.

After quickly checking the sheds, Pappy saw the roof of the house was on fire. He got up into the roof space and used the garden hose to put out the roof fire. If Pappy had not stayed to defend and put out the fire in the roof the house would have been destroyed. Definitely.

Nan and Pappy’s farm was totally burnt out by the fire. They lost 25 kilometres of fencing. The header that is used for harvesting was destroyed. Of their 122 sheep only 45 lived. Two sheds were destroyed and countless trees were burnt down.

Since the fire there has been a dust storm nearly every day. They need a big rain to settle the dust and for plants to grow back.

Pappy and Nan are lucky to still have their home. Some of their friends had their houses totally destroyed by the fire. Pappy said these friends still look devastated and for him life will be back to normal when he sees his friends with a happy smile on their faces.

My brother and me with our Pappy at the farm.
You can see a dust storm in the background.
Night of the Fire

Symbolism:
- red heat
- black smoke

Spot fires, embers
Fires burning trees
Feerie feel
The fields burn
Feerie, black trees
Twisted metal

Dead plants
Scorched zebras
Fire
Red, yellow, heat

Birds in the sky
Animal totems
Creatures of the fields
Mystical black birds

Looking out shoulder
Looking to future, new direction
Positives, but a lump in throat
Butterflies - unquestionably embrace changes in their life

Mystery, good vibes?

Cheryl BridgARt

Pinery bushfire - Mobiloil Farm
Nov 25, 2015

Three black birds - symbolic
Curiosity, they watch us, mystery

The grey scribbles of the wind
Smoke, transition, self-renewal

65 x 75 cm
After her partner John Marshman’s 5th generation farm at Mallala was destroyed on 25 November, Cheryl, a full time professional artist, could not sleep and began to draw her feelings.

The freely embroidered work below, Night of the Fire, represents her journey and the challenge of cleaning up, rebuilding and moving on. Three mysterious black birds, the look outs, feature in all the resulting art created after the fire for her SALA solo exhibition in 2016.

Images courtesy Cheryl Bridgart. Opposite page: The sketch created on the night. Below: Night of the Fire (free embroidery on canvas 75 x 65cm)
The Davies farm in Grace Plains. Top: The fire passing through the back paddock of the farm. Bottom: The back paddock taken the next day. Images courtesy Roger Davies.
A star in our backyard
Don Bubner
For all he did for the people of the Pinery fire and for being the man he is.
Pat Mcann

A star in our backyard
Alex and Jordan
Cutting short your honeymoon to come home and support us.
Marianne

A star in our backyard
Ricky, Josh and Hamley CFS
Allowing me to bring myself and horse into CFS shed for shelter and for checking my paddock to see if it was safe to return.
Haley

A star in our backyard
Rhynie
To the wonderful men and women who helped in the CFS shed and for the pizza oven to cook the donated pizzas for the firies dinner break.
Margaret S

A star in our backyard
Kris and Mick Thatcher
Evacuating our Bella dog and taking excellent care of her. Also for trying to evacuate our Lilly cat as well. Endless thanks xx
Jean

A star in our backyard
BlazeAid volunteers
Helping residents rebuild their fences etc. Such a wonderful group who pop up where needed. Thank you
Jenni

A star in our backyard
Brendon and Pat Bell
Their caring, kindness and generosity, right from the start.
Helen and Barry Childs

A star in our backyard
All CFS
Saving us all and keeping our spirits up. They are all ONE IN A MILLION. P.S. Be safe.
Julie Hanns

A star in our backyard
Britt, Gator and Joel
Keeping our spirit and hopes alive and all you have done and continue to do for us.
Marianne

A star in our backyard
Freeiling town
Kindness, support, love, empathy from many people in this small town that helped us after the fire; from meals, clothes somewhere to live etc. Far too many to name.
THANK YOU.
Glenys Roberts

A star in our backyard
Fay
Praise be to God that Fay came and told us there was a fire and kept us informed as to where and when to go for safety.
P and B Finch

A star in our backyard
Wasleys Ridley Arms Hotel
Organising two amazing functions in support of the Wasleys community. A place to share a hug and a few tears.
Dawn and Lewis
Emergency over, now the chaos of clean-up begins

VERITY EDWARDS
MICHAEL OWEN

Handyman Steve Emery and his wife Joanne lost everything in a devastating bushfire north of Adelaide that has left two people dead, five critically injured and more than $61 million in property damage.

The Emerys were among shocked members of small farming communities in South Australia’s mid-north who yesterday began returning to survey the damage as tributes flowed for Allan Tiller, 69, found dead in a paddock, and Janet Hughes, 56, who died trapped in her car as she tried to reach her partner Andrew Lemmon at the height of the bushfire emergency on Wednesday.

Hundreds of firefighters from across the country helped the state’s Country Fire Service to yesterday contain the fire, which started on Wednesday and rapidly grew to a 265km perimeter.

Mr Emery said he and his wife had lost their home, antique and handyman businesses, a vintage car and their cats.

“We had 15 minutes; we couldn’t go south, we took dirt roads,” Mr Emery said. “It was so black I couldn’t see where I was going and there were hot embers blowing over the car.

“My wife was following behind and we were driving 100km/h, I couldn’t tell you how horrible it was.”

The couple, who migrated to South Australia from Britain in 1997, bought their sandstone house at Magdalla, between Wasleys and Hamley Bridge, seven years ago.

“I never cried so much in all my life,” Mr Emery said. “Living in Australia you have to expect it, but you don’t think it’s going to happen to you, you think you’re going to have more warning than 15 minutes.”

They were not alone.

Hamley Bridge father of four David Ireland said he was lucky he had not yet bought his children their Christmas presents after losing everything else in the fire, including their home.

“We were all out fighting the fires, but the wind came so quick,” Mr Ireland said, as he sorted through rubble yesterday, salvaging a barbecue. “We tried to get back here three times, but we couldn’t get through.”

More than $61m in insurance claims have already been lodged.

Insurers have received more than 400 claims related to the blaze, which as of yesterday had destroyed 87 homes, more than 384 farm sheds, 98 vehicles and 89 pieces of farm machinery. More than 27,000 animals died.

Bushfire and Natural Hazards Co-operative Research Centre chief executive Richard Thornton said that this month’s fatal fires in Western Australia and South Australia reflected a worrying trend of Australian fire seasons starting earlier and ending later.

“There are a number of concerning things about this year, in particular,” Mr Thornton said.

“We have about 10 years of below-average rainfall and ended up with very dry subsoil. A number of months of this year have been the hottest on record ... we need to be vigilant.”

Investigators have found the point of the fire’s origin, but are still working on what started it, although police ruled out arson.

Hundreds of firefighters will continue to monitor the fire and tackle hotspots at the weekend.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING:
JACOB POLYCHRONIS

Steve Emery and his daughter Carolyn sift through the ruins of his wife’s antique business at Magdalla near Hamley Bridge in South Australia

Courtesy
The Australian
ROAD TO RECOVERY

Image: Barb wire circle in field, by Peter Wallfried
In this chapter, personal reflections, creative contributions and editorial snapshots aim to capture the Pinery recovery journey. People chose to express themselves in various ways; from painting, craft and embroidery, poetry and prose to mandalas created from nature, such as those seen on the front and back cover.

The recovery effort encompassed a number of community projects and events. This chapter touches on those initiatives and acknowledges examples of the financial generosity, community goodwill and sheer resilience of those impacted by the fire. It also recognises the many good deeds of those from outside the fire scar who just wanted to help in any way they could.

Local Recovery Committee

The Pinery Fire Local Recovery Committee was formed immediately after the fire to bring together key members of government agencies, non-government agencies, local councils and community leaders.

Chaired by the Recovery Coordinator, the committee met 24 times over the recovery period to guide recovery initiatives and especially to gain invaluable feedback on the support needed by residents. A total of 25 recovery newsletters were distributed to the affected community.

A large number of organisations were represented on the committee, some for a designated period of time, and others for the duration of its existence. The committee provided a central point for addressing issues including waste management, health and well-being, asbestos concerns, financial assistance, environmental matters, practical workshops and events and much more.

Throughout the recovery process, the community’s perspective remained at the core of all deliberations of the committee.

The work of the Local Recovery Committee and the Community Action Group has been nothing short of remarkable. They have never wavered in their commitment. They were always there to provide the information and insight into what their communities needed. We worked together to solve issues as they arose, not only for individuals, but for whole organisations. Government, local government and non-government all stood up, shoulder to shoulder for the good and well-being of those we were charged with helping.

To each and every one of those people and organisations who played such an important role I express my sincerest thanks as I know that, without this extraordinary cooperation, there would still, to this day, be an enormous number of people who would be floundering to rebuild their lives.

The initial leadership of Mr Vince Monterola AM was exemplary. His energy, professionalism, commitment and above all, passion were infectious. He played a most significant role in us achieving the outcomes we see today. On behalf of all of those with whom you interacted I sincerely thank you Vince for the positive difference you have made for the victims of this fire.

Alex Zimmermann
Pinery Fire - the road to recovery

Last November's Pinery Fires wreaked havoc in the local community with those affected now facing a long road to recovery.

Helping with the daunting task is a special committee that has been working behind the scenes, meeting fortnightly since it was formed just days after the fire.

Members of the Pinery Fire Local Recovery Committee come from the fire affected communities and include local council, specialist providers, churches and government and non-government organisations that best suit the needs of the area.

Ms Kirsty Dudley, Pinery Fire Community Development Officer, said the Committee was established to provide a forum for the Local Recovery Coordinator, Mr Vince Monterola, to facilitate the recovery process.

"It's function is to bring all service providers together and connect with some key community leaders to ensure that there is an awareness of what various service providers are doing, what stage their delivery of services is at, new issues can be identified and a response planned accordingly," said Ms Dudley.

The Light Regional Council area's committee not only deals with programmed recovery response but also other issues that arise and with so many varied needs coming to their attention, Ms Dudley said helping people understand how communities respond after a disaster was the most common request.

"They wanted to know what to expect. They know they are at the beginning of a long process of recovery and they needed some information on what they need to be aware of and prepared for," she said.

Specialist disaster recovery psychologist, Dr Rob Gordon has given a number community presentations supported by Red Cross that have been so well received that he will return for more sessions on April 6 and 7.

"He highlighted the differences between the ways men, women and also children deal with the trauma of a disaster and that the key to a good recovery for communities is staying connected and ensuring that amongst the hard work that comes with the clean up and rebuilding, to ensure there are opportunities for relaxation and that other fun," she said.

With the Pinery Fire affecting four council regions, Light Regional Council, Wakefield Regional Council, District Council of Mallala and the Clare and Gilbert Valley Councils, the former Tourism Barossa board member and Light Regional Council employee said her role is extensive.

"It is really to listen to the Communities in the affected area and then facilitate or support initiatives, projects and programmes in the recovery effort of all of the communities involved," Ms Dudley said.

She was concerned that people who know little about the Recovery Committee may be the same people they are yet to reach.

"If a friend or neighbour could be one of those people, please... encourage them to call the Pinery Fire Recovery Centre on 0477 744 258," she urged.

Four months after the fire, the local community still has a major part to play in the recovery process.

Ms Dudley recommends people stay connected, keep meeting and keep communicating.

"Keep an eye out for your family members; your husbands, wives and your neighbours," she said.

“A Pinery Fire Recovery Community Action Group has just been brought together to act as a community conduit, shaping and supporting the programmes, events or other activities that will be occurring around the affected region.

“There are going to be numerous opportunities to connect through community projects, events and programmes and I'd encourage people to join in.”
Volunteers

BlazeAid comes to town
Wendy Cope, Coordinator of BlazeAid’s Roseworthy camp

November 25th 2015 will stay etched in our minds as a result of the devastating Pinery fire.

Usually we need 30 land owners to register for assistance before we set up a camp and get co-operation from councils etc. The Pinery fire was an exception. Kevin Butler, BlazeAid’s founder and a farmer himself, knew a camp would be needed and immediately set things in place. As registrations increased one camp quickly became two: one at Hamley Bridge Football Club and one at the Adelaide University Roseworthy Campus.

We had 11 ‘combat ready’ trailers in SA throughout the Adelaide Hills, which the Toyota Land Cruiser Club generously towed to Roseworthy on 3 December 2015.

Volunteers arrived in a constant stream, many renewing friendships from previous camps. These included doctors, a dentist, a politician, a priest, a pilot, a farmer and even a magistrate. Everyone was there for the same reason: to help people recover. Approximately one third of volunteers were female and this year we had long-term volunteers in their 70s and 80s.

Affectionately named the ‘orange angels’ due to their orange safety vests, these amazing people provided a friendly ear and helped lift farmers’ spirits as they got on with the job and forged a way forward through a seemingly overwhelming task.

Early in the piece a group of concerned friends sat around a table wanting to lift the spirits of the community. They decided to hold a cricket game at the Long Plains Recreation Ground. Community members in Two Wells, Mallala, Balaklava and Long Plains organised the event. They drew on people from the entire fire ground, as well as some well-known sports identities, to make up the teams and on 13 December 2015 BlazeAid on the Plains was held.

This found arch rivals Mallala and United Football Clubs working together for a common cause. The decision was made that 100% of the proceeds would be donated. On that very hot day there was food, drinks and entertainment by John Schumann and the Vagabond Crew. Auctions of wines, agricultural supplies, plumbing goods, sporting equipment, clothing and holidays helped to raise $120,000. The decision was made to give all funds raised to BlazeAid, resulting in six fully equipped trailers being purchased and made in Gawler and stocked locally.

At the evening debriefs volunteers became good naturally competitive when it came to the work completed that day, from distances of fencing and clearing, the number of posts put in, wire run out and attached, to the quality of their lunches. We learned that when they said they only had vegemite sandwiches this was code for ‘we had a really good lunch but we are not telling as we want to stay on that job’.

On Saturday nights we invited the property owners we worked with to join us for a meal. For many it was the first time they had been out socially since the fire. These evenings could be emotional but there were a lot of laughs too.

This is the first year we have had tractors made available, Massey Ferguson and Case IH made post hole digging a lot simpler for our teams. We were also most grateful to the tractor operators who answered the call we put out through the ABC.

One of the most amazing things for BlazeAid is the community support. We received donations of food, meat, groceries, drinks, cakes, biscuits, fruit and vegetables and more. The service clubs, churches, and even schools were all ready and willing to assist.

We asked the local community to help with catering, preparing one meal a fortnight on roster and on many occasions we were able to offer the food donated to us. Theresa in Gawler kindly coordinated these groups. One lady from a service club who helped with meals on a regular basis said she loved doing it as we included them throughout the evening.

There are so many wonderful people that helped us in our work. As BlazeAid’s Patron, Ian ‘Macca’ McNamara from ABC’s Australia All Over supported us with updates, appeals for volunteers and visits to the camps. The incredible Gordon Family known as Tamarisque lost everything yet they still came to play for us. Their dear friend Eric Bogle came too and silenced the crowd when he sang The Band Played Waltzing Matilda, a song he penned in 1971. We also thank Barry Swann, who penned Blazin’ Away, a song about our volunteers.

I would like to draw attention to a particular donation that came to us from a local company many of you will know, Ahrens Engineering. They had extra staff at the time and, while most companies might have stood staff down or reduced their hours, they sent six employees to work with BlazeAid on full pay, some for two weeks others for eight weeks.
What a wonderful gesture to support the people that support you. Take a bow Stefan Ahrens.

Finally and just for the record the eleven original trailers sent from Victoria to start us up in South Australia in 2014 were returned to assist Tasmania in their need with recent floods. However our fleet will be back to twenty three courtesy of the donations from CMV, Viterra, grain donations from individual farmers, The West End Brewery Fund, Ride for BlazeAid, Arkaba Hotel, and as previously mentioned The Long Plains Event. These new trailers are being made in Gawler. We also acknowledge the response from the corporate sector and the State Recovery Office.

In closing we need to acknowledge the huge effort of the volunteers. Many of them used their own vehicles to transport teams and tow trailers to various properties. They had huge hearts and incredible empathy. Some put in long hours for the duration of the camp, others did whatever hours they could, but every single volunteer was equally valuable.

In total BlazeAid deployed 707 volunteers who worked on 202 properties, completed 6,940 days of work, cleared 590 kilometres and erected 364 kilometres of fencing — an amazing effort! To each and every volunteer we say thank you.
BlazeAid Volunteers
Maurissa Watson

BlazeAid came to our town in November 2015
To help out our community where the fire storm had been
Fences gone and burnt out trees, paddocks completely bare
They came to help resurrect what was no longer there
Chain saws fired up to cut down the blackened wood
Wire and posts were replaced, they really did us good
Hot and dusty were the days the wind did not relent
They worked so very hard, despite what elements were sent
We are so very grateful, words cannot say how we feel
Even now after 5 long months it still feels so surreal
These lovely men and women give up their time for free
To help in times of desperate need, to help both you and me
So with a hearty thankyou and with a tear in our eye
We can wish these volunteers farewell, and not goodbye
John, Mary and your teams we wish you all the best
To have you here to help us we have surely been blessed
Good luck to you all now as you leave to go on your way
We will always be grateful and think of you each day.

Jackson Pollock tries to mend a fence by Peter Wallfried

A star in our backyard

Greenhalgh family
This family gave us a Backyard Blitz. They worked over a number of weekends to help clean up our front house yard and around the sheds.
Angela O’Loan

A star in our backyard

Our amazing Fay
Working daily for weeks from sun up to sun down, up to her elbows in ash, soot and burnt everything. Also working endlessly in our garden on weed patrol. She truly is a blessed friend to have.
Dawn and Lew

Dawn and Lew Greenhalgh family
This family gave us a Backyard Blitz. They worked over a number of weekends to help clean up our front house yard and around the sheds.

Angela O’Loan

Our amazing Fay
Working daily for weeks from sun up to sun down, up to her elbows in ash, soot and burnt everything. Also working endlessly in our garden on weed patrol. She truly is a blessed friend to have.

Dawn and Lew

Jackson Pollock tries to mend a fence by Peter Wallfried
Rebuilding within the fire scar

*Emilis Prelgauskas, Independent Building Advisor*

The experience of each member of the community following the fire is unique.

During the recovery process, planners, architects, engineers and heritage advisers have been there to offer rebuilding advice and support. Common first concerns when it comes to discussions about rebuilding are insurance, approval processes and contract matters. Support is individualised to suit the person’s emotional and broader situation. This can sometimes mean simply offering an empathic ear.

The aim is for each person to be well informed, giving them the capacity to make their own decisions and move forward with confidence. Advisers visit people by invitation only, and remain contactable over an extended time frame. This allows families to take the necessary steps in the most suitable order for them, and at their own pace. Some of these steps include:

- Review value of assets and land in a broad context, while considering places on the property that have become a ‘blank canvas’.
- Consider individual buildings as repairable or replaceable, either through a standard build, an owner build, or a remotely-made kit or transportable.
- When occupying the home, ensure fire, structural, health and energy efficiency standards are met, while also considering the issue of sustainability.

This increases the potential to maintain family and community connections. The rebuilding process should be undertaken within a broad context, keeping in mind the place, the occupants, surrounding people, time as a resource to make better decisions, and a realistic appraisal process, allowing for achievable, successful outcomes.

Local councils have worked with property owners on various processes including emergency assessment for impacted families, policy matters, and structured contracts so that builders can give accurate timing and pricing.

People need time to familiarise themselves with industry jargon, to understand what is included and what is not, and to choose from the bewildering array of options available to them.

The intention is for people to emerge from this process with the best possible result, allowing them to move forward and be better placed for any of the curve balls life may bring.
Habitat for Humanity boosts recovery efforts

*Ben Sarre, Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity*

Habitat for Humanity is a world-wide not-for-profit Christian organisation, best known for our international work supporting low income families into home ownership. More recently, Habitat for Humanity SA has provided disaster recovery assistance in South Australia. With on-the-ground experience following the Sampson Flat bushfire, we were keen to support property owners impacted by the Pinery fire.

Between January and November 2016, Habitat completed 51 recovery activity days in the Pinery area, with over 500 volunteers assisting 45 property owners. Our volunteers provided ‘hands on’ clean-up work that included shovelling rubble, pulling down fences, restoring gardens, planting trees, removing debris from damaged buildings, salvaging materials for re-use and dragging trees or branches into burn piles. With all hands on deck, our teams, usually consisting of about 10 people, were able to complete tasks which would take the property owner weeks or even months to finish on their own.

The resulting transformation from devastation to rejuvenation gave property owners a real lift and a sense of optimism for the future. They were often quite overwhelmed and expressed surprise that our volunteers were willing to come and help out someone they didn’t even know.

Here are a few comments made by residents throughout our time in the area:

- “I could not have done my recovery without Habitat’s help.”
- “You did a great job helping us get back on our feet.”
- “What you accomplished was too good to be true.”

It is feedback like this that we received throughout the year that made our work so worthwhile.

For our volunteers it was an opportunity to reach out and help those in need, which they found incredibly rewarding. One volunteer was truly moved by the experience and said, “(The home owner’s) grief and loss has touched me far beyond what I thought was possible. The experience in assisting others in need was worthwhile.”

Another said, “The experience gave me the opportunity to meet an incredible bunch of people that all put in 110%.”

We wish to acknowledge the generous support of all the organisations and individuals who volunteered, supported or sponsored our work in the Pinery area. Without you, we could not have provided support to the many community members impacted by the Pinery fire.

And finally, to the families we met and supported, we were moved by your stories, astounded by your resilience, inspired by your courage and welcomed by your hospitality. It was humbling to meet you and a privilege to serve you.

Thank you and God bless.

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**A star in our backyard**

*Habitat for Humanity*

Craig and a wonderful crew of 16 from ASIC cleared and cleaned our block of all dead and burnt rubbish, and then replanted a new front garden for us. A big THANK YOU!

*Kathy and Steve Marriner*

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*Habitat for Humanity*

Clearing the burned debris and contents of our house next to the Wasleys Post Office. They worked tirelessly until the job was done and did it with enthusiasm and a smile. We’re forever indebted.

*Dawn and Lewis*
Below: Habitat for Humanity in the field. Images courtesy Habitat for Humanity
Lions serving the community

The Lions Club logo states ‘We serve’. When the fire tore through the area in November, Lions Clubs across Australia were true to their word and rallied to help affected communities.

Club venues became collection and distribution points for donations of emergency supplies, clothing and household goods, as well as refugees to go and have a chat, so important in times of crisis. Cash, food hampers and goods arrived from Lions Clubs around Australia. Seven patchwork quilts came in from Albany in Western Australia and a used car was even donated by the Clare Lions Club.

The clubs supplied thousands of meals to those impacted by the fire, CFS volunteers and other volunteers over a two week period, with much of the food donated by local businesses.

The Australian Lions Foundation (ALF) donated almost $300,000 in emergency cash grants to approximately 85 families affected by the fire, which was distributed by the Lions Clubs of Gawler, Mallala and Balaklava.

