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The *BlazeAid* POST



An Insight into the BlazeAid Organisation and its efforts to Rebuild Communities Affected by Natural Disasters



Current Statistics

A Strong Community: South Burnett Qld

Total Volunteers:

34,923

Total Volunteer Days:

362,187

Properties supported:

12,183

Fences cleared:

16,881km

Fences rebuilt:

16,544km

Current Camps:

Murgon QLD

Woolooga QLD

Fernvale QLD

Warwick QLD

Casino NSW

Coolah NSW

Grafton NSW

Oxley Island NSW

Wauchope NSW

Edenhope VIC

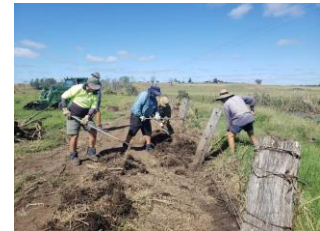
BlazeAid have been in our community since January of this year. They have made an amazing difference to our community in a wonderful positive way. This is also the 5th time BlazeAid has been in the South Burnett helping our farmers. When they first came to our region after the 2011 floods, our farmers were sceptical about allowing them onto their properties.

South Burnett farmers are traditionally very independent and also very particular about how they like things done. It took a little while before we could get them to trust BlazeAid on their properties but it soon

became apparent to everyone that they were capable and hard-working volunteers and it was an incredible asset to have them come to help.

Everyone puts their hand up now when we mention BlazeAid. They have built a wonderful reputation with the farmers and the whole community. Farmers are really keen to have them on their properties and the list of farmers wanting help just keeps growing. The community are also keen to help in any way, shape or form that they can. They donate funds, help with meals or fundraising events.

The reputation that BlazeAid has built in our community is at an all-time high.



Since BlazeAid arrived in the South Burnett this time, we have had four separate floods and the BlazeAid volunteers have fixed some of the fences on the same property up to three times. The farmers

mental health and resilience has been stretched to the limit but BlazeAid have stepped up and continue to work tirelessly to support them on the ground.

Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up.
Nelson Mandela

The BlazeAid volunteers have also done community work when it has been too wet to get on the ground. They are set up at the Murgon Showgrounds and have helped out with mowing and maintenance on the grounds as well as around the town. Council is really grateful for the work they did at the Murgon overnight camping grounds and the other mowing and tidying up they have done around the town.



Councillor Kathy Duff and BlazeAid Co-ordinator Ron Murphv

A Strong Community: South Burnett Qld

The Mayor, his wife Ros and I have had some fun catering for the BlazeAid Team. Mayor Otto had an Italiano night and cooked spaghetti bolognese. I was his chief assistant.

Unbeknown to the BlazeAid team he also whipped up numerous pizzas. I actually slipped down to the local pizza place and they insisted on donating a number of amazing pizzas!! It was a great night with the Mayor dressed in an Italian costume, with Italian music and an Italian desert made by Ros Otto!!



The Mayor catering on the Italiano night!!



Some of the volunteers enjoying the spaghetti bolognese and pizzas!!



Outside the Council Chambers with Ron & Linda, the Mayor, Councillors and some of the staff



Council ran a series of Breakfasts recently as fund raisers for BlazeAid in every town. They were well attended and hairdressers donated their time to cut hair for a reduced cost. Locals donated things to auction and locals flocked to the events because they wanted to give back to BlazeAid. I would like to sincerely thank Coordinator Ron Murphy and his assistant Linda Hibbard and all of the volunteers who have worked for BlazeAid helping our community this time and every time they have come. It has been a pleasure, a joy and a God send to have BlazeAid volunteers helping our farmers rebuild their fences and their lives. Thank you to all of the BlazeAid volunteers, you are community champions that our region will be forever grateful for.

Thank you and God Bless BlazeAid.

Councillor Kathy Duff



Council cheque presentation L To R Cr Danita Potter, Ron Murphy, Linda Hibbard and Cr Kathy Duff

Volunteers

Who could resist the offer of free camping and all you can eat? Certainly not Chris and Chamutal, Kim and Floretta, Steve and Jenny and Peter (from the TLCCWA) and Brendan (Bookworm Buddies Book Club), who all signed up for 2 weeks and Sonny (TLCCWA), Greg and Nan, Dawn and Bernadette (Bookworm Buddies), Steve and Lynn who were all available for one week.

Most of us had never heard of BlazeAid, never done any fencing and had to consult our maps to find out where Wickepin is located! Undaunted by these unknowns, we packed our work boots, work clothes, gloves, ear muffs, etc and duly arrived at the Wickepin Community Centre, Caravan Park or Hotel and set up camp.

Within a few days we had made new friends and mastered a whole new language. Now we could twitch a gripple, strain ringlock, operate a Whacker Packer, attach a geoclip and identify, and perhaps operate successfully, most of the objects in a trailer designed and stocked for fencing. We demolished burnt fences and cleared fallen trees in their path and took pride in replacing them with smart shiny new fences.

Driving through countryside decimated by fire and working amongst the blackened remnants of bush and trees planted by the farmers gave us only a hint of the disaster that has befallen these farmers.

*"The meaning of life is to find your gift.
The purpose of life is to give it away."*

Pablo Picasso

The paddocks are already brilliant green with newly sprouting crops so we could not picture clearly a totally black landscape or the desolation resulting from the February 6 bushfire which burnt 19,000ha on 13 properties.

We heard stories from our Camp Managers, first Rob and Broni and then Ed and Judy, about the fire and its effects on the land and the farming families. As we worked, we met some of these farmers and heard more details of their losses and ongoing anguish. Due to the efforts of the water bombers, only 2 houses were lost but there were huge losses of sheds, stock (eg 443 pregnant ewes on one property, 7500 pigs fattening to go to market) and vegetation, including thousands of trees planted by the farmers. It was gratifying to realise that our fencing contributions were a small part of helping them to overcome the trauma, depression and huge workload that follows such a devastating event. How can we forget their stories, their resilience, their hospitality and their morning teas delivered to us? Les even treated some of us to a tour of his shed full of 54 restored/semi restored tractors.



The generosity and enthusiasm of other volunteers and the amazing response from locals in Wickepin, Narrogin and Cuballing was impressive. Food donations poured in and several locals, including members of the Lions Club of Narrogin and the local She Shed - He Shed, popped up regularly to join the fencing teams. Teams of 3, 4 or 5 went out to various properties each day depending on numbers, with between 3 and 6 teams operating, although before we arrived they had only 1 or 2 teams and after we left there were only 3 fencers remaining to carry on the next week.

Overall, everyone felt that our visit was