In addition to the emergency cash grants, the ALF has committed an additional $90,000 in community recovery grants which will help to pay for a new stove in the Hamley Bridge Sports and Recreation Centre, replacement lights at the Hamley Bridge Bowls Club, phase 2 of the Men’s Shed at Mallala, which will deliver meeting rooms, a kitchen and toilets for local community groups and the local Lions club, with special emphasis on men’s mental health programs and air-conditioning, dust extraction facilities, equipment and tools for the Owen Community Shed.

Add to that about $250,000 that went to victims and community recovery projects after the Sampson Flat bushfires, and the Australian Lions Foundation has distributed about $600,000 to South Australian communities affected by fire within the last 12 months; a truly incredible effort.

We sincerely thank the Lions Clubs in South Australia, and around the country, for their wonderful work.

Toyota Landcruiser Club

Members of the Toyota Landcruiser Club have now completed their work in the fire ground.

Earlier this year, members of the club delivered 500 square metres of lawn donated by the Underdale Bowling Club to families affected by the fire. In addition to this, the club was instrumental in helping BlazeAid to establish their operations in the area. They also transported bottled water, assisted with house demolition, roof and gutter cleaning, rubbish removal, arranged fence post pickups, and supported Habitat for Humanity with tree removal and transport. Overall the team spent 105 days in the field, clocked up 700 hours of work and travelled a total of 7,000km.

The club wishes residents in the fire area all the best in their rebuilding efforts. We’d like to offer our sincere thanks to Toyota Landcruiser Club President Darryl Royans and the whole team for their fantastic work.

Volunteers at work. Image courtesy Toyota Landcruiser Club

A star in our backyard

Jamie Walker

One week after Pinery, friends had invited me for a day out to get away from the disaster. As I attempted to drive out, I found that overnight a tree had fallen blocking the driveway. Eventually I realised I no longer had a garden, so I could drive across proscribed areas through the fence. I had a lovely day, but on return was most downcast about that damned tree. I turned into the gateway to find someone had chainsawed it all up and cleared a passage. What a star! To recognise a problem and solve it before I’d even thought to tackle it!

P Barton
Australian Red Cross has played an active part in response and recovery from 25 November 2015, and continues to support and connect the community through its recovery.

From the initial response at the numerous relief centres, and through the Recovery Centre in Gawler, Red Cross staff and volunteers have supported, listened and connected fire affected people with resources and information.

The volunteers have spent hundreds of hours talking to people through our Outreach programme and well-being visits in and around the Pinery fire scar, creating wonderful conversations and connections. Red Cross personnel have also attended various events and programs to support the recovery program.

Our presence at the Hamley Bridge Fire Awareness Expo gave people the opportunity to have a chat, ask questions and gather up-to-date information.

It was a great day for us to meet new people and say hello to others we have built a relationship with.

In October, we made some home visits and phone calls as part of an Outreach program, in partnership with Disaster Ministries on behalf of the State Government. This gave the volunteers an opportunity to ask how people were getting on, and to give them information on preparedness in the lead-up to fire danger season.

It was so gratifying to see people rebuilding and connecting with their communities, as well as being better prepared and learning important lessons after the fire that has built confidence and knowledge. This is what we aim for. It has been our pleasure to work with the community and Red Cross will continue to support people into the future.

Red Cross and Disaster Ministries team ready to visit people in their homes.
L-R: Mary, John, Gwen, Sharon, and Eve. Image courtesy Red Cross.
Global Care supporting the community

Bev Dales and Kerry Turvey, Global Care Volunteer Counsellors

Global Care, an Australian-based International Aid organisation, became a part of the Pinery fire recovery initiative in December 2015. Since this time, my colleague Kerry Turvey and I have served as volunteer counsellors within the communities across the fire scar.

Our commitment to volunteer was motivated by a deep desire to be a part of the healing response in the wake of the event that devastated so many lives. We were joined by other Global Care volunteers who came on board to assist with hands-on work. This practical support included facilitating community recovery events, providing plants for revegetation, fencing, supply and delivery of household goods, and transporting of furniture and goods as people moved into new homes.

Barry Leske from the Barossa Valley cooked hundreds of honey biscuits for us to give to the families we supported. Ladies from the Barossa and Adelaide supplied tubes of luxurious hand cream for each woman we met. Businesses and individuals from across the broader Adelaide region responded to requests for help with great generosity, which helped to meet the needs of fire affected people.

People from the city wanted to be involved but didn’t know how to go about it. We found that they were grateful for the opportunity to help. They had given financially but wanted to do more. Global Care simply provided a pathway for this generosity of heart to connect with people’s specific needs.

Kerry and I continue to serve as members of the Pinery Fire Local Recovery Committee, which has created opportunities for us to provide counselling services at community events and participate in the production of a therapy resource for businesses and individuals across the fire area.

Good samaritans arrive

A MOBILE disaster relief unit, equipped with tools, a modern command centre and selfless volunteers, has rolled into Gawler to help with the Pinery fire recovery effort.

Samaritan’s Purse’s ‘Forward Assessment Unit’ has been deployed to the region on the invitation of the state recovery office, and has set up at Salt Church, Evandale.

Volunteers have converged from all over the country to lend a hand with general clean-up work, including garden maintenance and cleaning, across the 85,000-hectare fire ground.

A one-of-a-kind truck, purpose-built in America, has been driven down from Queensland, full of recovery kits for fire victims, as well as much-needed tools and equipment.

Relief volunteer Jim Winter said the truck was only brought out to Australia 18 months ago, and was also used earlier in the year with the Sampson Flat bushfire recovery effort.

“We just want to be there to help people, because it’s just plain tough for them,” he said.

“Sometimes, it is just being there to encourage them and to let them understand there are people that just want to help, with no strings attached.”

Fellow volunteer Marilyn Redcliffe said the unit is in need of more volunteers, to form teams of three or four, who are then sent out to properties to help with general clean-up duties.

“The kind of things we’ve been doing is remove damaged fencing, help people tidy up their gardens, chop down small trees; it’s really what can be handled with the equipment we’ve got,” she said.

The key to our work as volunteers was the chance to be present in the communities, speaking with people, perhaps around the kitchen table or in the paddock, as the work of the clean-up was being undertaken and hearing their stories and understanding their needs. We consider it a privilege to be trusted with the pain and grief of the hundreds of people we have supported. There were also times of great joy when a phone call or visit brought the news of progress made and celebrations to be shared.

The wisdom and oversight of Reverend Dr Phil Marshall and the generosity of the broader Christian community has also greatly complemented our work, making it more effective.

Kerry and I were inspired by the courage of the people in the fire area as they regularly faced overwhelming challenges to regain their lives. We are made richer from our time with the amazing people that make up this community.

A star in our backyard

Bev and Kerry – Global Care

Their kindness and support and generosity in helping us start our lives again after losing everything in the fire.

Helen and Barry Childs

By Bev Dales and Kerry Turvey

Global Care Volunteer Counsellors
Plants galore

Hamley Bridge Primary School became decidedly greener over the 2016 Queen’s Birthday long weekend thanks to a massive plant giveaway coordinated by Port Wakefield resident Wendy Deinum.

For six months, Wendy coordinated the potting of hardy garden plants for distribution free of charge to families impacted by the fire, with people from all over the state potting cuttings and propagating plants for the project. More than 4,000 plants were donated by Whyalla Garden Club, Murray Bridge Social Garden Group, the Australian Plant Society Brinkworth Area Group, Mount Pleasant, Tanunda, Minlaton, the suburbs of Adelaide and locals in the Balaklava area.

The rains provided the perfect gardening conditions and approximately 70 families visited the school to choose from the wide range of native trees, shrubs, geraniums, succulents, irises, pot plants, herbs and cottage garden plants.

Wendy said the generosity of those who provided plants, together with the sincere gratitude of the recipients, made the project very rewarding and a truly wonderful weekend for all involved.

Sincere thanks to Wendy, her children and grandchildren for assisting on the day. Thanks also to Hamley Bridge Primary School and members of the Hamley Bridge community for their support, and Altus Traffic Management for providing temporary fencing and signage around the distribution area.
Up until recently Janet and Hugh Gordon lived in a beautiful home which they had lovingly restored and built over the last three decades. Together they raised their four children and shared many treasured moments as a family on the property.

When the Pinery fire came, Janet and Hugh had to make the difficult decision: whether to stay and fight to save their cherished family home or to flee to safety.

Their now grown-up children called their parents, worried about their safety and urged them to leave. It was the extra nudge they needed. Janet and Hugh, both professional musicians, packed their prized violin, viola and mandolin, as well as a handful of other items into their van and left their home of 30 years.

Before they left the couple took as many precautions as they could to keep their home safe. They filled the gutters with water and jammed the windows tight with wedges.

When they were able to return to their property three hours later, it was all gone.

"We didn't ever think it would all go so we didn't take as many things as we should have," said Hugh, and Janet agrees.

"We probably should have taken more things but at the end of the day, when we came back, we only had what we were standing in, the clothes we were wearing and the few items in the van".

They were later told that a fireball landed on top of their workshop/recording studio and exploded. In a matter of just a few minutes it was all gone.

Janet opens a photo album and points to the picture of their original 1910 property when it was in desperate need of restoration and repair. As she looks through the pictures showing the transformation of the property through years of dedicated restoration — sanding floor boards, installing staircases, restoring chairs and cultivating a beautiful garden — the couple reflect on the work they did together.

"We moved there just before our youngest, Alexander, was born because I wanted to have a baby in that house", remembers Janet.

Janet and Hugh look through more pictures and stop on a page of what looks like a beautiful function centre. It is their 'party room' where their daughter held her wedding reception three years earlier and just last September Janet and Hugh jointly celebrated their 65th birthdays. Hearing them talk about those milestone events shows that it wasn’t just a house, it was a home.

After returning home and discovering that there was nothing left, their thoughts quickly turned to where they would stay for the night.

"Our daughter lives next door. Her house wasn’t burnt so we stayed with her that night. She was building a new house which was almost finished, so a week after the fire our daughter and her family shifted into their new home. We were very happy we had the extra house and had somewhere to stay," Hugh said.

The Gordons will continue to stay at their daughter’s house for the foreseeable future. However due to the location of their daughter’s property they drive past their old house every day.

"It is awful. I go there and dig through the ashes and the foundations. It’s a stone house so the walls are still there and I’m gradually working through the ashes, getting a few mementos," said Hugh.

"There’s just not much there, even things you think will be alright. It was so hot. Many things are unrecognisable," added Janet.

"Our cast iron beds were all melted and twisted. I thought I might be able to straighten them, but no. We also had a lovely Victorian cast iron cradle that I thought I might be able to fix, but no," explains Hugh.

With almost all of their possessions lost in the fire, Janet needed clothes and was seeking the comfort of their old lives.

"To be perfectly honest, I can’t remember what happened at the time, but I know that when I came to Vinnies, I was able to get clothes and books and all the things, well not all the things but…," Janet falters.

"Essentially what’s she is trying to do is replace what we’ve lost," adds Hugh.

"We can’t just go into new shops to get new things because we, well we don’t want to recreate what we had but we want things that make us feel comfortable."
“The first time [Hugh] drank out of a Willow patterned cup again, we were in the wrong house, with the wrong roof but he said to me you have no idea how much more comforting it is to drink out of a proper cup,” said Janet.

“It’s not like we bought a house off the shelf. I built it, sort of. It was a ruin and I made it. I did all the woodwork and did all those things,” said Hugh.

Janet reaches into a bag and puts a Victorian era jelly mould, a collection of Jane Austen books and blue Willow plate on the table.

“I brought in just a few examples of what we were given. I had a wonderful jelly mould collection, I make jellies. I had some beautiful Victorian moulds.”

“One of the Vinnies volunteers found me these. I love reading and all my Jane Austen books are gone. She gave me this beautiful collection,” Janet said placing a hand on the books.

“I’ve always come to shop at Vinnies before the fire, but then all of sudden it was really important. People have been wonderful but it has been difficult as we have always been able to help people out. All of a sudden not to be able to help other people and be the recipients has been hard,” said Janet.

Hugh and Janet are starting on the long road to build some normalcy into their lives but the memory of that day is never too far from their mind.

“The night times are the worst, in the day time there is so much to do but then the night comes and you think of that day and go over it again. You think of the things you would have done differently. Maybe we did things right. We could have tried to get more out and got stuck,” said Janet.

Many people think that insurance will cover everything but for some people, like the Gordons, that’s not the case.

“Insurance has been good. We were underinsured of course. It is very expensive. We insured the amount we thought would cover it, but we never thought we would need it,” said Janet.

The couple are now left with yet another difficult decision. Should they stay and rebuild their old home or start again elsewhere. For the time being they are taking things one day at a time.

“For now we’ll stay in our daughters place, there are a few repairs and alterations to do to it. It’s different now though, I’m 66 so it’s not like being 28 or 30 when I started the last one,” said Hugh.

Through all the adversity, Janet still manages to see the good that came from such a devastating experience.

“From the fire, if there’s one positive thing, it has made us realise that there are so many wonderful people around. We knew it of course; it’s just brought it into focus. People have done some really, really beautiful things.

“When I hear about the people that have been really badly hurt, I think we’ve got nothing to worry about, really. Thanks Vinnies for everything. We are very grateful. The support and financial assistance will help us with so many things”.

A star in our backyard

Belinda Halliwell
Assisting our family after the car accident and fire. Organising the ambulances, looking after our animals and helping coordinate the bushfire assistance database. Keeping us calm and safe. We thank you.

Sharyn and Paul Cocks

A star in our backyard

Kynwen Paparella and the crew of Cudlee Creek CFS
Their bravery and commitment and generosity to the people of Wasleys on the day. Also their generosity in bringing donations from their community to ours. We will never forget the community BBQ they provided just days after the fire.

Helen Chitty
A retiree in waiting

John Adams

When I retired from my career as an IT professional in October 2015, I had plans for my immediate future: learn to speak Spanish, play a musical instrument and commence an Associate Diploma in Photography. Little did I know what lay ahead of me.

On 25 November 2015, as I was visiting my mother-in-law in hospital, I heard the news that a serious fire was burning out of control on the Adelaide Plains and I immediately thought of my younger sister and her husband, who were farmers in that area. When I managed to contact my sister she was stranded in Nuriootpa and unable to return to her home, but she confirmed my suspicions that their home and farm were directly affected by the fire.

A day or so later I contacted my brother-in-law with a simple “what can I do to help?”. As a consequence I have spent the first 12 months of my retirement learning new skills such as fencing, land management techniques and, even though I was a skilled IT Project Manager, project management.

Although I knew a lot of people in the area, I was touched by the manner in which I was accepted into the community. Even today long standing locals still enquire of my brother-in-law as to my whereabouts.

Rebuilding the farm involved demolishing and rebuilding 15 kms of fencing, clearing roadside debris, demolishing and rebuilding burnt out sheds and outhouses and, because I am pretty handy with a chainsaw, felling and disposing of more than 500 trees. As the year progressed I was able to help with seeding and harvest. Along the way there was always a neighbour in need as well.

We worked from sunrise until sunset, seven days a week, the exception being on a Wednesday or Thursday when we would finish work at about 7pm and go to the Owen or Wasleys Hotel for a wood oven pizza or T-bone steak for dinner. Whilst at the hotels many a story was shared about the fire and its impact, how individuals were coping and how the recovery process was proceeding. Although I pride myself on my empathy and care for others, never have I experienced the genuine care and concern, generosity and compassion that was displayed to me by the community as a consequence of this fire. Regrettably a number of families directly affected by the fire are not coping well emotionally and some have chosen to walk away from farming.

I will spend part of 2017 back on the farm continuing fencing work, rebuilding several small sheds and assisting locals to clear burnt trees from their properties. Then I look forward to commencing my retirement.

A fresh coat of paint for the Wasleys Institute

The Wasleys Institute received a much needed makeover when 50 staff from Pernod Ricard Winemakers dropped by to paint the interior of the Institute as part of their Staff Volunteer Day on 2 June.

The mammoth task didn’t faze the group, who were very keen to be involved in the recovery effort. Under the direction of painting contractor Guy Bobridge from Tanunda they went through 100 litres of paint and completed a large portion of the work in one day. Guy completed the outstanding work on the ceiling and the higher sections of the walls later that month.

The community of Wasleys is very grateful to each and every volunteer from Pernod Ricard. Not only did they donate their time, but they also donated five computers to the Wasleys community.

Thank you to Jacqui Scadding and James Lake from Pernod Ricard who worked with Mo Shepherd from Wasleys to coordinate the project.

Men stand ready to help

In April 2016, 60 men from communities around the Pinery fire area graduated from a unique training course.

The Menswatch program, a specialised peer support training program, equips men with the knowledge to understand how other men cope with negative events as well as how they respond to stress. It also provides strategies to recognise the signs that someone needs support.

The 20 men in three zones within the fire ground — Freeling, Mallala and Owen/Tarlee — who completed the support training now identify as a team and stand ready to support others in the community showing signs of stress.

The program was introduced into the Pinery fire area after Owen farmer Ben Marshman approached then Local Recovery Coordinator Vince Monterola. His enthusiasm was contagious and Vince realised the program was just what the men in the area needed.

The fact that so many high calibre men are ready to provide this service to their community is a massive step forward in the overall recovery program.

Vince said it highlights that fact that mid-north communities are leading the way as this is the first time in Australia that community members have come together to provide a mental health support service for their neighbours.

The men will continue meeting occasionally to maintain their focus and encourage each other in the support they provide.

It’s great to know that this specialised training will continue to benefit the community long after the recovery team has moved on.

A star in our backyard

Kelly
Kelly found our black Labrador who had extensive burns from the fire and took her to Roseworthy Companion Hospital.

Thank you Kelly.

Claire Gable and Dennis Lyle

A star in our backyard

Early Rise Café, Freeling
Their community spirit shone through on the day, comforting and nourishing survivors, CFS and anyone who through their doors, plus six months on with the recovery. Thank you for everything!

Sharyn and Paul Cox
Recovery for the Tarlee community

Judy Gorey, member of the Pinery fire Local Recovery Committee and the Community Action Group

My role in recovery began very soon after the fire, when I was asked by Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council to volunteer on the Pinery fire Local Recovery Committee, representing the Tarlee and Bethel farmers and town residents as a Community Leader. This meant attending regular recovery meetings in Gawler. When the Community Action Group was formed, I attended those meetings too. The meetings gave me the opportunity to update the committee with the progress of the Tarlee community’s recovery.

Collating a list of local residents and farmers allowed me to personally address the recipients of recovery newsletters and other support material.

I also wrote a regular fact sheet covering information from recovery and resilience workshops that I attended. The distribution of much of these resources was greatly aided by my husband Frank Gorey, together with the kind cooperation of the post master John Robbins and his staff.

With research, I was able to clarify detailed information needed by fire-affected landholders, e.g. evidence required from a victim for a successful charge to be laid, particularly in regards to trespass and theft.

Various workshops have been held in Tarlee throughout the year and advertising these events well ahead of time was a clear advantage. We displayed posters throughout the town and flyers were sent out early, through post, hand delivery and email.

With the support of a small group of women in Tarlee and Community Development Officer Kirsty Dudley, we held a successful Girls Night Out event for more than 100 women. This was an evening of care and compassion shared between the attendees and the volunteers who offered their time for services such as massages and other healing activities.

A star in our backyard

Community

A year has nearly come and you are all still helping.
Thank you.

M Roberts
Disaster and Recovery Ministries

Wendy Perkins, Coordinator, Disaster and Recovery Ministries

As part of the State Emergency Management Plan, the Uniting Church in SA trains, coordinates and deploys a team of chaplains from many different churches and denominations. They assist the community during times of disaster. All chaplains have completed an intensive two-day training course, are appropriately referenced, have current police checks and are accredited for three years at a time. The role of the chaplains, who are recognisable by their purple tabards, is to offer pastoral and spiritual support to anyone who is affected by the disaster.

Chaplains respond to invitations to be present in Relief Centres, Recovery Centres and on outreach teams, visiting people at their homes to check on their well-being. Chaplains often work in partnership with Red Cross in these teams.

In the aftermath of the Pinery fire, chaplains were active in the area for several months, offering a listening ear, showing compassion and providing a calm, non-anxious presence for people who have experienced great trauma as a result of the fire. They have felt privileged to hear the stories and share the pain of people at this time, welcoming the opportunity to listen and care with no strings attached.

In addition to this, many people from the Uniting Church across SA and beyond contributed significantly to a Bushfire Relief Fund which supports local churches to assist their own communities in more practical ways. As a result of this generosity, it has been possible to fund extra pastoral worker positions based at Hamley Bridge and Mallala in order to offer ongoing pastoral care across the fire area. Phil Marshall, Jordan Gauci and Emma Christian have been actively supporting families and individuals. They have been helping to organise events and continue to be available to anyone who needs pastoral care in the aftermath of the fire.
The year that was

Lorinda Bayley, Community Development Officer with Light Regional Council and member of Pinery fire Local Recovery Committee and Community Action Group

Everyone has their story to tell about 25 November 2015. For many, tumultuous emotions will be attached to the memories of that day. It all happened so fast. The sky transformed from day to early nightfall. The winds were swirling black ash around; it was hard to see with grit filling your eyes. Seeing people’s fear and the sense of urgency the fire generated: hurrying to pick up the kids from school, rushing to find a safer place, mass panic, the volume of bumper-to-bumper traffic on the roads, trying to find a safe haven but which direction to go?

Some concerns and questions came up after witnessing this behaviour. During future events, how can we reduce the level of panic so that people don’t place themselves in more danger? What can we do to encourage the community to feel safer and be better prepared for unexpected events? What actions can we take to make our homes safer? Some services such as electricity and telephone may not be available during an emergency. What can people do to prepare for these times?

Anne Ellis, Sampson Flat bushfire Community Development Officer, gave a presentation at Gawler in June 2015. I took notes, never thinking I would have to refer to them so soon. Anne outlined what had worked and what would be a challenge to manage. Communications are paramount, so people can access the information and services they need in a timely manner. People are motivated by tragedy, desperate to help in some way, and will arrive with their enthusiasm. The main message from Anne was to let the community take the lead in recovery. Community members will naturally step up and mobilise local responses, coordinate and guide the support required at that point in time. Across all of our communities there were many people who stepped up to help — too many to mention individually.

The sheer volume of donated items that arrived after the event was enormous. While the humanitarian effort was touching, additional volunteers were needed to sort the goods, and storage locations needed to be sourced. Community halls and recreation facilities are at a premium during local disasters. These venues are often needed to hold community meetings but can become the temporary site for receiving these goods.

It can be a challenge to manage the significant volume of donations of second hand clothing and furniture received. It may be better to give a small financial donation to a gift fund, or give your time for more ‘hands-on’ tasks rather than giving clothing or furniture that is ‘well past its use-by date’. Donations of ‘less-than-serviceable’ items means they are unfit for purpose and need to be discarded – another task that needs to be managed locally. I don’t want to sound ungrateful, and strongly encourage people to continue to support those families affected by disasters, but please DON’T SEND YOUR RUBBISH.

In the days and weeks following a disaster, fundraising initiatives commence with the aim of raising money for those who have lost their possessions or their livelihood. Gift funds, concerts and numerous other events raise significant amounts of money for this worthwhile cause. Donations also bring the added challenge to distribute the proceeds equitably. I represented Light Regional Council on the State Emergency Relief Fund (SERF) Committee to develop eligibility criteria and ensure the SERF donations were fairly distributed across the region.

I have learnt much, and will continue to learn. I have made many new connections through representing Council on the Pinery Fire Local Recovery Committee and Pinery Fire Community Action Group.

In the early stages following a disaster there are many groups around to assist the recovery, but these reduce as communities find their feet. There are huge numbers of phone calls and emails, names and contact details to track and offers of assistance to manage. It can feel a bit like a game of join the dots, creating links and connections between people.

It was my pleasure to be at the Tarlee Women’s event in June, offering neck and shoulder massages to very deserving ladies. I shared in the fun of the Barossa Mystery Bus Tour and Resilience Day with Maggie Beer in July. It is important for everyone who experienced the Pinery fire to be able to tell their story, to relate their personal experience of that event, in order to commence their healing.

I encourage people to seek help. This can be challenging when people choose to be stoic. It’s okay not to be strong all the time. It’s okay to reach out and talk to others when you are feeling down. It has been heartening to watch social groups form and expand: the Wasleys Creative Chatter ladies group for example. Many ideas and suggestions have solidified into community-led projects, with people making the effort to get together to improve their towns. This all greatly assists personal and community healing.

Despite the major losses many people experienced during the Pinery fire, there are many positive things I want to remember about this event: the overwhelming sense of care and concern, the kind gestures, the teamwork, the stoicism observed in those who ‘got on with their life’, the strengthening of communities, not taking things for granted.
To everyone who stepped up and supported others, I express my heartfelt thanks to one and all for taking on these roles. It is this sort of behaviour that makes rural communities great places to live. I was thrilled to see the 'Stars in Our Backyard' project come to fruition through the Pinery Fire Community Action Group, providing an opportunity to publicly thank the 'stars' in our community who graced others with their wonderful deeds.

It has been my privilege to serve these communities, to be in the fortunate position to better get to know people from across the region. I am grateful that I was allowed a glimpse into their private world, to witness their pain, to hear their story, to appreciate them as a person not just a name on an application. I have felt pride watching the personal growth of people who have faced a very challenging time, to see their life change in positive ways as new options present themselves. The recovery process following the Pinery fire may continue for some time, but our learnings will help us to create a safer, more connected community.

A star in our backyard

Peter Klement (Klem)
Fought the fire on our property and saved our house. Then was just there helping us and the community everyday through the hardest time. What a fantastic neighbour he is. Thanks to his son Jimmy!

Steve and Kathy Marriner

A star in our backyard

Simon and Nicole Cain
Simon and Nicole were very quick to offer their services to help anyone that needed a hand to clean-up. Simon helped to remove burnt trees and lay new lawn at the Post Office. Nicole helped to clean up the Post Office and wash down shelves.

Dawn and Lewis

A star in our backyard

Don Bubner
Arranging furniture and garden vouchers for people right across the area.

Gwen

A star in our backyard

Lorinda
Very relaxing and much needed massage at an organised ladies night. Thank you.

Dawn

Words of Pinery

THOSE affected by last year’s Pinery fire can contribute to an anthology being compiled on the tragedy.

The Adelaide Plains Chapter and Verse writing group is accepting submissions for its book ‘Winged Pods – New Life Rising’, which it plans to launch during the Gawler Festival of Words in July.

Group member and anthology editor Carolyn Cordon said the group welcomes anyone to submit poetry, short fiction or non-fiction, of up to 600 words.

“I am a strong believer in the therapeutic benefits of writing,” she said. “Creative writing has certainly helped me and it’s helped many people to work their way through the issues that are hitting them.”

The group has already received about 20 submissions for the book, which range from raw personal accounts of the fire day, as well as stories of hope and recovery. Carolyn, a Mallala resident, who was evacuated during the fire, said the anthology will be arranged to reflect people’s journey from despair to hope.

“The anthology is going to be the journey from the absolute devastations of the wildfire going absolute mad, to things starting to come together and becoming more controlled,” she said.

Fellow member Geoffrey Grootz has created an illustration for the front cover, of winged pods, which are native seeds of a plant, which only germinate once they have been through a bushfire.

Submissions close on Saturday, April 30 and can be emailed to Carolyn Cordon (kittycordo@gmail.com). Carolyn is also offering to run a creative writing workshop for individuals or a small group, interested in submitting a piece, but unsure where to start.

More information is available on the group’s Facebook page, or by contacting Carolyn (0418 806 490).

Courtesy The Bunyip

Ellouise Crawford
Another Chance

Craig Chapman

On 25 November 2015, I was working with a group of volunteers on a fire-damaged property in the Adelaide Hills. It was the final month of an almost year-long campaign by Habitat for Humanity, providing assistance to people affected by the Sampson Flat fire in January of that year.

That evening, no doubt like many South Australians, I watched news footage and listened to tragic reports relating to the Pinery fire. It was immediately clear that, far from winding up our Bushfire Recovery Program, we were about to go to another level.

By the middle of January 2016, Habitat for Humanity was "on the ground" providing volunteer assistance to affected property owners. Since then, work has been conducted in locations all over the fire region. We shovelled rubble, picked up sheets of metal, filled skip bins and dragged branches as required by property owners.

It has occurred to me that even an event as devastating as the Pinery fire can be the source of a positive story. In the relatively short period of time since the fire, hundreds of people from various corporate and community groups have accepted an opportunity to volunteer through Habitat for Humanity’s Bushfire Recovery Program. Others, such as BlazeAid, Samaritan’s Purse, various churches and community organisations have been similarly active. All have done outstanding work. Many local people have no doubt rendered wonderful assistance to friends and neighbours without being part of any formal organisation.

In discussions with many volunteers, I have often heard passionate expressions about how glad they were to take part in such a rewarding experience. Rather than merely going home with aching limbs, many go home with the sense of achievement and satisfaction which comes from helping someone in need.

I have come to realise that volunteers don’t need to have special skills or knowledge to make a difference. They just have to be willing. We have engaged men and women of all ages and from all kinds of backgrounds in our program. Everyone works to their capacity and offers what they can.

Perhaps one positive outcome of the Pinery fire could be the tremendous opportunity presented to those who have the potential to assist.
On 18 June 2016 the Adelaide Plains Football League, SACFL, SANFL, AFL and associated clubs held a fundraiser, Kick in for Pinery to raise funds towards infrastructure for water collection to secure the region for any future bushfire disasters.

Funds raised purchased six 216KL zincalume water tanks to be installed within the Pinery fire scar area in Wakefield Regional Council and Adelaide Plains Council areas. Each of the tanks and their associated fittings has a value of $25,000 but through the assistance of Pioneer Tanks the fundraiser secured them at a cost recovery rate.

Wakefield Regional Council and Adelaide Plains Council have been working with the communities to see this project come to fruition and Wakefield Regional Council has committed to the ongoing water, maintenance, insurance and service fees for tanks at Pinery, Owen and Lochiel.

This project is a great example of collaboration with over 40 sponsors contributing to the project. Funding for installation of the Owen and Pinery tanks was supported by the generous donations from the South Australian community and government through the State Emergency Relief Fund, with further funds announced for Lochiel through the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) Grants SA program.

The project will assist to build resilience and natural disaster preparedness in the region and will supplement water supplies during any future firefighting operations, eliminating the time needed to source other water supplies to ‘top up’ their trucks.

The Kick in for Pinery water tank initiative reached a significant milestone on Monday 10 April 2017 with the official opening of the fire water tank at Pinery. Adjacent to the Pinery Hall, the tank will provide over 200,000 litres of water for fire fighting purposes to both CFS units and farm fire fighting units.

A large crowd of locals, contributing stakeholders and supporters gathered for the ribbon cutting ceremony. Another tank has already been placed at Owen with a further four to be located where they will be most valuable for fire fighters.
Tree-planting for Pinery

A TREE-PLANTING initiative is the latest community program to grow out of last year’s Pinery bushfire.

Local Rotary and Rotaract clubs have begun a tree-planting program to help those affected by the fires. Trees have been grown and donated by several organisations, including Trees for Life and Barossa Bush Gardens.

Barossa District Rotary Club member Frits Van Emden said the local service clubs would provide labour force to help the organisations complete the task.

“The landowners are extremely grateful for the help Rotary is willing to give, it’s mainly the smaller landholders asking for help,” Mr Van Emden said.

“The need was there, so we stepped in and we do it for free.

“Whoever wants to help planting with trees, we’re never shy asking for help...they’re not going to plant themselves, these little seedlings.”

Already, 15 requests for tree-planting support have been submitted, with a meeting to discuss the plans on Wednesday, July 5, at the PVA Hotel, Gawler at 6.30pm.

Meanwhile, a support group has been created for victims of the fire, their family and friends.

Pinery fire community development officer Kirsty Dudley said the State Government had joined with the Red Cross to develop the group, in conjunction with the Australian Psychological Society.

Ms Dudley said the society was willing to donate the services of a psychologist for the group.

“They provide guidance to help the group in the early stages, get it off on a strong footing (and) allows people a safe space to talk about their journey of recovery,” Ms Dudley said.

“The sessions are confidential and provide a forum where people can discuss their challenges and their triumphs...and also supporting each other and encouraging each other with the feelings or stories they are sharing.”

If you are interested in helping out with tree-planting, contact Frits Van Emden (8524 4136 or bethart@inernet.net.au) or contact Kirsty Dudley about the support group (kirsty.dudley@sa.gov.au or 0477 717 736).

Tara Nash

Re-greening the fire scar of Pinery

‘Re-greening the fire scar’ hit the Barossa Bushgarden in Nuriootpa on Sunday, with a turn up of around 500 to 600 people, including Minister Zoe Bettison to help support those affected by the Pinery bushfire disaster.

Communications and Community Engagement Coordinator Abbie Thomas was delighted with the turn-out and the support shown by the community despite some disastrous weather from mother nature.

“It was great, it was fantastic, the wonderful response from the community, wonderful turnout despite the terrible weather,” she said.

Ms Thomas could hear many discussions among landholders about productive issues to do with the Pinery disaster.

“I could hear so many animated conversations going on all around me, people discussing what to plant and when to put things in, how things are recovering so far, speculating about the season ahead,” she said.

“It really brought the landholders together.”

“There were quite a lot of community members who came through and just brought plants.”

FRESH START: Landowner Chris Heinjus, Freeling, dropped in to pick up seedlings ready to continue the task of re-establishing native vegetation on his property following the Pinery fire.
PEOPLE & PLACES

Re-greening the fire scar

NEW LIFE FOR PINERY

More than 500 people attended Barossa Bushgardens on Sunday to collect over 20,000 native seedlings for Pinery fire-affected landowners.

Barossa Bushgardens nursery manager Pam Payne.

Fire-affected landholders Matthew and Dawn Coad with daughter Kaydii, 2, Templer, looking forward to planting some new native plants.

Gawler Environment and Heritage Association nursery manager Adrian Shackley, Barossa Bushgardens Pam Payne and Wayne Brown, Environment by Design.

Landholders Yvonne Bell, Baralba, Sally Fritz, Hamley Bridge, and Stacey Bell, Grace Plains, were all impacted by the fires.

Trees for Life seedbank manager Bruce Smith and Light Regional Council environmental officer Andrew Philpot.

Barossa Council mayor Rob Spinney and Communities and Social Inclusion Minister Zoe Bettison with some of the thousands of seedlings.

Members of Gawler and Light Rotary Club provided the crowd with delicious sausages to keep away the cold weather.

Natural Resources Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges volunteer Kurtis Madigan.
Tony Fox, District Manager Northern Hills, Coast and Plains, Natural Resources Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges and member of the Local Recovery Committee

The Pinery fire caused significant and long term damage to the natural resources that underpin farming profitability, community well-being and environmental values. Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges (AMLR) recognised that effective recovery could only be achieved by listening and responding to community needs and helping build community resilience by applying the following principles:

- Community is at the centre of all fire recovery effort
- Building relationships and connections between landholders and all NRM organisations
- Building on strong current relationships with ag bureaus and industry groups
- Landholders are enabled to manage their natural resources in the short, medium and long term
- Review of past NRM investment and ensure that there are continued outcomes.

Just over half of the country burnt by the Pinery fire was in AMLR Natural Resources region, with the remaining in the Northern and Yorke region. Efforts to assist the communities to recover from this disaster required that the two regions worked together collaboratively along with the area’s farming groups and the many other government departments and NGOs to provide meaningful support services.

Resilience of nature: Autumn lilies in February 2016 offer a welcome relief of colour. Image courtesy Andrew Philpott
Vegetation Recovery
Kathryn Martin and Chris Madigan, Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges

Shortly after the Pinery fire the community raised concerns about the loss of shelterbelts and significant damage that had occurred to areas of remnant native vegetation, roadside vegetation and garden plants. Natural Resources / DEWNR responded by organising a working group of community members, government agencies, NGOs and local government to provide support to the community with vegetation recovery.

The Pinery Fire Vegetation Recovery Committee is a cooperative group that was formed in January 2016 specifically to address environmental problems caused by the wide scale destruction of vegetation in many parts of the fire area. The committee and its works are coordinated by AMLR and Northern and Yorke Natural Resources.

Shelterbelts, widely used by farmers to provide protection to stock, crops and in some cases houses, disappeared from the landscape. Native birds and animals who survived the initial fire lost vital food and shelter. Gardens around homesteads were destroyed and home owners spoke of wanting to redevelop their gardens as part of the process of restoring some sort of ‘normality’ to their lives.

Stage 1

Throughout the early part of 2016, local NRM staff assisted landholders with free property visits, a shelterbelt workshop and an opportunity to order native plants to replace those lost in the fire. At the same time volunteers at local community nurseries increased their production of species native to the fire affected area.

The culmination of these efforts was on 5 June 2016 when over 17,000 free plants, tree guards and stakes were distributed to 260 landholders at an event held at the Barossa Bushgardens. Minister Zoe Bettison welcomed over 500 community members to the event. As well as receiving plants, landholders were able to access a variety of services that provided assistance and support. These included assistance with planting from local Rotary clubs and opportunities to speak with representatives from the CFS and the Pinery fire recovery centre.

Stage 2

Project team members are now focussing on protecting natural regeneration. In areas of native scrub, fire triggers many local species to germinate. Some native species not seen for decades have reappeared following the fire. We are fortunate that there has been good rainfall to sustain these seedlings through summer. This work has involved putting guards around individual seedlings and fencing small clusters of seedlings to provide protection from grazing by stock, kangaroos or feral animals. Protected seedlings are faring far better than unprotected plants. Weeds have also been promoted by the fire and these often outcompete native seedlings so some weed control has also been undertaken.

The members of the Vegetation Recovery Committee include Natural Resources’ AMLR and Northern and Yorke, Barossa Bushgardens, Kersbrook Landcare Group, Gawler Environment and Heritage Association, State Flora, Trees for Life, Greening Australia, Light Regional Council, TAFE SA and Conservation Volunteers Australia. The majority of funding for the project was provided through the AMLR NRM Board.

Image courtesy DEWNR
The majority of the landscape was cropping in various stages of harvest, mixed with sheep grazing and intensive agriculture. The fire rapidly burnt crops, stubble and soil organic matter, leaving little or no ground cover, destroyed soil structure and significantly reduced soil stability. Hot windy weather after the fire, which continued through the following months, resulted in an almost instant mobilisation of top-soils.

This soil loss is a major concern for local farmers who over the last 30+ years have improved soil health significantly through best practice no till cropping methods, stubble retention and controlled traffic. Due to the fire occurring at the beginning of summer and mid-harvest, it was to be several months before rains and subsequent plant ground cover that helped to stabilise soils.

In the interim, farmers used a range of strategies, including emergency tillage, to help retain soil. This creates ridges and clods in paddocks to form a rough surface that slows wind and traps wind-blown soil in the furrows. In sandy soils, clay can be brought up from the subsoil by delving or clay spreading which can give protection from wind.

Natural Resources worked with Rural Solutions SA and landholders to develop and promote, through demonstration sites, strategies to manage significant drifting issues through stabilising the soil profile. These strategies involved incorporating clay with large machinery over unstable sandy ridges and working this into the top soil to change the soil texture and improve structure. Not only does this strategy help to stabilise soils but it has been shown to provide long term benefits of increased moisture holding capacity, production capacity and associated profitability.

All agricultural engagement and extension was delivered through our established relationships with agricultural bureaus in the fire affected area including Mallala, Freeling, Stockport, Tarlee and Owen. We also collaborated with PIRSA through Rural Solutions SA and a range of independent consultants to ensure that farmers were provided with access to the most relevant and current advice. In partnership with these industry groups, we delivered a number of extension field days and workshops including:

- Farming after fire events, focusing on immediate conservation actions
- Sheep management workshops
- Horse SA workshops and information sessions
- Partners in Grain farming women resilience workshops
- Agri-forums with Hamish Dickson, Darren Ray (BOM) and Keith Smith.

Our sincere thanks to the five Agricultural Bureaus, Mid-North Young Guns, Horse SA, Partners in Grain and other industry groups we have worked with. Also those properties we have visited as part of workshops.

We appreciate the time you have given us and on farmer reference panels, for us to deliver a meaningful recovery program to you and your farming communities.

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A star in our backyard
Too many to name
Tractor to bury my beloved pet sheep and alpacas, generous meals and boxes of food dropped off home, bobcat man to remove burnt trees, free trees and shrubs from numerous groups, ongoing empathy from many people affected by the fire.

Truly humbling xx

Sue Chase

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Image courtesy DEWNR
Clay spreading to stabilise the soil profile, and minimise top soil loss and erosion. Image courtesy Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges

Clay spreading and spading workshop at Tarlee to demonstrate soil stabilisation methods. Image courtesy Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges

Image courtesy Corbin Schuster
The Hamper Project
Errol Meaney, Uniting Church Minister

The Hamper Project was an initiative of local church leaders in the Balaklava and Owen district. Its simple objective was to personally deliver Christmas hampers to 500 households in fire-affected communities and communicate love, concern and encouragement over what would be a difficult Christmas for many.

500 hampers was the maximum number the Foodbank could provide with short notice. Distribution was not given on a needs basis however, as it was agreed that while losses would vary, everyone was in some way affected.

Over two days during the week leading up to Christmas 2015, 30 volunteers delivered 500 hampers to households in the regions of Hamley Bridge, Stockport, Pinery, Wasleys, Owen and Mallala.

The boxes were so gratefully received and the public support for the project was simply marvellous.

The hampers came from the Foodbank in Adelaide and included $70 worth of produce. They were delivered to Balaklava from Adelaide by Balaklava Transport free of charge. McArdle’s Agfert Fertilizers provided storage free of charge. We discovered the word spread further than expected when a church in Uganda saw the Facebook page and sent us $35 to sponsor a hamper for a household.

Additional funds were donated by the community, which resulted in:

- a $2,000 grant to the Hamley Bridge Community and Sports Centre
- a $5,000 grant to the Owen Swimming Pool
- a $300 grant via the Christian Pastoral Support Workers in all of the schools in the affected districts
Moquet Lee is an area at the rear of the Grace Plains Church and Cemetery, 8 kilometres north of Mallala. It was named in memory of the late Fred Nairn. The land was gifted to the Grace Plains community by the Nairn family, with additional contributions from 42 local residents.

William Frederick Nairn was born on 4 August 1897 in Mallala. He was the son of James and Emma Caroline Nairn, a community-minded farming family at Grace Plains. Fred attended the Grace Plains School until the age of 14. Finishing in 7th grade, he returned to his family farm and began work as a farmer. Eager to join the war effort, he waited patiently until he turned 18 on 4 August 1915, before enlisting six days later. Fred paid the ultimate sacrifice.

He was severely wounded, captured and subsequently died after a battle against German forces at Moquet Farm in France on 21 August 1916 during World War I. He is buried at the Niederzwehren Cemetery in Germany.

Moquet Lee has always been used for recreation. The two hectares include an oval, tennis court and, formerly, a croquet green and associated pavilion, surrounded by pine and gum trees. In its heyday Grace Plains boasted one of the earliest football teams with a premiership win in 1926, two tennis teams, netball team and a very well-known cricket team that enjoyed considerable success.

During the Pinery fire on 25 November, the trees and infrastructure were substantially destroyed. The small community saw an opportunity to revamp the area and create a more suitable memorial, which will be much easier to maintain and be of greater significance. The cemetery, which also suffered significant damage, will be re-fenced and resurfaced thanks to a $5,000 SERF grant. While this money will be a great help, additional funds are being sought to complete the work.

On completion, it is envisaged the existing tennis courts will become a parking area for the Grace Plains Cemetery and the damaged tennis club shed will be restored and lined with suitable art work to create a memorial building.

Due to the generosity of the South Australian National Football League (SANFL), a number of 250,000 litre tanks have been donated to the community for future firefighting purposes. One of these may be located on the Moquet Lee reserve.

These three projects will help a community that lost many homes and memories.

All of these activities have been supported by the local Mallala Lions Club and the Adelaide Plains Council, together with the Grace Plains community. The dream has been made possible with the financial assistance of the State Emergency Relief Fund grants.
Adelaide Plains Community Churches

Don Bubner, Member of the Pinery Community Action Group and Local Recovery Committee

The Plains Community Churches, part of Uniting Church SA, became involved in the fire recovery effort when they received a large financial donation for those who lost their homes. As the local treasurer I was very involved with distribution, so the Owen Community Centre asked me to be their representative on the Pinery Fire Community Action Group.

Church members, and many others from the wider community, opened their hearts and donated enough to give the 26 families in our Parish area $1,200 each within two weeks of the fire. Churches in Balaklava and Gilbert Valley generously provided Christmas hampers, which we helped to distribute. Donations of furniture and household goods were also channelled through our group. Many homes are yet to be completed so a lot of items are still available.

With money arriving from all over the state, a Greening the Landscape project began. Church members were kept busy visiting those whose gardens were damaged to offer them $100 dollar gift vouchers for the Vadoulis Garden Centre in Evanston. By the program’s completion vouchers totalling $28,000 were donated to 230 families across the region. The final donation that allowed us to cover the whole area came via a grant from Foundation Barossa and the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI).

At our request the Uniting Church SA funded our minister Reverend Dr Phil Marshall to act as Recovery Liaison Pastor for one day per week for 12 months. They also employed Emma Christian, an experienced Christian worker, to support women and children in need one day per week for a period of 12 months.

For the 12 month anniversary of the fire, the Owen Community Centre and the Plains Community Churches organised a Remembrance Service held on Sunday 20 November in the Owen Town Hall. The guest speaker was Reverend Sue Ellis, Moderator of Uniting Church SA. A free barbecue on the day gave people an opportunity to meet and reflect.

I would like to commend the wonderful work of Bev and Kerry from Global Care and a number of local women, led by Gwen Seacomb and Liz Warnes, who worked as part of the outreach program through Red Cross.

Four vehicles were used to transport high quality furniture donated by Mr and Mrs Ross Lowe from Price to Owen. L to R: Helpers Noel Bubner, Maurice and Gwen Seacomb, Don Bubner and Ian Freebairn.
Prisoners aid clean-up

BY LAURA ECKERT

LOW-security prisoners are pitching in to help the community clear debris and fix damaged property caused by the recent Pinery bushfire.

A dozen prisoners from the Cadell Training Centre are working to get the region back into shape, after a fire ripped through the area almost two months ago, claiming two lives and destroying 91 homes.

A spokesperson from the Department for Correctional Services told the Barossa & Light Herald the prisoners were being supervised by two team leaders and an environmental officer from the Light Regional Council while they removed damaged trees and fixed broken fences near Freeling, Roseworthy and Davenport.

“The low-security work gang work to recover the land affected by the bushfires, including removing damaged trees and fixing broken fences,” the spokesperson said.

"The clean-up project is difficult and expensive, and the community receives much-needed help in this. Their (the prisoners’) work benefits both the community and themselves. The prisoners thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to help out the community after such a devastating event and it is beneficial to their rehabilitation.”

Council has notified farmers of the work the prisoners are currently undertaking.

The Pinery bushfire killed two people, tens of thousands of livestock, 85,000 hectares of farmland and damaged or destroyed 91 houses.

More than 13,000 insurance claims totalling $11.9 million have so far been made.

The prisoners are expected to continue with clean-up efforts over the next three months, with about 100km of roads affected by the bushfire.

Meanwhile, BlazeAid volunteers have started working to help clean up areas affected by the bushfire, estimating they will stay there for as long as four months.

Volunteers are restoring fences for farmers and completing other jobs in the community, with camps set up in Hamley Bridge and Roseworthy.

BlazeAid is a volunteer-based organisation that works with families and individuals in rural Australia after natural disasters such as fires and floods.
Freeling art and craft group
Sharyn Cocks

The Freeling Community Hub has supported locals during the fire’s aftermath and throughout the recovery process. The Art Therapy group (now Art and Craft group) is held fortnightly. It has assisted like-minded locals to use their talents and explore their creativity in a social and safe environment. It has assisted in the recovery by bringing a pocket of the community together, which every group and program has the opportunity to do.

The Pinery Fire was the focus for a session and we took a journey through that day, our experiences and the recovery process, creating our own individual art pieces, shown below.

New life created post-Pinery fire.  
Baby Owl, by Renee Tassone-Hartnett

Dedicated to the Freeling CFS. Pinery Fire by Silvia Meaney.

Below left: Pinery fire anniversary by Sharyn Cocks. Kangaroos inhabit this part of Freeling and around the first anniversary there were many sightings, looking South from Daveyston Road. 
Below right: Daveyston Road—where time stood still by Sharyn Cocks. The Pinery Fire starts to head to Freeling, the smoke and blackness starts to consume the blue sky, looking North from Daveyston Road
Community events

**FIREY WOMEN WORKSHOP**

*Helen Hennessy and Penny Kazla*

Every year, during the winter season, the South Australian Country Fire Service (CFS) offers free workshops for women designed to provide them with new skills to protect their families and livelihoods. This workshop is known as Firey Women and is one of the CFS’s most popular community engagement programs.

The Firey Women workshop was created after the 2005 Wangary (Eyre Peninsula) fires when nine lives were lost, seven of whom were women and children. Many died in or near their cars whilst trying to flee.

On the day of those fires, a significant number of household members with firefighting skills — generally men — were away from home and women were left to defend the property. Many women did not know which equipment to use, or how to use it. It became apparent that women are more likely than men to evacuate at the last minute and often with their children. This puts them at greater risk if they lack knowledge of bushfire safety.

The course content includes preparing yourself emotionally, understanding bushfire behaviour, bushfire warnings and danger ratings, deciding when to ‘leave early’ or ‘stay and defend’, and operating firefighting equipment in a safe way. The aim is to assist women to take important steps towards empowering and protecting themselves, their family and their community.

After the 2015 Pinery fire, there was a strong demand from women across the fire ground for more information about how to be better prepared for a bushfire. Firey Women workshops were held in Freeling, Pinery and Tarlee.

Local women acted as coordinators, seeking registrations, determining suitable times, finding venues and promoting the workshop to their communities.

The women in Freeling elected to hold four Friday evening sessions in April at the local Lutheran Church Hall. Women in Pinery chose to hold two daytime workshops in their local community hall in June and another round of workshops across four Friday evenings in August. Tarlee women chose to hold two Sunday workshops in August at their local Institute.

A total of 76 women, from teenagers to retirees, attended the workshops. Women from the same family – daughters, daughters-in-law, sisters, mothers and grandmothers – attended to support each other and learn together. They often travelled considerable distances, from towns around the impacted area, and beyond. The sessions were a mix of gravity, laughter, tears and strength. Many friendships were formed as experiences were shared. Many attendees then attended other recovery events together.

These women went on to share their learning with their family and friends, so the total number of people that benefitted from the program is likely to be several hundred. Participants have actively promoted CFS community engagement programs and, with the strong farming family connections that exist across regional South Australia, this has led to many subsequent presentations including another Firey Women workshop held at Maitland on the Yorke Peninsula in June.

Feedback indicated that participants felt empowered by what they had learned, were keen to implement their new knowledge and felt appreciative of the mutual support component.

The women from the Freeling Firey Women workshop decided to reunite in the lead-up to the next fire season and review their progress. This idea was enthusiastically taken up by other workshops, culminating in a Fire Season Ready Expo held at the Hamley Bridge Community and Sports Centre in September 2016.

Helen and Penny are CFS Community Engagement Officers and presenters of the 2016 Firey Women workshops across the Pinery fire ground.
Recovery with the community at heart

Kirsty Dudley, Pinery fire Community Development Officer and member of the Local Recovery Committee and the Community Action Group

When a disaster occurs in Australia, it is heartening to know you can always count on the community spirit to shine through.

Following the fire the community banded together to support each other with community-led relief centres, firefighting, fundraising initiatives, clean-up efforts, community events, information sharing and sometimes just a warm, consoling hug. It was inspiring to hear so many people who were affected by the fire say, “We are okay, but I think my neighbour could do with a hand”, when offered help.

Recovery is most successful when it is community-led, therefore when the local Agribusiness community discussed hosting a women’s planning workshop, aptly named Gals Aloud, in March 2016 to help guide the community recovery effort, it was all hands on deck. The community and businesses partnered with local and state government organisations to bring it to fruition. The community and businesses partnered with local and state government organisations to bring it to fruition. The question put to the 56 women attending from across the fire scar was, “What do you believe would aid the recovery of you, your family and your community?”

The responses were prioritised into 15 key areas alongside specific event and project suggestions. We asked men’s groups the same question and found most of the key areas they chose were very similar but prioritised differently. It was then full steam ahead to develop events, access resources and support projects that addressed the identified recovery priorities, ensuring relevance and value.

A Pinery Fire Recovery Community Action Group (CAG) was formed with representatives of the local community, Council Community Development Officers and some state government service providers who had direct roles in supporting the recovery efforts and had strong networks in the local community through Agricultural Bureaus or other industry groups. The group provides a valuable link between the Local Recovery Committee and the community, disseminating information, networking with kindred agencies and other community groups to support any initiatives undertaken across the fire scar. The insight provided by this group is invaluable.

Programs and events delivered or supported as part of the recovery effort were diverse, encompassing practical workshops such as the PIRSA Think Tank for farmers, grant writing workshops, financial counselling programs, record reconstruction and business continuity planning; well-being initiatives supporting people’s mental health through support groups and social networks; and events which directly upskill people in the region to offer psychosocial support; such as the Menswatch program, the St John Ambulance Mental Health First Aid training sessions and the Red Cross Resilient Leaders course.

Dr Rob Gordon, an expert on mental health in recovery, visited the region on two occasions to present sessions on How Communities Recover to help people better understand the road ahead.

A fun and informative afternoon with Maggie Beer, part of the Road to Resilience afternoon.
A free DVD of two of these sessions was made available to anyone in the fire ground by request. Dr Robyne Le Brocque also held very insightful sessions throughout the region on supporting children after trauma.

It was no surprise that the highest priority identified during our early strategic planning sessions was the re-greening of the landscape. It was wonderful to see various groups and community members growing seedlings to donate to fire-affected people and the Plains Community Churches program providing $100 nursery vouchers to people who lost their gardens. The Pinery Fire Revegetation Committee, with the support of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management, planned the hugely successful and informative event, Gardens Alive event at Anlaby with guest speaker Sophie Thomson from the ABC and a free shelter belt tree distribution day at the Barossa Bushgardens.

At the Road to Resilience event for women Maggie Beer donated her time to share how she and her family overcame many challenges including fire, flood and pestilence to build the business into what we know today. She explained that one of the keys to her success, after so many setbacks, was to accept assistance from friends, family and the broader community and embrace their desire to help you.

Community members worked hard to bring together events like the Tarlee Girls Night Out, which bought together 100 women for an evening of pampering and helpful information, the Wasleys Post Office reopening event, the CFS Firey Women workshops, a Blue Light Disco and various fundraisers. Groups built nesting boxes and installed them where habitats had been destroyed.

Artistic group Creative Chatter formed to work on handicrafts and share stories, equipment and materials while others marked the event through the creation of books or artworks. Groups from all facets of the community including Men’s sheds, church groups, Rotary, Lions, Red Cross and schools came together to help make these initiatives a success.

A Fire Season Ready Family Expo was held to provide people with important information about preparing for various emergencies. Some community groups began to formulate plans to upgrade their facilities to ensure their communities were better equipped to cope in the event of a disaster.

Seven events were held across the region to mark what Reverend Dr Phil Marshall dubbed the ‘unwanted anniversary of the Pinery fire’. These events were a chance to heal and reflect, however many used these events as their line in the sand to say ‘we have made it this far so we know we can do this and now it is all about the future’.

It has been such a rewarding and humbling experience to work with such dedicated people in every layer of this recovery, from community members, staff from local government and state government and many volunteers and staff from non-government organisations too numerous to mention here, but so deserving of individual thanks.

While recovery for both communities and individuals can take many years it might help to remember the community is full of ‘Stars in Your Backyard’ and, in dark times, they shine the brightest.

Community members gathered at Apex Park and the Hamley Bridge Institute on 8 and 9 April to create mosaic pieces for the Janet Hughes mosaic seat. Accompanied by a live band, everyone shared happy memories of Janet and created pieces that meant something to them (some shown below). Contributors included members of Janet’s family. The seat will become a memorial at Apex Park in Hamley Bridge.
Fire Season Ready Family Expo

In September 2016, the community gathered at the Hamley Bridge Sports and Recreation Centre to learn more about fire preparedness, hear from emergency service experts and contribute tips of their lessons learned. It was a great day out for the community. Even the kids learned First Aid!
A day at Anlaby Station

Taryn Mangelsdorf, Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges and member of the Local Recovery Committee

The focus of the day, funded by AMLR NRM and hosted at the historic Anlaby Station, was community well-being. The event provided the opportunity to present important information about increasing fire resilience through property and landscape planning, and the use of native plants in shelterbelts and gardens.

In perfect weather more than 170 local people toured the beautiful Anlaby gardens with hosts Andrew and Peter to hear about the region’s rich farming history, early settlers and the magnificent heritage listed gardens, trees and buildings.

Following lunch in the stables, the group was inspired by Sophie Thomson’s talk about soil health, garden planning with native plants and rebuilding a garden after fire. Helen Hennessy from the CFS spoke about planning and preparation for fire around homes and properties, and how she is working with Andrew and Peter to make Anlaby more fire safe.

Everyone went home with a rose from Knight’s Roses, flower punnets from Living Colour, fertiliser, hand tools and the opportunity to pick up some compost from Jeffries – all kindly donated products. The event contributed significantly to community well-being by providing a timely distraction from the fire-damaged landscape, a happy social occasion to come together around positive experiences while building community knowledge and resilience.

Guests enjoy the lunch provided

A star in our backyard

SA Bushfire Garden Revival

Thank you for growing and providing an abundant supply of plants free of charge. Our trip to Owen was amazing. Lots of friendly faces.

Dawn and Lewis
Singer Wes Carr comes from the Gawler area. After winning Australian Idol in 2008, he forged a successful recording career. After the fire, Wes was moved to write a song called ‘Hellfire’, a powerful tribute to the community and those who lost their lives.

Wes generously appeared to perform the song at the Pinery Fire Recovery Concert held at Seppeltsfield in the Barossa Valley on 14 May 2016. Wes has agreed to allow his stirring lyrics to form part of this commemorative book.

Hellfire

What has the devil made of us now?  
Burnt the seed right through the ground now, we’re lost in our hometown 
and folks out here may never be found

Hear the sounds of sirens 
and the screams and pleas of Mrs Hughes 
we gotta run we gotta get out now 
how do we out run the devil in working boots?

It’s hellfire 
Blue sky to black 
Nothing’s ever built to last 
so keep your head on boy, cause we got your back when this hellfire comes blazing down ya track to take everything you own and everything you had 
Just never look back…

All his life he’s been a working man 
Made a promise to his papa to keep this land 
heirlooms and a simple life 
now nothing but dust black as night

My grand daddy did build these walls 
That caved and crumbled under flames so tall 
Vale Mr Tiller 
went back to his truck to save his neighbour 
In this hellfire

Wes Carr, 2016
www.wescarr.com.au
Pinery concert raises thousands

By Alicia Laid-Scott

Suespnethsheld Winery's Vintage Collar was the setting for a fundraising event to help lighten the load of those affected by the Pinery fire. Held on Saturday night, the three-course dinner, catered by chef Owen Andrews, and concert featuring headline act Wes Carr and vocal ensemble KidDeeFe, together with silent and live auctions, helped raise approximately $30,000 for the Pilling Community Centre building project and Pinery fire Recovery programme.

Wes, the 2006 Australian Idol winner has strong connections to the local community. His father, Brian Carr is the CEO of Light Regional Council and was the key instigator of Saturday night’s community fundraising initiative.

Wes' performance of “Holdin”, a song he penned as a tribute to those affected by the Pinery fire, brought the crowd to its feet. Powerful, evocative lyrics evoked a wrongdoing image that matched the story of Wes’ father'scollar on a Saturday night. Wes' voice was only too true.

Host and MC for the evening, Suespnethsheld Winery’s Managing Director, Warren Randall, welcomed special guests and thanked the many sponsors who helped make the evening possible.

Mr Bill O’Brien, Light Regional Council Mayor, spoke of how the council area was “significantly hit” by last November’s bush fire. He was overwhelmed by the “extraordinary response from community leaders and ordinary people” who “put their hands up” to help.

“Local communities and local people have felt the effects of this devastation greater than any in our history and we, as a community, have responded with pride, respect and harmony,” Mayor Bill said.

“We are determined in our efforts to rebuild our communities and will continue to support those who have been affected. To express our appreciation and assist those out there...you can hold your head up very high and be proud of your council, our people and communities. We sincerely salute you.”

Mr Owen Schueler, vice chairman of the Pilling Recreation Park Committee, also spoke at the Pilling Community Centre event. The centre provided a way of providing continuous support for the region’s people following the fire.

In-kind support and cash donations of $300,000 has been collected by the committee to raise and support a community for the region’s people following the fire.

“We truly have been helped by the fire, the true meaning of community. Owen told the audience.

“Support and support for the people to come out of the fire, to help those who have been affected. We sincerely salute you.”

Mr Brian Carr, who has been instrumental in the recovery effort, described how Wesley’s performance hit the nail on the head and was a fitting tribute to those affected by the fire.

‘We wanted something really good to come out of something really bad... that’s what we want to achieve and we are well on our way thanks to all of your support.”

Singer-songwriter Wes Carr and his father Brian Carr, Light Regional Council CEO whose painting depicting the Pinery fire raised $2,300 at Saturday’s fundraising dinner and concert. Brian’s painting also features on Wes’ special issue CD, released to raise funds for the Pinery Fire Recovery Programme.

Members of local vocal ensemble KidDeeFe had the opportunity of a lifetime on Saturday night when they performed with 2006 Australian Idol winner Wes Carr. Seven choir members, including Marilyn O’Brien on trombone, Caroline Rau, Rob Andrieus, Anna Moor, John Claydon, Bill Moon and Geoff Schell joined the singer-songwriter for a couple of numbers. The entire choir also performed during the evening’s programme.

Courtesy The Leader

barossaherald.com.au

Wednesday April 20, 2016

NEWS

Let us join in the chorus for Pinery relief

FOR PINERY: Musician Kathryn Zerk will be performing with Jamie Cook at Trinity College’s Chapel and Balaklava Town Hall in a Pinery Bushfire Relief Concert.

IT’s time to join together and help raise money in a relief concert raising funds for Pinery fire victims.

Acclaimed musicians Kathryn Zerk and Jamie Cook are preparing to perform at the Trinity College Chapel and Balaklava Town Hall.

Ms Zerk and Mr Cook are both known to perform a variety of pieces, with all proceeds going directly to the State Emergency Relief Fund for the Pinery bushfires.

Ms Zerk grew up on a farm near Pinery, and attended Balaklava Primary School and High School before moving into the city.

She is an incredibly accomplished musician, claiming first class honours in voice performance at the Victorian College of the Arts, before she moved to London as a professional singer.

Since moving to Sydney, she has devoted herself to her time to teaching young voices and using her skills to raise money for a variety of charities.

Jamie Cook has links to Balaklava and Pinery, after beginning piano studies with Dr Stephen in Balaklava before going on to study in Adelaide, Prague and Freiburg.

Mr Cook has presented a variety of concerts in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, France and Switzerland.

Tickets are $30 for adults, $25 for concessions, $15 for children aged 16 and under, or $70 for a family of two adults and two children aged 16 and under.

81
Kathy Marriner
Kathy saw a need and was determined to fulfil it. From seeing women lose sewing machines and material, Kathy created Creative Chatter so items were replaced that were lost.

Unknown

Above: Nurturing creativity at Creative Chatter group event.
Below: A men’s barbecue event held in the fire area.

A star in our backyard

Creative Chatter
Thank you to everyone at Creative Chatter for their friendship, support and kind donations. We have been so blessed with so much love, help and support from our wonderful community.

Thank you everyone x

Helen Sandow-Childs

BLOKES BBQ
TONIGHT 6PM
Local ladies lap up the luxury

ON Tuesday, June 21, the Tarlee community hosted a ladies night for women affected by the bushfires. It was a fantastic night of fun and friendship, organised by the members of the Tarlee Hal and Community Services committee, and the Recovery team.

More than 100 women enjoyed the night which included pampering, shopping, fashion parade, floral arrangement demonstrations and much more.

The ladies enjoyed hearing from guest speakers, Fiona Mcintosh, writer, and Linda Elidudge, rural consultant, with examples of resilience and strength and many moments of humour in their talk.

A free goody bag was awarded on arrival along with a free glass of champagne thanks to the community.

Guests enjoyed a free massage, nail polished, plums, gifts, fashion parade and much more as well as products for sale.

Catering by Tash from 'Tarlee Takeout' was enjoyed by all with the bar available thanks to Sashley from Tarlee Hotel.

More than 30 vouchers and gifts were donated and went out to local ladies at lucky door prizes. Other prizes included donations of goods from Sashley and Maggie Beer, Rav-its prizes at a Christmas hamper, Barossa Novotel accommodation, cooking classes and Barossa market voucher, and all the attendees were overwhelmed with the prizes.

The general feedback from the women was - “More positive community gatherings like this please.

Freeling fundraiser hailed a success

Organisers behind Saturday night’s Freeling Bushfire Fundraiser have hailed it a success and estimate at least $20,000 has been raised.

Spurred on by Mr Carol Scandrett with a massive team of volunteers to pull it all together – the Freeling train station precinct was filled with people enjoying entertainment, food, an auction and fun atmosphere.

Carol estimates 2,000 people attended the event which was created to support those in the township affected by Yowenber’s Pinery fire.

“It was amazing,” said Carol.

“It was a great day and everyone had a great time.”

A newly formed committee is expected to meet next week to assess where the funds will be distributed. However, Carol said they have already decided to donate the proceeds from the auction of a firefighing unit direct to Blaze Aid.

In addition, Carol said the committee has been set up to support the town’s CFS cadets as well as people who have lost their homes or have been affected by the fires.

Carol, who is the owner of Foodworks Freeling, created the event after hearing of people’s experiences of the day following the devastating blaze.

She said it touched her, how many people she knew personally who were affected, and she felt overwhelmed she wanted to help in some way.

Carol said she was initially going to be a small fundraiser with some music but Carol soon gained the momentum and support to put on the town fundraiser.

“People donated a lot of work was done from Freeling and it was great to see everyone come together,” said Carol.

“This has helped put Freeling on the map in a positive way.”

Next: Courtesy The Leader
Support services

AS the emergency service workers rolled into Mallala last week, one local club was there to offer its support as soon as it could.

Putting its new emergency services trailer to use, the Mallala & District Lions Club set up at the town’s CFS shed on Wednesday night, providing food and drinks to those battling the Pinery fire.

The club shifted to the Mallala R.S.L. on Thursday, and, by Friday, it had cooked up to 35 kilograms of sausages, as well as large amounts of steak and chicken.

Mallala & District Lions Club life member Geoff Donlon, who was instrumental in acquiring the trailer last year, said the emergency personnel had appreciated their efforts.

“We’ve been extremely busy,” Mr Donlon said.

“Don’t forget small deeds that meant so much to us. We will never forget small deeds that meant so much to us.

“Thank you.”

Sharyn and Paul Cocks

A star in our backyard

Don Bubner
All the extra work above and beyond what he so readily does every day for his Lord. He worked tirelessly after the fire doing so much for the victims and the community.

Loretta Aikins

A star in our backyard

Chris Jenkin and family
Chris spent hours saving my house in the Pinery fire. The family spent hours and days helping me to clean up in the aftermath.

Christine Young

A star in our backyard

Marilyn and Wayne – Freeling Post Office
Their generosity to our family after the fire. We will never forget small deeds that meant so much to us.

Thank you.

Sharyn and Paul Cocks

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Marilyn and Wayne – Freeling Post Office
Their generosity to our family after the fire. We will never forget small deeds that meant so much to us.

Thank you.

Sharyn and Paul Cocks
A star in our backyard
Lewis
Sheer tenacity and determination to plough through what seemed like never-ending chaos. Never giving up and encouraging me not to give up.

Dawn

Communities lend a big hand

The Kapunda Football Club had bottles of water for rescuers in Dutson Park. The Kapunda Tourist Park organised tea, coffee and milk, while Clare Castle Hotel is collecting and delivering a lot of food and goods every day to Freeling.

Freeling
I love the way the people of Freeling pulled together to help in any way they could.

Marilyn

A star in our backyard
Roger Edson
Helping put out the fire as it came through the fence, by joining us on the ‘bucket brigade’.

Ron Hammat

Author sets sights on a novel gift

BY SONIA FOWLER
Kapunda
A LITTLE girl’s heartfelt comment on TV after the Pinery fire devastated her family home immediately struck a chord with Kapunda author Gillian Cooper-Curtis. After hearing the little girl’s profound words, “I’ve lost all my books,” Ms Cooper-Curtis initiated a Bushfire Book and Toy depot
“Books give much pleasure and during hard times become a treat of escape—no matter how young or old,” she said.
“By fire evacuation pack prepared in readiness for an emergency has always contained three special books—one signed by an author who died last year.”
Watching the Pinery fires on television, Ms Cooper-Curtis realised that of all her possessions, her books were special and so losing them would be devastating.
“Readers and authors sympathised with the plight of this girl and others who lost their books and toys in the devastation of the Pinery fire,” she said.
Kapunda residents as well as Ms Cooper-Curtis’s author colleagues from around Australia, including members of the Romance Writers, and the South Australian Echidnas (writers of children and young adult fiction) immediately donated to the cause.
The participating authors hope their books will provide a helping hand with the kids’ recovery from their trauma.
Ms Cooper-Curtis plans to personally deliver all the donated items to those in need.
“My spare bedroom is full of boxes of new and pre-loved books and toys.”
Another local award-winning author, Ms Rosanne Hawk, has donated many books to the depot and has also collected more from the Echidnas.
A large box of books arrived by post from Sean Williams, Adelaide’s best-selling ‘Star Wars’ author.
“The response has been overwhelming, and some have said they are sorry they can’t give more,” she said.
“Donations have arrived anonymously on my doorstep—I would open my front door in the morning, and there was another bag or box.”
Some generous children from the community have also donated some of their pre-loved toys.
Other donors have left messages which will be given out at the toy run. Some books have been signed by the authors.
Thanks to those who have donated including Wendy Yell, the Clayde family, Dale and Bill Mattuck and Catherine Evans, NSW.
Books and toys can still be left at Ms Cooper-Curtis’s depot in Adelaide, or her Kapunda home.
Those interested in donating can email kopperkas@gmail.com for details.
The Bushfire Book and Toy ‘run’ itself will take place in late February.

KIND KIDS: Kapunda Kindy donated iced coffees for the GFS volunteers during the Pinery fire.

Emergency services personnel Helen McKinnon, Miriam Price and Judith Hackett.

Clare Castle Hotel’s Cathy Cooper has a drop-off point for donations.

Stan Alston and Gary Davis with Gary’s donated kay. Photo Les Lloyd.

Deb and Brendan Metten from Lil Mo’s Bakery, Kapunda Football Club president Matt Ryan and Kapunda Tourist Park’s Terry Ryan.
The long road to recovery: The Wasleys Post Office

Dawn Richter


I officially moved to Wasleys to live in our restored cottage and to run a Post Office. I had worked in the education department for 20 years and never thought I would do anything else.

The process prior to opening was stressful as we prepared an old building for its new use. We built walls and a ceiling, painted, re-wired, installed post boxes and generally cleaned up what was to become the Wasleys Post Office. We were still painting the night before we officially opened. We had a five year plan to pay back all of our set up costs and fully stock our shop, after which I would be able to draw some income for myself. That date would be 18 July 2016.

So close and yet so far...

25 November 2015: The day Hell broke loose.

It was hot and windy and there was generally an eerie feeling in the air. I always feared days like this and worried that a small fire would get out of control quickly, but I had faith in our local community of farmers, landowners and CFS to act quickly. I had witnessed their efforts previously.

Our amazing community could never have prepared for what happened that day and would never be the same again. Smoke, fear, panic and disbelief filled our beautiful little town and threatened to destroy our world.

Why? Why? Why?

The ensuing hours ensured that everyone would have a tale to tell. Some would be retold ad infinitum and others would never be heard. Life would never be the same. The quiet pain and suffering of many drifts in the air.

Post office rebuild

THE Wasleys community will rebuild, according to the owners of the town’s post office, which was, last week, gutted by fire.

Putting out a large sign out the front of the fire-damaged building over the weekend, Lew Richter thanked the community and vowed to get the post office back up and running.

“Dawn and I will rebuild and with your support we can again have a great post office,” Mr Richter wrote.

The town post office was one of several buildings in Wasleys damaged in last Wednesday’s Pinery fire, which hit the town around 3pm.

“We’d mown the grass and there was nothing to burn, so it must have been an ember attack that has got into the back veranda and into the roof,” Mr Richter said.

“...We’ve lost a little bit, but we’ve got our home, at least, and some people have lost their homes.”

Mr Richter and wife Dawn evacuated from Wasleys on Wednesday afternoon at the last minute, reportedly taking time to warn other residents of the approaching fire front.

The couple has owned and run the post office for the past four years and have become well-known and respected locals in the town.

Thankfully, their home, located near the post office, survived the blaze, with damage contained to the shed and backyard.

Wasleys mail is temporarily being redirected to the Roseworthy Post Office, with residents asked to collect after midday and to bring identification.

It is understood parcels and mail already at the post office when the fire hit have escaped serious damage and have also been transferred to the Roseworthy Post Office for collection.

Ellouise Crawford
25 November 2016: The anniversary

One year later. A year of challenges, heartache, battles with red tape and bureaucracy. A year of community spirit, support, love and encouragement. Sometimes the line between the two would become a blur.

Many times it would have been easier to walk away and is a constant battle to keep going. The struggle continues in my heart and in my mind. Why bother? Why work so hard for so little? What difference does it make? It can all be taken away in a blink of an eye and when we’re gone, life goes on regardless.

Through the despair there are many glimmers of hope and clarity.

The Recovery Centre created the ‘Stars in our Backyard’ project, where everyone was encouraged to recognise the wonderful deeds that were performed during and after the Pinery fire. I became quite overwhelmed when I started trying to think about the many ways that I had been supported by my wonderful community. I’m sure that I will not remember everything or everyone but I am hoping that, through this process, you will all know who you are and accept my indebted gratitude.

March 2017: A new reality

The journey back is still moving both forward and backwards at times. Our beautiful building is taking a new breath of life. The new roof is a major achievement and the beginning of the next chapter of successes and challenges as the journey continues.
Bowlers rally together

FROM the moment members first learnt their beloved Wasleys Bowling Club had succumbed to the devastating Pinery fire, they began rallying together and focusing only on the future.

Years of memories and effort went up in flames just after 3pm, last Wednesday, when the Annie Terrace clubroom was engulfed by a fire front that also swept through the wider town, taking with it homes, outbuildings, vehicles and farming land.

Wasleys Bowling Club president and life member Barry McDougall said while the place will be greatly missed, the community has been quick to rally around each other and get back to playing.

Less than 24 hours after the club was damaged, about 40 members gathered at the site for a barbecue, drink and to support each other.

From there, the help has been rolling in from bowling clubs and businesses all around the country, including the Berri Bowling Club, which was out on Friday to cut the green.

“It’s marvellous how it goes around with bowling clubs,” he said.

“They stick together and help each other.”

Fellow member John Martin said the focus is on moving forward.

“To see it when we came out on Wednesday night was just heartbreaking, especially for all the club members who have put time into here, it was disheartening for them,” he said.

“But we are going to come back a lot stronger and we are going to be a very big family.”

Dozens showed up on Saturday for an impromptu game and practise out on the green, while members are expected to be out practising again tomorrow night.

Last night Adelaide Crows’ players, including Sam Jacobs, Richard Douglas, Tom Lynch and Jake Lever, participated in a bowls fundraiser for the Wasleys Bowling Club and wider district, at the Mallala Bowling Club.

Wasleys’ bowling support

THE Hanley Bridge Bowling Club is hosting a tournament later this month which will help raise funds to rebuild Wasleys’ destroyed bowls venue.

The Wasleys Bowling Club’s facilities were lost in November’s devastating Pinery fire which killed two people and destroyed 87 homes.

Secretary for the Hanley Bridge Bowling Club Roger McQuire said the lawn bowls community had been hit hard by the tragedy.

“The partner of one our own Hanley Bridge members lost their life in this fire,” he said.

“When the Wasleys Bowling Club lost their green we were the next closest club, so we immediately offered the full use of our greens and clubhouse to Wasleys members so they could finish their season with as little disruption as possible.”

Wasleys’ members will continue to have full use of the Hanley Bridge venue until their own club is rebuilt.

Mr McQuire said team registration for the event has already sold out. “The lawn bowls community has been incredibly supportive,” he said.

On the day, 20 teams and around 80 players will be competing, with the $500 registration fee going straight to the fundraising initiative.

Although we don’t have any more room for teams, we really want as many people out supporting the tournament as possible,” Mr McQuire said.

“There are some great raffle prizes to go in the draw for and all income from the entry fees, bar, raffle profits, special sponsorship funds and other fundraising activities will be passed over to the Wasleys Management Committee.”

For more information, call the clubhouse on 8528 2210, or Roger McQuire on 0407 796 560, or email rogerandrew@tmb.net.au.
What a comeback!

Four months after their clubrooms and greens were destroyed by the Pinery fire, the Wasleys Bowling Club went on to win the Wooroora Men's Bowling Section Division 1 Grand Final at Balaklava - the first premiership won by the club in its 80 year history.

New greens, installed in February 2016, are the pride of the club. Completion of the new clubrooms will top off an amazing recovery by the Wasleys Bowling Club and serve as testament to the resilience of every member.
Above: Courtesy The Bunyip

**A star in our backyard**

*Wakefield Regional Council*

All the work done by outside staff clearing trees etc off the roads and grading the drift from the roads. Many long days and into the night.

*Rodney Reid*

**A star in our backyard**

*Black Dog Ride*

They held a BBQ at the end of a run at the Wasleys Ridley Arms Hotels and donated the proceeds to us. We were overwhelmed at their generosity and also to two local community members who added to the fund.

*Wasleys Post Office*

**A star in our backyard**

*Anon*

Quietly placed a beautiful handmade and painted pollet Christmas Tree at the front of our damaged Post Office with a note of support. We’ve kept the tree safe and will display each year.

*Dawn and Lewis*

**A star in our backyard**

*Roseworthy Post Office*

When Wasleys Post Office was not available they took on the extra mail. On top of their usual workload they sorted mail for the residents of Wasleys. Thank you.

*Anonymous*

**A star in our backyard**

*Unknown*

Met a lovely lady at work. We had a great chat, a cry and a hug. I returned to work a few days later to find an envelope with a lovely note and $10 to buy a new chook for my kids as we had lost ours.

*Felicity*

**Free hay**

Farmers impacted by the Pinery fires will receive a share in 400 bales of hay from the State Government.

Working with Primary Industries and Regions SA, Agriculture Minister Leon Bignell said the donation from the Flaxley Research Centre was worth $34,000.

“There’s currently a very real need for feed, given the loss of paddock feed and hay stocks in the fire, and we welcome any other donations as well,” Mr Bignell said.

“When we heard staff were cutting and baling the last of the pasture crop at Flaxley, before it transfers to new owners in July, we knew it would be best used by the farmers who needed it most.

“PIRSA will also cover the freight costs to Roseworthy campus, where livestock SA will coordinate the distribution.”

Livestock SA fodder co-ordinator John Sharp said the hay donation was extremely well-timed as a lot of the agisted livestock was now returning to the Pinery fire area.

Livestock owners requiring assistance with further assessment and fodder supply can contact Livestock SA (08 2577 2299 or 0409 919 994) to organise pick-up from the Roseworthy campus.
Generosity, kindness in time of need

ONE person in particular who usually helps out others on a weekly basis is Kapunda Community Shed president Tim Harris.
But this time, Mr Harris and his family were on the receiving end of kindness after they were evacuated from Kapunda to Robertstown during the Pinery fire.

"When we arrived in Robertstown we were blown away with the hospitality and generosity of the wonderful people there," he said.

"The Robertstown General Store, which was closed due to the fire, specifically opened their doors so we could buy some goods. Our daughter had her baby so she needed some supplies and when we went to pay the owner he said, 'It's okay, no, you don't need to pay.'

"We did give them some money but we couldn't get over the generosity and compassion."

Mr Harris and his family were greeted with the offer of a coffee or tea when they arrived at Robertstown and a barbecue dinner was being organised for people who had been evacuated.

"It was really quite amazing that here we had perfect strangers going home and grabbing food out of their freezers to come and feed us when we were in need," he said.

"I'd really like to thank the people of Robertstown for everything they did."

Kapunda Rotarians, Brenton Diener and Frank Ware sort tools for donation. Courtesy Barossa and Light Herald

Below: Courtesy Plains Producer

Rotary Club of Kapunda supply tools for bushfire victims

Since the Pinery bushfire, the Rotary Club of Kapunda has been discussing how best to support bushfire victims.
Local sources informed them that tools for dismantling and rebuilding were desperately needed.

Rotary member, Mr Frank Ware said that the club wanted to donate something useful.

"Experience from past natural disasters tells us that people donate with good intentions but some goods end up being surplus to needs," he said.

"We learned that tools were something that were desperately needed so we concentrated on that," he added.

To that end members of the Club were asked to donate any surplus tools they had.

The Club donated $300 towards the purchase of tools as well.

Fellow Rotarian, Mr Brenton Diener and his son, Anthony had a contact with a metropolitan hardware store.

"Through personal contact we asked ‘Garden Centre’ at Golden Grove to donate and they were very generous," Mr Diener said.

With all the donations put together a near overfilled trailer load of hand tools, work gloves, garden tools and wheelbarrows was delivered to the Watsleys relief centre.

"You should have seen their eyes light up when I delivered them," Mr Ware said.

"I know that they were going to be put to good use," he added.

The Rotary Club of Kapunda has also been contacted by other Rotary Clubs in South Australia and interstate.

The club is suggesting that they might also like to donate tools with the Rotary Club of Kapunda brokering the purchase and delivery.

Rotary is also supporting victims through the Humanitarian 2020 Disaster Recovery Fund and the Rotary Australasian Benevolent Society.

Rotarians across the region are also volunteering with local authorities as well as offering their expertise.

As well as tools donations, the Rotary Club of Kapunda is also supporting the benefit concert to be held at the Kapunda Harness Racing Club this Saturday.

It's going to be a big job, but gifts come rolling in

Louise Michael reports:

Many local farmers are in the clean up process after the Pinery fire, with thoughts slowly but gradually turning to fencing.

Clare winemakers and grape growers have donated posts to be used for the Blaze Aid recovery.

Currently, about 9000 posts have been donated, with some already delivered to properties in need of fencing material.

Walters farmers, David and Tim Cawne, received a load of fence posts last week but are still in the process of clearing up fence lines.

"We've been busy cutting up fallen trees off fences and fence lines, along with stripping up paddocks to stop drift," David said.

"We've had to re-fence about seven or eight kilometres, with about a kilometre or so of fencing completely burnt out, along with many stainer posts which will need to be replaced."

David said some of the wiring would need to be assessed as they went, and hoped it will last as they won't get all the fencing done this year.

Some fences need to be repaired or replaced prior to the fire, but David said fallen limbs or trees, and bushes made access very difficult.

However, that has now changed, as once the clear up is done, David and Tim will be able to re-fence their paddocks properly.

David said they had about 2000 acres burnt by the fire, along with 36 rams, 30 old ewes and 250 lambs.

"It could have been worse but we had most of the ewes away on transfer."
The State Emergency Relief Fund

Joe Ullianich, Chairperson
State Emergency Relief Fund Committee

The SA Pinery Fire Relief Appeal closed on 30 June 2016. It raised more than $2.19 million in donations and interest, including the government’s $1.0 million contribution. By the closing date, 575 applications were received by the State Emergency Relief Fund (SERF) Committee from people requesting a gift payment. In addition, 16 applications were received through the committee’s Community Strength and Resilience Initiative from community organisations and groups requesting support for their community development projects.

In distributing the donations, the expectations of donors and the needs of the fire-affected individuals and communities were paramount for the SERF Committee.

Consistent with the approach taken with previous disasters, the eligibility criteria for gift payments developed by the committee contributed to short and long-term outcomes for individuals and communities.

On behalf of the committee, I extend our thanks to everyone who donated to this worthy appeal and trust that the recipients felt some measure of support and comfort knowing that so many people cared for them.
Support from Bendigo Bank

Last December, Bendigo Bank presented a cheque for $85,000 to the fire-affected community. The funds were a combination of $65,000 donated by the public and $20,000 from Bendigo Bank through their Community Enterprise Foundation.

The presentation took place in Freeling and Judy Gorey from Tarlee and Lorinda Bayley from Light Regional Council accepted the cheque on behalf of the region. Judy expressed her sincere thanks for the donation and highlighted some key points in the community’s recovery.

The funds will be used, in partnership with St John Ambulance, towards the following projects:

- fire awareness signage on major arterial roads in the region
- six defibrillator units for CFS groups in the region
- two St John First Aid training sessions
- six community barbecues
- events in the region
- two women’s resilience events.

We sincerely thank Bendigo Bank for their generous donation.

A star in our backyard

Don Bubner and the Adelaide Plains Churches

Their kindness and support and generosity in helping us start our lives again after losing everything in the fire.

Helen and Barry Childs

Boot shakin’ raises $50k for fire victims

Finery Fire

Firefighters from across the state last week donated $50,000 to those affected by last year’s Finery fire, following a recent Shake the Boot fundraiser.

Australian Professional Firefighters Foundation president Greg Howard presented the cheque to Chris Parish, a community representative on the State Emergency Relief Fund.

Mr Howard said the event was usually held in November. “After the Finery fire we decided to run a special Shake the Boot fundraiser in December,” he said.

Clad in full protective gear, around 50 firefighters hit the streets across metropolitan Adelaide and north of Adelaide collecting money as part of an impromptu Shake the Boot appeal on Friday, December 4.

Local MP for Light Tony Piccolo praised firefighters for their efforts in raising the money, which will go to the SA Finery Fire Appeal.

“There were plenty of stories told to the collectors on the day and the community were not only generous by donating their money but also generally forthcoming with a yarn,” he said.

Mr Howard said donations have continued to roll in from across the state for the past month.

“We had one anonymous person donate $5,000, and even a person whose own house burnt down donated.

“CFE firefighters donated personally, with one firefighter and his family choosing not to give each other Christmas presents but to donate $1200 to the appeal.”

Mr Piccolo said the donation demonstrated that the community, and in particular, our paid firefighters had not forgotten about the trauma the Finery fire victims experienced.

“The foundation was established to support burns and road trauma victims and their families, and this donation reflected the compassion for fire victims by our paid firefighters,” he added.

- Laura Eckert

Courtesy Barossa and Light Herald

SUPPORT: With the cheque for $50,000 are Wakefield Regional Council’s Chris Parish, firefighters Greg Howard and Cecilia Low and Member for Light Tony Piccolo.
Volunteer group receives $120k boost to help Pinery fire victims

Above: Painting by Lynette Reichstein, Councillor from Light Regional Council, that raised money for people impacted by the fire when it was auctioned at the Local Government Association (LGA) Annual Dinner.

**Pinery fire recovery gets $120k boost**

FROM p1

Roseworthy BlazeAid co-ordinator Wendy Cope said a number of generous donations from residents in Two Wells, Long Plains, Mallala and Balaklava resulted in a significant amount of money being raised.

“These funds have been used to extend BlazeAid’s South Australian fleet with six new trailers being built nearby in Gawler and all of the equipment sourced locally,” she said.

“And when the camp closes at Roseworthy, these trailers will be stored here in SA until they are needed again.”

BlazeAid volunteer John Tuckwell said more resources were desperately needed to assist with clean-up efforts on the fire ground.

“The lack of tools and trailers proved to be quite restrictive, but now we’ll be able to send six more teams out to help the farmers,” he said.

“We are still doing a lot of clearing, but we are now starting to fix some of the fences, because farmers have to get their sheep back onto their property.

“We are helping a lot of farmers, but there’s still a lot of people out there who need to approach us for assistance.”

Mr Tuckwell said more volunteers were still needed to help with clean-up efforts.

*Courtesy Barossa and Light Herald*
Tzu Chi Foundation

David Wang

When the Tzu Chi Foundation learned about the Pinery fire, which caused so much devastation and trauma to the affected community, we contacted the State Recovery Office promptly to enquire how we could send aid to the affected residents. We then immediately mobilised our volunteers to help raise funds and manage distribution of cash cards.

A total of $58,450 in grants and cash cards was given to 79 households together with 199 eco-blankets at two distribution events in Mallala and Wasleys.

Residents responded to our sincerity and care with beautiful smiles and hugs, some even had tears in their eyes because they couldn’t believe a charity organisation they had never heard about had invited them to receive the cash cards. Our volunteers listened to people’s stories, their losses and the traumas they had been through — the emotions hidden in the deepest of their hearts for the past months. We hope our organisation has helped those in need through our contribution.

Our Founder Shih Cheng Yen believes that when people work together with sincerity and love, hearts will be warmed and inspired toward purity and goodness, society will be more peaceful and harmonious and there will be fewer disasters in the world.

We are confident that with faith, love and courage, the community will soon recover, embracing a brighter and promising future.

Tzu Chi also supported victims of the January 2015 Sampson Flat fire, providing 157 families with a total of $117,750 in cash grants.
Thousands raised for Pinery effort

GRIGN donations from SA growers, and a financial donation from Glencoe Grain and Vitezza, have raised more than $200,000 for local charities to assist growers and communities affected by last year’s Pinery bushfire. A total of $105,789 worth of grain donations were made and the company contributed a massive $110,000 to the cause.

The beneficiaries of the donation were Blazaid – which received $135,000 – Tres For Life – $50,000 – and the SA Country Women’s Association – $17,789.

Vitezza general manager of operations Tim Krause said he was pleased to place the donations on behalf of the company and the generous growers.

“As key participants in the grain industry in SA, we are exactly aware of the devastating impact that the bushfire had on local communities,” he said.

Mr Krause underlined the importance of the communities and the growers and the

creeds were reserved for the fire recovery efforts,” he said.

“The amount of grain donated by growers was overwhelming and we’d like to thank them for their generosity and community spirit,”

The company worked with its Strategic Silo Committee, which includes local growers in the region, with Blazaid, Trees For Life and GWA identified as providers of significant long-term support to growers and communities in the region.

The Pinery fire was a devastating event on the community, with multiple people left without homes, and two lives lost.

More than 65,000 hectares of land were burnt by the fire which started on November 25 of last year.

Over 90 homes were destroyed by the thunderous blaze, while tens of thousands of live stock were sadly killed.

In addition to the stock, more than 150 farm sheds and outbuildings perished in the Pinery tragedy, but communities are rebuilding.

Animals start returning home

A WHOPPING $84,000 has been donated to help save fire-affected animals in the Pinery bushfire.

The money will go towards the purchase of bandages, dressings, antibiotics, drugs and fluids for the animals presented to Adelaide University’s Roseworthy Veterinary Health Centre.

“Thousands of livestock plus many pets and wildlife suffered critical burns, smoke inhalation and other injuries as a result of the fire, while, sadly, thousands more did not survive.”

Fregley the cat is just one of the many survivors who received lifesaving treatment in Roseworthy after suffering burns to 40 per cent of his body. He was found in a paddock next to the burnt remains of his family’s home and has spent several days in the Roseworthy campus’ intensive care unit with 25 other dogs, cats and wildlife as well as a number of horses.

On Friday staff at Roseworthy’s Equine Health and Performance Centre celebrated the full recovery of two horses injured in the Pinery fire. The horses were the first of those injured in last month’s blaze to be released and reunited with their families.

Treatment for these animals has been provided at a discounted price or without charge, so the recent donations are crucial to the university’s treatment of injured pets and livestock.

Ellinouise Crawford & Kimberley Pratt
Hay and cash from bank appeal

CHILDREN’S CENTRE BRANCHES OUT WITH LOCAL GIVING TREE

Louise Michael reports:

BALAKLAVA Community Children’s Centre (BCCCC) has been thrilled with the generosity of the whole community, with its “Giving Tree” overflowing with gifts for those affected by the recent fire.

BCCCC deputy director, Cara Nielsen, said many of affected families had already attended the centre to access gifts for their children.

“It’s not just for those families affected by the fire, but also for other family members, such as grandparents and other relatives who have lost everything in the fire, and who may like to select Christmas presents for their grandchildren,” Cara said.

We have stockings or socks here too which can be filled with toys or games for the children.

Cara, who started at the centre at the start of this term, said the response to the “Giving Tree” had been incredible.

This was organized in conjunction with the Hawker SA Relief Centre, with a stipulation that toys or games had to be delivered new and unwrapped.

“It’s important for children to be able to choose or receive new toys,” Cara said.

“This way also is not intrusive for parents who can drop in anytime to select some things for their children.

Hamley Bridge mother of four, Rachel Ireland, visited the centre last Friday with her children, who were very excited when they saw the tree.

“We’d like to thank everyone for their generosity and kindness — not just in Hamley Bridge, but the whole district and farther,” Rachel said.

Rachel, husband David, and their children, lost their home and possessions in the fire, but said they were strong and would get through this ordeal.

“Bad things don’t define us, we will recover and come out stronger for it, but we are not the only ones having to go through this,” Rachel said.

Rochelle’s children, Makaeda, Izak, Jakob and Blake had already been through the many gifts at BCCCC before choosing a selection to take “home”, which is currently at a friend’s house.

Cara said the “Giving Tree” would continue to run as long as possible, and encouraged other families affected by the fire to contact the centre if they would like to be involved in this program.

“We can arrange after hours visits of that parents, or they can ask a friend to collect items for them,” Cara said.

If any members of the community would like to contribute to the “Giving Tree” please drop your new and untagged gifts at the centre.

Please phone Cara Nielsen on 0412 368 301 for any queries or further information.

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The Stockport community has endured multiple floods and fires over the years. Farmer Brian Koch is a member of the Pinery Fire Local Recovery Committee and the Community Action Group and also served on the former Flood Recovery Committee. Here he shares some observations on resilience and dealing with disasters.

“The flood was hard on the people impacted but they were resilient and bounced back.”

“We were always aware a fire could happen. We had 1,000 litre farm fire fighting units on the back of two utes.”

“We headed over to Stockport and made a fire break around the back of the town. Matthew my son got the tractor with a disc plough behind the town. It was luck of the draw that we were able to put that break in place.”

“One of the biggest thing right from the start was the insurance. Fortunately we were adequately insured to cover our major losses.”

“Recovery assistance has improved remarkably over the years. Some people say that councils aren’t doing anything but when you’re involved in the recovery committee like this it just shows you how much is getting done – that includes NGOs, government organisations, and others.”

“Life has to go on. Our family has always looked at the goals down the track rather than looking back. Think of the years ahead. We wanted to get the farm back on track and replace the livestock, machinery and infrastructure.”

“Don’t dwell on what you lost, think about what you’ve still got.”
Pinery Fire: Then and now

In late November 2015, one of the worst fires in the state’s history struck the Lower North. Sparked at Pinery, the blaze went on to claim two lives, 90 homes and nearly 90,000 hectares of land in the space of about 24 hours.

Plain Producer Editor, Les Pearson, took some photos of the charred landscape the day after the fire tore through the district.

Fast forward to September this year, following the extreme rain during the growing season, and the scenery has changed quite substantially.

Les describes the scenes in each caption.

“Then”

“The smouldering landscape was a sight to behold, while the water bombers were still working tirelessly with CFS crews to contain potential flare-ups.”

“Now: late 2016”

For months afterward, this home like many others in the Hamley Bridge/Barabba area would have been subject to regular dust storms.

“The land was stripped bare, like a scene from an arid desert. It was heartbreaking to see all the wonderful green and yellow crops now filling the empty landscape which created havoc and plagued home owners for months afterward.”
For farmers, this was an unprecedented fire. It was during an early harvest. It was fast, ferocious and enormous. Previous fires such as Wangary had covered a similar area but nearly all the land burnt this time was arable and mostly under crop. The fire raged over some of the State’s most productive land, fuelled by the heavy crops that had been, or were about to be harvested.

In six hours, over 82,000 ha were burnt - nearly 4 ha (an area the size of two football ovals) per second. The speed and the distance the fire travelled caught many unawares. Farmers took farm fire-fighting units to a fire tens of kilometres away never imagining it would sweep over their properties.

The blaze consumed whole properties, even when they were blocks kilometres apart. Millions of dollars’ worth of headers, tractors, chaser bins and field bins were destroyed in the paddocks where they had been pulled up earlier in the day. Livestock perished. And there were those that lost their house – their home, homestead, headquarters and heritage.

Immediately afterwards, farmers’ attention was focused on livestock: disposing of the dead, treating injured and finding feed for the survivors. PIRSA officers, SAVEM (volunteer veterinarians) and the University of Adelaide’s Veterinary School, helped assess, treat and destroy injured livestock. Agistment and donations of feed were being offered through farmer and agribusiness networks. Livestock SA coordinated fodder donation and distribution and within a few weeks the University of Adelaide’s Roseworthy Farm became a depot for storage and collection, the farm staff assisting with handling it. BlazeAid arrived and volunteers started helping farmers clean up and re-fence. Many of those affected by the fire had helped other farmers after fires before; now that help was returned.

Farmers’ generosity in helping one another is often unrecognised. Just as farm utes swarm from all over the district and beyond to help put out a fire, so do offers of fodder, fencing, agistment, equipment and labour because ‘what goes around, comes around’.

For some, the soil erosion that started with the winds accompanying the fire was just as devastating as the fire itself. Farmers had nurtured their soil for years and reaped bigger and better crops as a result of this care.

In one cruel blow, the stubbles and pasture cover protecting the ground’s surface was incinerated and the soil carried away by the vicious winds that blew for days afterwards.

Within a day farmers were out trying to stop the soil blowing away. Using borrowed machinery and comparing their techniques and results with one another, they started roughening up the soil surface to stop the wind’s sweep. Within a week, Agricultural Bureau members, industry leaders, consultants and advisers organised a workshop for farmers to discuss how they were going to restore their land.

Wind erosion is very difficult to stop and there were many dry, windy days when the soil would move again, nullifying the efforts people had made to stabilise it. This was an ongoing cause of despair and despondency for farmers, their families and the whole community. Soil crept in everywhere and dust storms were constant reminders of the fire and the awful conditions on that day.

Any growth of plants was welcomed. Weeds that would normally be sprayed off over summer were left to grow and provide some greenery in a sepia landscape. This spawned an outbreak of Russian wheat aphid, a pest previously undetected in Australia. The green growth provided a picnic for the insect, which is now thought to have been present in low numbers for a while in Australia.

Opening rains in May heralded a promising start to the season. Rain continued falling through winter and spring to the point of waterlogging, run-off, overflowing watercourses and flooding. Crops and pastures grew well and optimism grew with them. The landscape in late spring was a lush, green carpet with the promise of bountiful crops. Livestock had abundant feed and thrived. The fabulous façade hid the stress, struggle, fatigue, financial worry and frustration that people faced in the months after the fire. Farming is a time-demanding, complicated, hard and expensive occupation at the best of times without the additional burdens of restoring and replacing houses, livestock, land, sheds, machinery, fences, watering systems, tools and equipment that have been accumulated over generations. The progress in recovery to date of farms so badly affected by the fire is a testament to the determination, courage, strength, tenacity and sheer hard work of many.
Soil stabilisation after the Pinery fire

David Woodard,
Sustainable Agricultural Consultant, Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA)

The Pinery fire left the land devoid of any soil surface protection rendering it vulnerable to catastrophic soil erosion. This was a major concern for landholders who immediately talked to one another to discuss, test techniques and develop strategies to reduce the threat.

A field day coordinated by Mallala Agricultural Bureau members, and funded through Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges was held to discuss and promote useful soil and crop strategies. Farmers then used tillage practices to roughen the soil surface which reduced wind speed and soil movement. They borrowed or rehabilitated machinery that would bring clods of soil to the surface and act as a wind barrier and experimented with full, strip, tramline, checker board and patterned cultivation. Tillage was relatively successful on the heavier soil types such as loams and clay loams but soils that continued to drift were the coarser sands and fine sandy loams. Water erosion risk was also substantial in the hills and slopes of the fire area.

Claying sandy soils stabilises the soil surface and reduces wind erosion but claying techniques such as spreading, delving or spading are not widely practised in the fire area so only a few local farmers had some skills and expertise in their use. Adding clays to sandy topsoils has long term benefits such as improved resistance to erosion, improved soil cover, increased water and nutrient holding capacity in the soil, and reduction of water repellence.

A project to demonstrate, provide technical advice, and coordinate claying contractors to treat badly eroding areas was established. The project also monitored soil changes following testing of various soil management practices. This project is supported by the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board through funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program.

Landholders also investigated alternative treatments and methods for soil stabilisation including using straw, Tarac Technologies’ products of spent grape marc and TPR, compost, chicken litter waste, feedlot manures and synthetic polymers.

Farmers and their advisers also considered what ramifications the fire and its heat had on the soil resource and subsequent crop and pasture performance. Information was shared widely and appropriate weed control and fertiliser use strategies put in place.

Farmers were worried by the potential for significant losses of crop nutrients in dust and drift and also frustrated by the frequency of weather fronts producing small amounts of rain and strong and prolonged winds. The small amounts of rain loosened soil particles on the ground’s surface which were picked up by the winds, creating large dust storms across the fire scar.

Landholders sowed their land as soon as they could to get crops and pastures growing to provide soil cover. Early growth was very good so soils were soon protected from the wind. In early winter, the hilly areas received heavy rains while crops were still young so run-off caused water erosion. As crops and pasture grew through winter and spring, the soil health improved and growth was prolific leading to record yields in the area.

The 2016 year was an exceptional one for crops and pastures. Farmers affected by the fire also reaped very much above average, if not record, yields. PIRSA’s Crop and Pasture March Report indicates that yields in the Lower North area (which includes a substantial proportion of the fire area) produced approximately 465,800 tonnes of grain from 119,800 ha. A breakdown (shown below) of the Lower North estimates of area sown and tonnes produced show how individual crop types fared over the last two seasons. It was reassuring for farmers to see how well their land had recovered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>2016 t/ha</th>
<th>2015 t/ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vetch</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canola</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Most of us pride ourselves on having no erosion anymore with the conservation farming systems that we run and we haven’t seen our soils for probably ten years. This year we’ve got far too good a look at them”

Andy Barr, as told to ABC’s Landline

“As soon as the wind comes up the dust comes up and it wears you down. When the winds are up they’re just blowing dust all day long. It’s not nice”.

Mark Branson, as told to ABC’s Landline

“It was heartbreaking to watch the ground drift when we had worked so hard over a long period of time to get good soil cover… We had some terrible winds after the fire where visibility was down to 100 metres.”

John Lush, as told to Grain Producer SA.

“Yesterday was horrendous. I was out driving around with some guys from Primary Industries and Regions SA. At one stage there when we were driving around the visibility was down to less than 10 metres because of the dust that was flying off the fire ground”

Richard Konzag, as told to ABC news.
Growers focus on protecting cropping soils after fire

Grain growers in South Australia's fire-ravaged Lower North cropping region are being advised to develop and implement tailored and collaborative erosion control strategies based on soil type and drift susceptibility.

Minimising topsoil loss is a priority for growers in the region who are working together to reduce the impact of fire on their now bare cropping land and to protect their livelihoods.

A recent fire recovery and soil protection meeting organised by the Mallala Agricultural Bureau brought together around 150 local landowners and experts from numerous organisations to discuss soil-saving options and the immediate and longer-term agronomic repercussions of fire in terms of crop rotations, weed control and soil nutrition.
Recovery begins for Freeling farmers

by Alicia Lüdi-Schutz

Farmers hit by the Pinery Bushfire are embarking on a massive recovery programme with support from Light Regional Council who are seeking government assistance.

Mr Richard Dodson, LRC General Manager, Infrastructure and Environment, said the November fire left a “charred canvas” in the Council area and landholders at a community meeting highlighted that burnt pine trees were unlikely to recover and were at risk of collapse causing safety concerns.

Based on site visits and farmer feedback, it is believed around 3,000 trees may need to be removed.

Light Regional Council are now working on a “Pinery Fires - Tree Affected Programme” which will engage local farmers and farm hands to work under Council supervision to remove and dispose of the fire affected trees and re-plant suitable species.

To fund the scheme, Council are seeking a $60,000 grant from State Government to match Council's contribution of $60,000 along with a $120,000 grant from the Commonwealth Government in the hope of starting the programme at the end of this month.

Freeling farmer, Mr Gavin Schuster said support would be welcomed as tree removal is not covered by insurance policies.

“All this tree removal, which is very expensive, is going to have to come out of the cash flow for farmers. Obviously in this next twelve months, farmers are going to be very cash strapped and if we can get a helping hand from Council and government to do this, it would be terrific,” Mr Schuster said.

“That’s why we want to work with Council and see if we can get some funding to be able to help farmers to clean the landscape up and get some new trees planted to make the area look better and get it back to how it was.”

Aleppo Pines are the main tree species needing removal.

“This area would have the highest population of pine trees in any district of the fire ground,” said Mr Schuster who is eager to get the region cleaned up.

“We need to remove them as quickly as possible because they are an eye sore for the district and just a horrible reminder of the fires that went through. The quicker we can remove them, the better,” he said.

Third generation Freeling farmer, Mr Chris Heinjus began the clean up last week. He employed a specialist demolition excavator operator and said it was quick and efficient with minimal environmental impact.

“Essentially, we’ve taken the view to try the excavator... They’ve come straight from the Waskley’s Mill this morning after working out there with the fire recovery,” Mr Heinjus told The Leader last Friday.

With an estimated cost of $15,000 to remove all the dead pine trees on his property, he will then replant the area with more appropriate trees.

“If you look around homesteads in the area, it’s not uncommon to see 50 to 100 pine trees,” said the CFS volunteer.

“These trees increase the fire intensity behind them. One, they won’t come back and two, they already were a fire hazard to begin with whereas eucalypts that were basically burnt, have all re-shot.”

The Heinjus family activated their fire plan on the day of the disaster with the household evacuating early. Mr Heinjus stayed back to defend his home with water pump, generator and spare hoses all at the ready.

“I didn’t feel unsafe here. We had a plan and it put us in a good position. I think that’s one of the reasons as to why we still have a house,” he said.

He is encouraging farmers to learn from the experience and engage in the recovery process.

“From a psychological point of view, dealing with it and not having these sticks of burnt material around - it’s basically the start of the recovery,” said Mr Heinjus.

“It’s really important for your headspace to get this stuff done. Suddenly I can see a clean slate and then I can see trees growing - I can start to see the rebuilding happening.”

Freeling farmers, Chris Heinjus and Gavin Schuster are encouraging fellow farmers to begin the recovery process and were impressed with how quick and efficient this demolition excavator removed burnt trees from the Heinjus farm last Friday.

Courtesy The Leader
Hoof prints fading

Sandy Brown

I walked the field today
just like yesterday,
looking for your hoof prints, fading,
ash and sand so quickly erasing.

I watched what's left of your favourite tree swaying.
Gently cracking from moisture lacking.

I opened the door today and listening for your nicker,
A harsh wind answered with the burnt tin trigger.

I stood at your trough today, still filled with death's black ash.
I haven't the heart to clean it yet...

I'm sorry.

Mother nature cruelly divots the earth where you're buried.
Just in case my stark memories might be varied.

The silent wish to bury my face in your mane, one last ride,
to hear you eat, to stand by your side.

Just one more chance to.....feel.

You are here.... watching me,
as your comfort I seek,
Memories flow out of my eyes,
and stream down my cheek.

Till we meet again loyal and faithful steed.
I'll wait for you down by your tree.
Where I swallow hard and bury the pain.
Paint on a smile then return to the fold again.

In memory of our fur family lost from the Pinery fire on
25 November 2015.
Oaks Jack Spanner, Jodie the wonder pony, Winky Sweet
Abby, Mr McFinnis.
Gone but never forgotten.
Rest in Peace.

The grave markers of Sandy Brown's horses.
After the ashes have gone

Helen Childs

It's months ago since things went wrong;
It's all got lost in the media throng.
I understand that;
But to me it doesn't seem that long,
Only feels like yesterday.

I really want to smile, i really do;
And appreciate all of natures hues, understand her beauty and destruction.

But then again, I see Black, all the moments of that day attack and i
Feel sad.

I'm an ever-changing canvas of humanity and emotion,
But then my mind entertains the notion; "you can be happy, smile and be free from the haunting
memories that crash over me like a stormy ocean.

So, the next chapter begins in life; new memories to make and to rebuild lives.
The chameleon changes, the phoenix rises, comes the strength which sometimes surprises.

But i am determined to overcome things that are done,
And look forward to everyday new day and every new sun.

My memories are there forever in my heart, but i know i am blessed to make a new start.
To live again among grass so green and be home and feel serene.
Life since the fire

Trudy Ireland and Anton Noack

The Pinery Fire changed our lives.

Our house, the sheds and all their contents were completely burnt out. We lost all of our personal possessions and Anton's tools of trade. My children, Phoebe and Sam Ireland, lost many of their personal possessions, mementos and trophies, including pictures of their late father, David Ireland Snr, who passed away when they were 8 and 3 years old.

My stepson, David Ireland Jnr, his wife Rachel and their four young children, who lived next door, also had their house totally burnt out and lost all of their possessions. David and Rachel are now building a new house in Hamley Bridge, which is coming along very well.

We decided not to rebuild in Hamley Bridge and have since moved to Gawler East. We purchased an established home so that we could recover quickly from the impact of the fire. We are glad to now have a safe and comfortable house.

It had a massive impact on our lives. We are all glad to have survived the fire and to be recovering well.

We are very grateful for all the support we received from community groups, church groups, the State Government, the public, our family and friends and many caring and generous individuals who have helped us to recover from the impact of the Pinery fire.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
The Aftermath
Craig Chapman

Piles of rubble, twisted metal, homes burnt to the ground
scenes that many still find hard to get their heads around
mem’ries of the driving flames, the heat and darkened skies
people with a deep, abiding sadness in their eyes

Constant worry, problems mounting, hard to get to sleep
nightmares of the tortured deaths of horses, pigs and sheep
hay bales in the paddocks just reduced to blackened spots
minds remain in overdrive, with stomachs tied in knots

Chasing up assistance keeping many on the run
wondering if there was something someone could have done
lingering anxiety that never goes away
friends and loved ones mourned by those who miss them every day

Struggling to recall what the insurance broker said
nagging realisation of the work that lies ahead
many treasured items which will not be seen again
hoping joy will soon return, but still not knowing when

Nutrients and top soil get more scarce with every gust
fed up with the impact of the never-ending dust
houses which survived amongst so many that were lost
prompting so much guilt, while others daily count the cost

Sheds and farm equipment lost, each site a story tells
tractors and machinery just haunting burnt-out shells
some will move, but cockies clearly haven’t got that choice
courage isn’t guaranteed to calm a quiv’ring voice

Fences down, or buried in the ever-shifting sands
evidence of post-traumatic stress in trembling hands
stories of relief from those who only just survived
many can’t believe how fast that fire-front arrived

Amidst the devastation, there’s renewal to be seen
grateful for the rain which brings a welcome tinge of green
signs of epicormic growth rejuvenate the trees
small things are important after being on your knees

Many voice frustration and are desperate for some help
some just suffer silently and never give a yelp
families encouraged by the many who assist
finding inspiration to move forward and persist

Fatalism questions the desire to roll the dice
logic states emphatically it couldn’t happen twice
optimism takes the view there’s nothing left to burn
faith maintains, eventually, the good times will return

Craig Chapman was a Site Supervisor with Habitat for Humanity.
This poem was largely a result of his experiences and also formed part of the Adelaide Plains Poets Winged Pods Anthology.
I was just a child but I remember that day in the garden, my mother in her wellington boots and wide-brimmed hat, lovingly cradling in her dirt-brown hands a tiny tree-ling. ‘This one’s for you,’ she smiled, bending so that I could see. Together we knelt in the rich brown soil as in reverent prayer and nestled the tree-ling into the lush warmth of its new garden bed.

We grew together, that little tree and I, watching summers pass, etching birthdays and schoolyard crushes into its mottled skin. It was there that I stood on my wedding day and pledged my love. When my mother died I sought comfort there among the leaves.

But then came the fire tearing through town greedy for fuel and in its greed it took away my mother’s gift. It took the leaves and the mottled skin and the etchings but it couldn’t take the weddings and birthdays and schoolyard crushes. Today I stood in my wellington boots and wide-brimmed hat, lovingly cradling in dirt-brown hands a tiny tree-ling. ‘This one’s for you, mum,’ I smiled – and kneeling in the rich brown soil, nestled the tree-ling into the lush warmth of its new garden bed.
The first anniversary of the Pinery Fire took place on Friday 25 November 2016. It was an unwelcomed anniversary because it reminded people of the horror of the day, the losses suffered by many and the hard work of the past year in the recovery process. It did stir strong thoughts and feelings and, for some, even the thoughts and feelings put behind resurfaced. It was a reminder that recovery is a long process with times to move forward and sometimes taking a step back. We were not surprised that the approaching anniversary of the Pinery fire stirred up strong feelings and we acknowledge the range of feelings people expressed in the lead up to the anniversary.

Community events – care and compassion

The anniversary events in the district were an attempt to create community events to express care and compassion for all. They were gatherings where people were able to support each other and shared experiences of the past year. There was time to express gratitude for the courage of many people through actions, large and small. Stories of generosity emerged involving family, friends and strangers far and wide. Those that lost their lives and were seriously injured were remembered and honoured. The majority of towns impacted by the fire created an event to mark the anniversary to meet the needs of the local people. Some events drew on the spiritual resources of prayer and Christian reflections while others did not. Events ranged from formal occasions with speakers, music and a community meal while others were a simple gathering of the local residents around a community barbecue.

A turning point – moving towards hope

Coming to terms with loss, grief and adjusting to the new circumstances of our lives is difficult. The psychological wounds are real and the healing process seems so slow. Anger and frustration are common feelings in the loss and recovery process that people had to go through. The anniversary events became a marker in the life of the community and a physiological turning point conveying the message of hope that next year will be better than the last. There was a community-wide acknowledgement of the courage of many who worked to keep us safe, gratitude for the generosity of others in people’s time of need, and affirmation that we can continue to look to each other for encouragement and support.

A personal comment

I believe that hope is stronger than despair, love is stronger than anger, and encouragement can change the direction of an individual’s and community’s life. May our towns be filled with hope for the future, made stronger in love and care, and be communities of encouragement where each person is valued.
After the fire

Val Hammat

It’s been fifteen months now since that terrible day that a ravaging monster raged through our communities. In Pinery it grew from a single flame driven by a vicious wind that blew in from the north-west at great speed. Many of us will never forget the terror of that day.

Alan Tiller was the first to be taken by the beast, it then moved on taking homes, animals and livelihoods with it. At Hamley Bridge that same beast took my sister Janet Hughes from us. The Tiller family and mine suffered the greatest loss on that day. That hurt will fade in time but neither of them will be forgotten.

In the aftermath the community spirit was a wonderful thing to see. There was so much support from so many people. Most of us would be grateful to our own and the wider community that came to our aid.

As time has gone by, Mother Nature has started to mend her many wounded children. Some of them will never regrow and they are a constant reminder of what went before. We look at the skeleton of the old Barabba School and feel saddened that it will never again be home to the gentleman that used to live in it. So much was lost to him that day.

It was wonderful to see the crops come up this season. They were so lush and green then turned their beautiful golden brown. With harvest came the trucks full of grain and rolls and squares of hay being taken to distribution points.

Sheep and cattle have started to appear back in the paddocks; new life in the shape of lambs and calves is a joy to see. Their antics as they play are lovely to watch.

New houses are coming to completion and will soon be ready to be turned into homes by the families that will move into them. New memories will be created within those walls. Children will grow to adulthood and have families of their own. Life will go on and the cycle will continue.

For us it has been a long road back, a time of highs and lows as we look toward a future without Janet in it. Her partner and son are slowly coming to terms to a life without an integral part of their family, the person that nurtured and cared, loved, laughed and cried with them.

We are thankful that this summer has reached its end without a major incident. Winter will soon be upon us and another year will pass by. Life goes on and we move along with it.

In conclusion, we would like to acknowledge and thank the many people that we have met in our passage through the last thirteen months. You have all helped us in various ways. We send the members of the CFS a big thank you. So many volunteers out there keeping us as safe as they possibly can.

Front row, L-R: Graham Duncan, Mayor Rodney Reid, Holly Cowan, Rev Dr Phil Marshall. Back row L-R: Emma Christian, Kirsty Dudley, Rev Sue Ellis at the Owen anniversary event. The fire suit in the background is a new initiative for fire fighting units in response to the Pinery fire.
12 months on
*Maurissa Watson*

One year has passed since that terrible day
When the Pinery Fires got away
Still very fresh in the minds of us all
We try to forget try to stand up tall
But the truth is it haunts us day in day out
Trying to figure why it came about
The homes that were lost, now starting anew
But memories were lost not only a few
The heartache it brought to many a home
Feelings that made some feel very alone
The loss of loved ones still in their prime
The fingers of flame gave them no time
The pain is returning as the anniversary draws near
Refreshing our thoughts. Refreshing our fear
We all need support of a family and friends
Until from this horror our fear finally ends
So thing of the people and all what they lost
Their loss came with a terrible cost

Reflecting on the anniversary
*Larry Sullivan*

To the community of Freeling,
Thank you for a great day at Gratitude Day. The sun has set on this day, and the sun will rise again in the morning.

It was great to see the kids having so much fun laughing and playing games, as were some parents. It was great to see people smiling at last!

The fire consumed everything in its path. We all now have to show the same courage, strength and determination that we showed last year in the face of imminent danger and stop this beast of a fire from consuming any more.

Will it be easy? No.
Will it be quick? No.
Will it be this week? No.
Will it be this month? No
Will it happen? Yes, yes it will!
For the sake of our loved ones, families, friends and community it has to.

We are lucky enough to live on and live on we must. For the alternative is simply not acceptable to any of us.

I am suffering with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from the fires, but after today I have decided to treat this fire like a terrorist: IT WILL NOT RUN MY LIFE ANYMORE!

I, no, we have the power to not let this beast destroy any more. With the support and love around us all, I know we can ALL conquer and move on with our lives and enjoy every single minute we have left on this planet and our loved ones.

We will get through this together.
Stay strong and all the best in the future.
Last time
Colleen Moyne

Last time
you took us by surprise.
You came,
creeping at first,
making your presence felt,
keeping your intentions to yourself.

It took time
for us to realise.
We felt
confident at first
that we had control
that we could fight you ourselves.

But in no time
you showed your fury
striking
where it hurts most.
You won that round;
You took our homes and our bounty.

Yet with time
we have become strong;
We have
made ourselves ready,
and if you come again,
we will lock arms against you.

Next time
you may take our homes,
our fences
and our fields,
but you will not take…

Our community
Our loyalty
Our resilience
Our confidence
Our neighbourhood…
Our brotherhood.

Perspective
Colleen Moyne

If it wasn’t for the fact
that fires can destroy,
we might enjoy
their beauty
and their reckless will
and understand the thrill
felt by those who light them.

We might see beauty
in charcoal landscapes
and in scarred trees
and black smoke
carried on the breeze,
in orange flames
that grope and tease.

Living in the city,
fires were a sad story
on the 6 o’clock news,
so I would choose
another channel
and put another log
in the wood-fired stove.

But then I moved
to the country
and fire became
a familiar adversary.
that commanded respect
An enemy I didn’t expect
That now lived over my fence.

An adversary
That dances around me every summer
like a boxer, waiting for a chance
to move in for the attack.
One year ago, it came –
and despite its rage and despite its fury,
only now I see its beauty.

Today I see the perfect circle
of life – according to nature.
The destruction that cleared the way
For new growth to begin
The heat that burst the seed
For new life to emerge
The heartbreak
That opened new hearts.
Students express gratitude

ELLOUISE CRAWFORD

FOR Freeling Primary School, this Friday’s Pinery fire anniversary will serve as time for its community to celebrate having one another, to reflect on how far it has come, and to acknowledge what it is most grateful for.

The school will be hosting ‘Gratitude Day’, which will kick-start with a barbecue lunch for students and their families, followed by a whole afternoon of activities themed around being thankful.

The main events include the unveiling of the ‘Buddy Bench’ and the creation of a time capsule to store away students’ recordings of what they are grateful for.

The time capsule will be reopened on next year’s Pinery anniversary, only to be refilled with new gratitude notes for another year.

Principal Nicole Crawley said Gratitude Day is about making Friday’s one-year anniversary a really positive time for students, most of which experienced some sort of trauma during, and following, the Pinery fire.

“We decided that rather than reflect on how traumatic it was, we would look forward and look at the things we are grateful for, look at the things we have to celebrate, and really involve the families and community in that,” she said.

“A number of families were separated on the day and we did have some children that were at school with us until about 10pm at night, because their families weren’t able to get through, so we thought it would be nice for families to have the opportunity to come and just spend the afternoon together.”

Mrs Crawley said the time capsule is about being able to look beyond oneself, look more widely at the broader community, and support students to develop a sense of global citizenship.

“It’s a fantastic opportunity for them to reflect and actually verbalise the things they are grateful for,” she said.

“Some students have talked about being grateful for having a bike, or having a puppy, and for other students it’s gone a little deeper and they’ve talked about being grateful for having an amazing family who provide for them and give them shelter.

“Obviously, because of the time of the year, and it is very forefront in kids’ minds, a lot have said they are grateful for the CFS and for firefighters.”

The school’s new Buddy Bench is aimed at making students feel included, and was largely organised, and designed, by the Student Representative Council.

School councillor Jenni Hewett said the children have been enthusiastic about planning activities for Friday, many of which will be run by year six and seven students, for the younger classes.

“I think it will just be a lovely community day,” she said.

“It’s about bringing the school and the community together, and it’s celebrating the wonderful community Freeling is.”

Freeling students are grateful for...

A family, because we do lots of fun stuff together.  Cooper, age 8

School, because you get to learn and try new things.  Elia, age 8

The CFS, because they saved Freeling.  Riley, age 9

Air-conditioning, on hot sunny days.  Holly, age 9

Such wonderful friends to play with every day at school...I also love every second of my entire life.  Miah, age 10
Adjusting to change

LAURA COLLINS

It has been a tough year for so many families across the Pinery fire zone, but many are now settling into a new way of life.

Freeling resident Chris Davidson is one of nearly 100 residents who lost their homes as a result of last year’s November 25 blaze. Ms Davidson said it has been a major adjustment moving into a new place, after living in her Templers home for almost 26 years, but she has reached a place of acceptance.

“We weren’t looking for a new start, we were put in the position of needing a new start,” Ms Davidson said. “You could go on forever being upset, but that really isn’t going to achieve anything.”

“We were determined we were going to get back to the comfortable living that we had without having to spend all of our money,” Ms Davidson said. She decided to move to Freeling as it was most convenient for her grandson, who attends Freeling Primary School.

“Jade goes to Freeling Primary School and I thought it was in my best interests to move somewhere that was close by, so he could walk, or ride his bike, when he gets to the right age,” she said. “So it is teaching him to be independent, which we couldn’t have done in Templers, we were too far away.”

Ms Davidson said she has gotten through the tough time with support of close friends and family, but also members of the community, too.

“I haven’t been able to cry about it, I think the saving grace for me has been being able to talk about it,” she said. “I think talking about it is really what has stopped me from having a breakdown, or a major setback.”

Ms Davidson said although her new Freeling house cannot replace her Templers abode, she feels very grateful to have all of her loved ones nearby.

“At the end of the day we may not stay here when Jake is finished school, but we are happy enough here,” she said. “We just had things and T-shirts on during the day of the fire and that was all we had to our name, but we actually didn’t lose our limbs, or our lives.”

“So we are grateful in a way.”

Community commemorative events

Pinery community commemorative event
When: Friday, November 25, 4:30pm.
Where: Pinery Hall, Pinery Road.

Malilla commemorative event
When: Sunday, November 20, 10am.
Where: Malilla Uniting Church, 7 Traeger Road.
On Friday, November 25, the church will be open for a quiet reflection between 10am and 1pm.

Hamley Bridge coffee, cake and chat
When: Friday, November 25, 3pm to 6pm.

Where Hamley Bridge Institute, corner of Dahmyna and Gilbert streets.

Hamley Bridge community barbecue
When: Sunday, November 27, 12midday to 4pm.
Where: Hamley Bridge Community Sports and Recreation Centre, Stockport Road.

Wadley’s Thanksgiving event
When: Friday, November 25, 6:30pm, followed by free barbecue from 7pm.
Where: Wadley’s Institute, Annie Terrace.

Resilient recovery

LAURA COLLINS

Pinery fire local recovery co-ordinator Alex Zimmermann has been amazed by the many recovery efforts displayed by the community in the 12 months following last year’s devastating blaze.

Mr Zimmermann said recovery efforts began almost immediately after the fire event and have continued throughout the year.

“I was part of a number of meetings immediately after the event where members of the community came together to be advised about the progress on the fire, and what was happening in the recovery,” he said.

“When particular public meetings were fantastic examples where people shared their own stories, and I think they were the beginning of showing how people were coming together in their time of need.”

“Since the immediate weeks after the event, we have seen a lot of fundraisers and extraordinary events.”

Mr Zimmermann said the resilience shown by affected communities, and the support provided to individuals, has been extraordinary.

“What I have seen is that they have remained engaged, notwithstanding it has been 12 months since the fire,” he said.

“Many have been very positive in assuming focus within their community who were having difficulty coping, and that remains the case because people are recovering at different rates.”

“There will always be people that take a bit longer to recover from an event such as this, and people will continue to support those people, in those communities, as well.”

Mr Zimmermann said the significant amount of recovery events and initiatives exemplify the enormity of the Pinery fire.

“I think they served to show how close to total losses we came for many of these towns and communities,” he said.

“You had to be there to actually hear the stories and the close calls.”

Mr Zimmermann said he is very appreciative of not only locals, but also to the wider South Australian community, and the State Government, for their continued support.

“I think support extended right throughout the state because this fire was so extreme and it had never been seen before,” he said.

“The ferocity and the speed of this fire definitely puts this fire as one of the worst in the history of the state, and caused complete devastation as well as deaths and injuries.”

“It was just a miracle that we didn’t lose anymore people.”
Joy Woodroofe wrote this song for the first anniversary church service that was held on 20 November 2016.

For Joy the song reflects on the time that has gone past since the fire, and how it has made the community look out for each other more than ever before.

It was a day, that changed our lives forever
it was a day, that started out the same way.
This day that turned
our lives around
that brought despair
that made us scared...
it was a day.

Broken hearts and broken lives
just tryin’ to comprehend.
It makes no sense
tryin’ to figure it out
without warning to prepare.
Now picking up the pieces
it will never be the same
but together as we soldier on
today’s another day.

It was a day, that changed our lives forever
it was a day, that started out the same way.
This day that turned
our lives around
that brought despair
that made us scared...
it was a day.

Now picking up the pieces
it will never be the same
but together as we soldier on
today’s another day.
It was a day, that changed our lives forever
it was a day, that started out the same way.

This day that turned
our lives around
that’s brought repair
that made us care...
it was a day.

This day that turned
our lives around
that’s brought repair
that made us care...
it was a day, it was a day.
Supporting local schools after the fire

Kathryn Bruggemann, Department for Education and Child Development

The Pinery fire either impacted or threatened 24 preschools, primary schools and secondary schools under the authority of the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). Many staff members and their families lost property and were personally affected by the fire.

Students and staff alike were evacuated as part of the emergency procedures and endured darkness, smoke and direct fire scenes. Difficult and sporadic communication contributed to confusion and feelings of uncertainty relating to imminent danger. Some sites closed for the next two days because roads were unsafe for bus travel or driving.

When schools reopened following the fires, it was clear that the impact had devastated families and staff, and it was vital to support each school towards their recovery.

Work began during the Christmas holidays. DECD contacted Red Cross and other agencies for resources to support each community.

Leaders worked with staff to look out for individual children within their classes so they could be connected to appropriate support. DECD social work services worked with staff to develop their ability to provide trauma support and also deal with their own trauma recovery.

Team leaders met regularly throughout the year to ‘debrief’ and discuss a systemic approach to supporting schools. Feedback was provided to DECD to inform any future emergency response. A formal review was conducted and some important recommendations have now been adopted.

In the months that followed, a number of community and government agencies, including Red Cross, Global Care, Lions Clubs and the Local Recovery Committee were there to support the schools in their recovery. This included presenting a number of events. There were afternoon teas, trauma recovery programs, information sessions and community events.

DECD service providers and leaders continued to visit staff and students. Children and their families were referred for further support, staff accessed our Employee Assist Service and the Education Director monitored the well-being of leaders.

The recovery continues. We have learnt a lot about our emergency responses and the impact of trauma on our school and preschool communities. We are forever grateful for the concern, action and care that other agencies and individuals have provided to us during the aftermath of this devastating event.

To all of you, we say a very big thank you!
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A message from Harrison and Leighton Schuster. Image courtesy The Leader

Wasleys Post Office. Image courtesy The Leader
Community thanks

It has been observed by many people that, although devastating, the fire has brought communities together. For many, the horrific days of the fire and the recovery that followed have been marked by moments of gratitude to the emergency services crews who worked tirelessly to protect the community during the fire and the many community members and groups who gave their time in large and small ways to ease the burden of others in the months that followed.

Communities throughout the fire scar took every opportunity to show their appreciation. Snapshots of these are shown in this chapter. It also includes contributions from the four local council areas impacted by the fire.

A message on Stockport Road

THANK YOU CFS XXX

THANKS FIREYS MERRY CHRISTMAS

THANK YOU CFS AND ALL VOLUNTEERS FROM HAMLEY COMMUNITY

A message on Stockport Road

Image courtesy Plains Producer

Photo by Darret Robinson.

Image courtesy Plains Producer
An attitude of gratitude

**Marianne Roberts**

It was a day like no other, and one none of us will ever forget. The ‘Pinery Fires of 2015’, as they have become known, touched the lives of many across the state — particularly in the district hardest hit. Even today it seems surreal, unfair and horrific.

Many thanks have been given to the fire fighters and I add mine to those. However, thanks and appreciation must be given to those who were heroes in their own households: those who fought to battle the inferno with no previous fire experience, neighbours who beat back the flames with hoses and wet sacks, sons who climbed on neighbours’ roofs to install sprinklers or stand on main roads, hoses in hands to put out trees that were well alight, husbands who left their houses alight to save neighbouring properties and homes that had a chance of being saved, families who put their lives and plans on hold to help us.

These are my heroes, and they may never be publicly thanked for these actions, so I thank them here. Family, friends and neighbours, thank you for all you did on that fateful day. Thank you for all you have done since.

Through this adversity there are many things that make us grateful and appreciative of our community: the kindness and support of strangers who gave up bedding, clothing, food and money, volunteers who worked tirelessly to restore fences and remove the blackened trees, those who cared for animals and turned up with supplies of food, water and clothing, furniture and kitchen needs, the care centre staff who gave us direction, food, financial support and focus, the recovery centre who still today call regularly to check on us, and the churches and organisations who have helped in so many ways.

Thank you most sincerely, one and all.
Recovery Committee members

Sincere thanks to everyone who served as part of the Recovery Committees.

Community leaders

- Pastoral Care - Rev. Phil Marshall (volunteer)
- Stockport — Brian Koch (volunteer)
- Stockport — Dick French (volunteer)
- Owen — Don Bubner (volunteer)
- Grace Plains — Peter March (volunteer)
- Tarlee — Judy Gorey (volunteer)
- Building support — Ematis Prelgauskas (volunteer)
- Freeling — Lynette Reichstein (volunteer)
- Hamley Bridge — Wendy Williams (volunteer)
- Emma Christian
- Taryn Mangelsdorf
- Lorinda Bayley
- Lol Hill
- Holly Cowan

Representatives from Councils, State Government and non-government agencies

- Adelaide Plains Council (formerly District Council of Mallala)
- Balaklava Community Centre
- Barossa Council
- Billy Graham Chaplains
- BlazeAid
- Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council
- Country and Outback Health
- Country Fire Service (CFS)
- Country Health SA
- Country SA PHN
- Department for Communities and Social Inclusion
- Department of Environment, Water, Natural Resources (DEWNR)
- Department of Education and Child Development
- Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI)
- Environment Protection Authority
- Global Care
- Habitat for Humanity SA
- Health SA
- Light Electoral Office
- Light Regional Council
- Local Government Association
- Natural Resources Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges
- Northern Health Network
- Pastoral Care
- Pinery Fire Recovery Centre
- Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA)
- Rawtec
- Red Cross
- Regional Development Australia - Barossa
- Regional Development Australia – Yorke and Mid North
- Samaritan’s Purse
- SA Water - Engineering Functional Service
- South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM)
- South Australia Police (SAPOL)
- State Emergency Relief Fund (SERF)
- State Recovery Office
- The Barossa Council
- Town of Gawler
- Volunteers from throughout the community
- Wakefield Regional Council
- Zero Waste / Green Industries SA

A star in our backyard

Cr Lynette Reichstein
Lynette (and her book) gave countless hours of support across the region – coordinating distribution of donated clothes and furniture, feeding BlazeAid volunteers, and numerous other deeds. A truly selfless effort caring for so many xo.

Lorinda

A star in our backyard

Ridley Arms Hotel
A BIG thank you to Daniel, Dee, Katherine and James on organising a fun-filled, fantastic Christmas party for the community. It was great to see so many people, laughing and smiling after a terrifying few weeks. Well done!

Kathy and Steve Marriner

A star in our backyard

Mark Kowald
Immediately after the fire he purchased and arranged delivery of a storage container for us to salvage whatever we could out of our post office with the comment, ‘use it until you don’t need it’.

Dawn and Lewis
As the Mayor of one of those Council areas significantly hit by this devastating and catastrophic fire, I have been overwhelmed by the extraordinary response from the many community leaders and ordinary people who put their hand up to help. I also acknowledge those Councils who have contributed time and resources during the recovery phase.

Former Local Recovery Coordinator Vince Monterola and the recovery team hit the ground running and continued to do an outstanding job in providing the necessary leadership, direction and on-the-ground assistance.

I also thank the Council staff members who courageously dealt with the many issues resulting from this tragedy, and the emotions surrounding individual situations, in a professional and caring manner.

Apart from the outstanding contribution from emergency services, many volunteers within our communities gave their time to assist with donations of short term shelter, clothing, household items and the preparation of food to feed those working in the field. This included BlazeAid volunteers who had not only been rebuilding fences, but helping to rebuild community spirit. Ordinary people in the community have demonstrated incredible strength and leadership. They all deserve recognition and our sincere gratitude.

Wes Carr performed his powerful and moving song Hellfire at the Pinery fire fundraising Recovery Concert in May 2016 at Seppelt'sfield.

The song is about a community that endured a devastating ordeal and pays respect to Mrs Janet Hughes and Mr Allan Tiller, who both lost their lives in this horrendous fire. A silent auction at the event included some amazing paintings by Light Regional Council CEO Brian Carr and Councillor Lynette Reichstein, which illustrated the enormity, the incredible force, and the devastating effects of the fire.

The Council and the local community felt the effects of this devastation and we have responded with pride, respect and humility. We are determined in our efforts to rebuild our communities and continue to support those who have been affected.

To all the courageous and selfless people out there, and you know who you are, you can all hold your heads up very high. On behalf of your Council, our people and communities, I sincerely salute you.
Reflections from Wakefield Regional Council

Holly Cowan, Community Development Officer, Wakefield Regional Council

Wednesday 25 November. A morning like any other as school children assemble at bus stops, people commute to work, farmers busily watch the forecasts and people unite for the day ahead.

As the sun rises in the sky, the height of fear also approaches as wind gusts and temperatures rise. The smell of smoke and sirens begin to create panic and anxiety, but the usually quiet and safe life on the Plains catches many off guard.

The smoke plumes and alerts rise higher than comfort levels and the usually quiet sweeping plains are a blur of noise, and smells and panic to test all senses.

Emergency services provide hope. Hope to help people see more clearly through the smoke. Hope for a cooling smile and hand to reach through and pull them to safety. Hope for a miracle.

In a short space of time our little community became national news. People congregated in safe havens not yet knowing the enormity of the fire footprint. A footprint so large that it stretched across four Council areas, discriminating against no one.

Local sport was cancelled. Council meetings postponed. People were in shock, panic and disbelief that this once luscious and bountiful land was reduced to smouldering reminders of life before the fire.

People were left stranded, homeless and not knowing what the future would hold. The most devastating news followed soon after. Two well-respected local community people had lost their lives in the fire.

Not everyone was able to return home, and for those that did, the constant reminders of smoke, dust and lack of everyday routine.

A new meaning of community emerged. Through the smoke shone bright lights of hope. People banded together like never before with a common cause to help a friend, a neighbour, a stranger, an animal, anyone. These people now had something in common that caused an instant bond. Local, state and national fundraisers began. Money and donations poured in, many cases creating mountains of clothes, and furniture and goods. The goodwill of people could not be questioned. The Hamley Bridge and Owen communities opened relief centres that acted as safe refuges and caring environments for people to congregate. This was the first of many community-led initiatives that helped shape the start of a successful recovery.

While the journey will be long for many, the first steps have been taken with the aid of friends, family, neighbours and wider outreached arms.

Council has supported the recovery through a number of initiatives such as private works, deferment of rates, waiving of fees, access to Council staff and resources, advocacy, support to BlazeAid and ongoing support to the Local Recovery Committee and Community Action Group. These are small things, but as each organisation and individual contributes, the wider collaborative outcome is a community well on its journey to recovery and a legacy of community spirit.

A star in our backyard

Wakefield Regional Council

Working tirelessly to give information in the days following the fire and the work of ongoing planning needs still being carried out today.

Rodney Reid
Reflections from Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council
Lol Hill, Community Development Officer, Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council and member of Local Recovery Committee and Community Action Group

25 November 2015 was heralded by a fire in the morning at Hill River, just east of Clare. Fortunately the fire ran into a Lucerne paddock, which contained its run and enabled fire crews and local landowners to control the fire. As the mopping up of the Hill River incident continued the same crews scrambled to respond to the Pinery fire.

The speed, ferocity and destruction of the Pinery fire was terrifying. Within Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council district the townships of Stockport and Tarlee were engulfed by the fire whilst Rhynie, Riverton, Saddleworth and Marrabel were on high alert.

The bravery of communities, farmers, residents and emergency services operating within the fire zone saved lives and property.

Major damage to public infrastructure was contained to a culvert on Giles Corner Road, which was burnt out. Drifting soil and fallen and dangerous trees were priorities in the immediate aftermath to clear roads for traffic. Council also assisted with the burial of livestock killed by the fire.

There were 181 properties affected in the Pinery fire scar, with 92 individual owners. Those who lost their homes were to the north and west of Stockport. The communities of Stockport and Tarlee have demonstrated characteristics typical of the area in their generous support for their neighbours; however it is acknowledged that the impact of the damage and trauma experienced through the event will be felt far into the future.

The recovery program from the Pinery fire has been extensive. The work of community members Mrs Judy Gorey (Tarlee) and Mr Brian Koch (Stockport) in providing liaison and a local reference point for the State Recovery Office and Council in responding to the many challenges faced by people affected by the fire has been outstanding and is gratefully acknowledged by Council.

Mayor Allan Aughey OAM has raised some key lessons from the Pinery fire:

- Telecommunications need to be sufficiently robust to prevent loss of service as the community relies on this as an essential form of communication.
- Council to investigate the acquisition of CFS-style fire retardant clothing. This would be available for purchase by the public.
- Community discussion to be held promoting ‘Safer Places’ strategies for each area.

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A star in our backyard
Anonymous
I had arranged to have someone remove stumps from my burnt garden. Turned up when he said and took stumps away so I didn’t have to get rid of them myself. Something less for me to think about. Thanks.

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A star in our backyard
Lizi Worden and the Worden family
Organising and promoting a Go Fund Me page, which paid for our power pole and reconnection of power to enable us to resume trading at the Post Office. Huge thanks to everyone who donated xx

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A star in our backyard
Levis Mcc
Volunteered many months of their weekends to clean up a long fence lines. They cleared kilometres of fences piling wood up neatly as they went. Often during hot and windy days without complaint.

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A star in our backyard
Dawn and Lewis—Wasleys Post Office

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A star in our backyard
Alex O’Loan
The week before the fire, I had been elected as Deputy Mayor, and almost immediately taken on the Acting Mayor role, following the sudden resignation of the Mayor. Little did I know the events about to unfold.

Throughout the morning of the day of the fire, the radio was advising of strong and gusty winds, and the day was getting hot. Suddenly all the phones were ringing with urgent messages to ‘enact your plan or leave now’. Some of my neighbours were in the street watching the smoke to the north. They had heard the calls to evacuate, but were not sure where they should be heading. Should they head for the town oval? No, I responded. If they had no plan to defend their home, they should leave now to Two Wells.

It was the first lesson from the day. Everyone should have a plan that answers these questions. It is too late when disaster strikes.

The rest of my day was spent at the Community Centre in Two Wells. Council staff, who had quickly established themselves and set up refreshments and support, were assisting residents who were collecting there in growing numbers. Council employees were also active on the fire ground, some defending their own properties, supplying water to CFS and farm vehicles, contacting residents, manning the grader, and involved at the Council’s Incident Control Centre.

As the day progressed the scale of the disaster was becoming apparent. It was clear houses had been lost, and then the tragic news that lives also were taken.

At around 6pm, the all clear was given that the road back to Mallala township was open, and residents could return.

The next morning all energies were into the recovery. Many calls came from neighbouring councils asking what support we might need and offering graders, trucks and staff to assist in coming days. Very quickly services were established at the recovery centres, and a highly coordinated plan was enacted. Council staff provided significant input, initially with the terrible task of the burial of burnt and dead stock, and out with the grader, chipper, utes, and chainsaws commencing tree removals. There was also the enormous task of removing the sand drift off the roads.

The local community had also rallied to the cause, and the Mallala Lions Club became a focus for local support. Donations of food, clothes and other goods poured in, and filled the RSL hall. I was privileged to see our residents respond so quickly, sensitively and with such magnificent coordination. Other volunteers arrived to repair fencing and clear timber. A flurry of meetings were held over the following days providing information about the recovery services, Ag Bureau coordinating soil preservation and stock feed, updates for council, the community and the media. The immediate essentials of food, shelter and clothing were resolved, and the recovery efforts refocussed on the longer term needs of the community.

Gradually the recovery progressed to rebuilding, for some. Farm infrastructure was being replaced, new houses being built, new sheds erected. The winter brought rain and green growth. That helps to heal the landscape scar. The emergence of a bountiful harvest also rallies the spirit.

Recalling the way the area responded and united to support their neighbours, and continues to do so, reinforces my understanding of why we have such a strong community. That support is ongoing, and still necessary, as for many the realisation of loss continues, and the ‘path to normal’ still has a long way to go. So many people, groups, organisations and agencies have assisted us in so many different ways, and I could not begin to acknowledge them all. They were there when we needed them, and we are grateful for the support received. Our community is healing, but we all have different ways of dealing with the aftermath of the events that day, and will each respond as individuals.

As I sit here writing this small contribution, the day is very hot, and the wind is gusting ominously. My iPad announces that there is a grass fire at Lower Light, and for many, it is days like today that will bring back memories that they prefer to forget, and disrupt their feelings of safety and security.

It is a timely reminder that we all should have an emergency plan in place, as we commence this next summer.
As the community rebuilt their lives – their gardens, their fences, their homes and their livelihoods, many lessons were learned. Advice about fire-preparedness and planning, looking after your mental well-being and tips from those who have survived multiple fires appear in this chapter, as well as a list of useful websites that you may like to use as a reference into the future.
“Whichever way the wind blows it can’t get a start ’cause it’s always at an angle to the furrows. My father did it back in the 1940s with a team of horses and a cultivator so I can’t take much credit for the idea. I just implemented it and it worked a treat. It stopped it completely.”

Brian Fischer, on his eye-catching soil erosion treatment (pictured below), as told to ABC’s Landline.

*Image courtesy Brian Fischer*
Prepare yourself ahead of season

THERE are simple things you can do around your house to prepare you for the fire season:
- Clean leaves from the roof, gutters and downpipes and fit quality metal leaf guards;
- Plant trees and shrubs that are less likely to ignite because of their low oil content;
- Keep garden rubbish away from the house and keep grass short;
- Store wood piles well away from the house and keep covered;
- Make sure the pressure relief valves on LPG cylinders face outwards, so the flame is not directed towards the house;
- Check the condition of external walls, cladding and seals any gaps;
- Have a non-combustible doorcase and choose fire resistant floor areas; and
- Ensure you have a hose which is long enough to reach every part of the home.

Write your plan down

PLANNING ahead of the fire season should be done by anybody who lives near areas that have significant bush, forest, long grass or coastal scrub.
A written and well-structured action plan will help everyone in the household stay calm and know what to do in the event of an emergency.

HOW TO PLAN
Bushfire plans are individual and will vary from property to property, no matter where you are in Australia. This is because there are different hazards, threats, locations to consider, refuge points and more.
Numerous fire authorities in Australian states and territories have information on their websites to help you write a bushfire plan.
Discuss the plan with your local fire authority to ensure it covers matters that are relevant to your property and region.
A good plan should include what to do:
- Before the Fire Danger Season;
- On a Total Fire Ban day;
- During a bushfire and after a bushfire;
- Keep away from danger;
- Who do you need to keep informed of your movements;
- Is there anyone outside your household who needs to be contacted or checked up on;
- How will you be informed about warnings and updates?

Fire-fighting suits

Awareness and the need for protection has gained momentum following a very successful Ag Bureau initiative to raise funds with the support of local business — Gilmac, Balco, JT Johnson & Sons, GrainFlow and Casella Family Brands — to donate fire-fighting suits to local farmers. As a result, NCC Apparel is manufacturing additional farmers’ fire-fighting suits.

The suits, comprising a jacket and pants, are made from Australian fabric in a high visibility yellow colour to distinguish them from CFS staff. They are designed for wildfire-fighting activities and meet the same stringent Australian standards (AS/NZS 4824:2006) required for CFS and other agencies to protect the wearer from radiant heat and skin exposure.

The suits come in sizes 3XS through to 6XL, and can be purchased at the following Rural Co (CRT) outlets:

- Rob’s Merchandise & Insurance - 5 Adelaide Road, Mallala (08) 8527 2166
- NTS Rural – 28 Way Street, Kapunda (08) 8566 2666
- Platinum AG Services – 22 Railway Terrace, Balaklava (08) 8527 2166

The suits will also be available through Four Season Textiles, who have a network of distributors throughout South Australia. If you would like more information, email Roger Williams at rwilliams@nccapparel.com.au or phone 0433 368 807.
Inform yourself about fire ratings

The Fire Danger Rating forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology is a predictor of how likely a bushfire is to occur, but how dangerous it could be if it did occur.

**CODE RED**
Catastrophic
These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire. The safest place to be is away from high-risk bushfire areas. What should I do? Homes are not designed to withstand these conditions. Leaving high-risk bushfire areas the night before or early in the day is your safest option.

Know your trigger – make a decision about when you will leave, where you will go, how you will get there, when you will return, and what you will do if you cannot leave.

**EXTREME**
Expect extremely hot, dry, and windy conditions. A fire will be uncontrollable, unpredictable, and fast moving.

BE PREPARED: Having knowledge of what the Fire Danger Rating means will help you make an informed decision about what to do in the event of a bushfire.

Homes that are situated and built or modified to withstand a bushfire, are well prepared and actively defended may provide safety. You must be prepared to defend in these conditions.

What should I do?
Consider staying with your property only if you are prepared to respond. Some areas may need to be vacated immediately. If you do not have sufficient resources to protect your property, you must leave. If you do not have time to prepare your home, you must prepare to leave. If you are not prepared to the highest level, leaving high-risk bushfire areas early in the day is your safest option.

**SEVERE**
Expect hot, dry, and possibly wind conditions. If a fire starts and it is determined, it may be uncontrollable. You must be prepared to defend in these conditions.

What should I do?
Well-prepared homes that are actively defended may provide safety. If you are not prepared, leaving bushfire prone areas early in the day is your safest option.

**VERY HIGH/HIGH/MODERATE**
If a fire starts, it can most likely be contained in these conditions and homes can provide safety. What should I do?
Check your bushfire survival plan and monitor conditions. Action may be needed or leave the area if necessary.

Daveyson residents talk bushfire plans

By Meg Bieby
After the horror of the Piney Fires, the small Daveyson community banded together to discuss their approach to future bushfire situations.

Alan and Cynthia Kempster held a meeting at their house on Sunday, which was attended by most of the town. Kris Bartsch, a local, said the meeting was about sharing their experiences and concerns.

“We had a meeting about how to prepare for the future,” he said. “It was a good opportunity to talk about what to do and what to expect.”

The residents’ main concern is to strip off land the front of their homes, which could potentially be a fire hazard.

They intend to approach council about giving them a hand to tidy up the area.

Other items discussed at the meeting included plans for more houses to get water tanks. Alan said that he thinks the meeting will also increase the communication amongst the locals.

Cynthia agreed and said that the community would rally together in times of need.

“I think this has woken a lot of people up,” said Steve. “I think it’s important to think about bushfires until they happen.”

Many Daveyson residents either evacuated or could not reach their home, the rest staying back to save their property.

Alan and his neighbour, David Swan, stepped up to fight the fire and save a number of the properties.

Cynthia who evacuated the area, said that several people offered them somewhere to stay if they needed it, and the vet in Nundroo offered to help with their pet dog and cat.

“Situation like this definitely bring out the good in people,” Steven added.

“I think we should all definitely thank the fireys for what they did, if it wasn’t for them who knows what might have happened.”

Daveyson residents, Steven Bartsch and Alan Kempster in front of the strip of land that is causing concern in their small community.

**GET THE RIGHT INSURANCE**

**MAKE sure you review your insurance policy and what it covers, especially before the weather warms up.**

Talk to your insurance broker or agent about your property and ask them to visit and inspect your site, so they understand your property and can help you identify what level of cover and any extras are suitable for you.

This will also help you understand what you are covered for in the event of a bushfire.

**REDUCE YOUR FIRE RISK BY PRUNING BACK NOW**

**TAK** advantage of conditions at the moment so you’re ready for bushfire season.

Do your yard cleaning and pruning now: make sure yards are clear so when it heats up, materials aren’t there to combust.

Think about boundaries and any green matter close to property. Prune back branches and clear any dead wood laying about properties.

Also consider any grasses and make sure green matter isn’t touching or overhanging buildings.

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Daveyson residents, Steven Bartsch and Alan Kempster in front of the strip of land that is causing concern in their small community.

**A star in our backyard**

**Emergency services**

Thank you to everyone involved in containing and stopping the fire. Your tireless effort and your actions was overwhelmingly amazing. If it wasn’t for your efforts, this disaster would have been worse. Blessings to you all ♥

**A star in our backyard**

Ricky Huckshold

The fire could have easily swept through and wiped out the main street and surrounds. If it weren’t for the quick thinking of Ricky, followed soon after by a CFS returning unit, when the fire had started into the houses on the back of Cooper Street. Thanks Ricky.

Wendy Williams
Being bushfire ready

CFS Officer Helen Hennessy presented a session on being bushfire ready.

One of the key points was to take the opportunity to read Your Guide to Bushfire Safety: Prepare. Act. Survive.

Helen also noted the following key points:

- Nearly 50% of people don’t understand the threat bushfires pose to them.
- Radiant heat, the heat that comes ahead of the fire front, is the most dangerous, so you are advised to wear protective covering to guard against it.
- Seek shelter in a solid structure between you and the heat.
- A car will not shelter you.
- On a Severe, Extreme or Catastrophic day, if your plan is to leave, consider leaving the night before, or early in the morning.
- The only really safe place is in the closer suburbs to the CBD in Adelaide.
- Only police can legally tell you to evacuate an area.
- It is strongly recommended that you inform yourself about where the fire starts, the wind direction, and if a change of wind is forecast.
- Listen to ABC 891 on a radio with batteries during an emergency for direction.
- It is quite usual to lose power, electricity and water during a fire.
- On days of Catastrophic fire danger you cannot assume that the CFS will have enough crews to be at every property.

The best advice is to ensure you have pre-planned what you and your family will do when a Fire Ban is issued for your district. That enables you to take all the actions you consider necessary, in an orderly way.
Future proof your horse

Addressing the impacts of intense rainfall, hotter temperatures, increased heat waves and extreme fire risk days on horses has won the Horse Federation of SA Inc (Horse SA) a national climate change award.

Horse SA’s work with horse owners to prepare for climate change, supported by a Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) grant, won the ‘Champion – Community’ category of the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility’s (NCARF) national climate awards, announced at the recent NCARF conference.

Feedback from an online survey and a full day workshop was brought together in the Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Horse Owners and Organisations.

More educational programs and activities for sustainability and managing horses in extreme events, including a ‘Future Proof Your Horse’ checklist, were delivered with the support of a number of local, state and Australian government agencies.

To see the plan, visit www.myhorsedisasterplan.org.au.

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A star in our backyard

Fay, Lorraine, Deb, Nicole, Simon, Troy, Shaun, Darren, Steve, Alyssa

Great community members who helped us to reopen our Post Office – cleaning, painting, plumbing, electrical, sorting stock, re-stocking.

Lots of hugs xxxx.

Wasleys Post Office

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A star in our backyard

Pat Margaret Bell

Tirelessly manning the RSL donation centre. Sorting, saving and delivering goods for those affected by fires, offering a shoulder, hug and always a smile. An amazing lady who is always first to lend any assistance she can.

S Chenoweth

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A star in our backyard

Nurses and doctors

Caring for those who suffered significant burns and trauma.

Anonymous

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A star in our backyard

Geoff Roberts

Selflessly climbing on neighbours’ roofs to set up sprinklers. Fighting tirelessly to push back the fire. You are a true hero, Geoff xxx

Marianne

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A star in our backyard

Peter and Lyn Hayman and family

The 26th November they visited many affected by the fires and hugged and talked and left a box of essential goodies and some treats for people.

Anonymous

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A star in our backyard

Megan

For being an amazing friend. Thank you for looking after my three children when I could not get through to be with them, your strength, your organisation, your love and support. I am blessed and eternally grateful that you were here that day.

Much love xxx

Bec

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A star in our backyard

Peter and Lyn Hayman and family

The 26th November they visited many affected by the fires and hugged and talked and left a box of essential goodies and some treats for people.

Anonymous
Fords is between Freeling and Kapunda. We’d heard about the fire on the radio and didn’t expect it to reach us but we kept going outside and looking at the smoke to watch where it was going.

We were babysitting my grandkids and they were scared. We thought it best that I took them to my daughter’s house in Kapunda while my husband stayed to protect the property. After 30 minutes it had turned from day to night. In the end we chose to move further out to Auburn.

There are things for which you can’t plan. It was luck that no sparks fell onto our roof and it was luck that our stock was in the right paddock at the right time. Half of that paddock burned however the stock was able to move into the safe area.

We keep the area surrounding our house free of trees and I spray the weeds every year. I would rather live with dust than weeds. Our harvester was in a clear area so that survived however we lost crops and fencing and the tyres on the field bins melted.

We have our own farm fire-fighting unit on the property. This includes a 800 litre water tank, which can be hooked onto the Ute. We make sure that it’s full and ready to go at all times.

My husband had the sprinklers going. He was dressed in long clothes and closed shoes. While the fire was passing he sheltered in a nearby paddock with no grass so it couldn’t burn. He watched it go around him. Once it had passed he expected to find the house destroyed or damaged but it was still there.

I wasn’t able to reach my husband on the phone and because of the road closures I didn’t arrive home from Auburn until 10pm that night. Burning tree stumps dotted the landscapes like torches. If it hadn’t been so scary or so furious it could been quite pretty. We stayed updated by listening to the radio and asking people via Facebook what was happening. It wasn’t until I woke up the next morning I was able to see the full extent of the damage.

We had a fire at our place on Christmas Eve in 2001, so it’s the second time we’ve been through it. Once again we were very fortunate only to lose fences and paddocks.

After the first fire we learned to increase our insurance cover and insure items like fences.
Mental well-being

Psychological trauma of fire

“Being able to put it into context and give it some meaning is a really good way.”

Mr West said people may experience many different emotional and physical reactions, which vary in severity, depending on how close that person was to the event and the degree of loss the person may have experienced.

“Common reactions include feelings of fear, sadness or anger, difficulty with concentration and focusing attention, and unwanted and recurring memories or bad dreams related to the event,” he said.

“Other people may be feeling overwhelmed, have difficulty planning ahead, feeling numb, detached or withdrawn and have sleep problems.”

According to SA Health, when a person experiences a stressful or traumatic event, such as a bushfire, it can have a profound impact on the person’s psychological well-being.

SA Health network senior mental health clinician David West said the best way to deal with trauma was to talk about it.

“Try and talk with someone you trust about your experience so you can try and make sense of it,” he said.

It is normal to still feel sad or stressed in the first few months after a disaster such as the Pinery fire. Some people may still feel this way for the next couple of months and even years. It takes time, and people will go through different emotions at different times, but these feelings will fade if you have the right information and look after your well-being”.

Well-being sessions with Dr Rob Gordon

In 2016 psychologist Dr Rob Gordon, who specialises in working with communities after disasters, presented information sessions around the fire area.

Feedback was extremely positive with people saying it helped them make sense of their emotions and experiences.

Sometimes personal recovery needs to be supported by specialist knowledge to ensure that the stress does not linger unnecessarily or lead to other health problems. Stress-related problems can be resolved with advice from professionals, such as counsellors or psychologists.

• Assume that any unusual change in yourself or those you love is related to your experience and try to work out the connection.

• Problems are often presented as everyday hassles when in fact they are about bigger things.

• Rest and listen to what your body, mind and emotions tell you they need. You will eventually get energy back — you just have a big overdraft.

• Give yourself time to enjoy recreation activities. These can give you energy and make things feel worthwhile.

• Put energy into rebuilding relationships, family and important friendships. Make time to be together by changing routines and patterns.
The State Government has released independent reviews into both the operational response of the South Australian Country Fire Service (CFS) and the Government Radio Network (SAGRN) during the Pinery fire.

These independent reviews commend the work of emergency services agencies and volunteers in responding to the Pinery fire. Key to the findings of the CFS report was that the weather conditions experienced on the day of the fire prohibited any possibility of containing the fire until they improved.

The SAGRN report confirms there was no interruption to the operations of any SAGRN sites or services during the course of the fire. The review found that traffic congestion and delays to radio messages experienced during the peak of the fire were caused by SAGRN sites in the Pinery vicinity being overloaded by unrelated radio traffic.

The SAGRN is regarded as one of the largest and most effective public safety networks in the world. In 2009 the Government committed $154.5 million to upgrade the SAGRN, which will see improvements to the SAGRN’s coverage at a number of locations across the state, together with increases to the radio traffic capacity at the majority of its sites to be completed by the end of 2017.

From these reports, comprehensive action plans have been developed which address the lessons learned. The recent State Budget contained a number of initiatives that will address recommendations in the reports, including a $9.3 million commitment over four years to accelerate the retrofitting of burn-over technology and replacement of CFS trucks.

Training for CFS and SES volunteers has also been bolstered, including nine full time training positions made possible by a $6.3 million State Government budget injection over four years.

To access the full reports and action plans, please visit www.safecom.sa.gov.au (click on publications, then scroll down to the bottom of the page to the heading Pinery Reports).

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Back cover image: "NEW GROWTH" Limited Edition Fine Art Pigment Print (back cover image cropped)

Mandala of elements collected from the roadside of the Pinery fire-ground edge on January 18th 2016, photographed in the natural Summer light.

A donation of $25 is made to the Pinery Fire Community Fund via Foundation Barossa with every print sold.

[www.selfpollinate.com](http://www.selfpollinate.com)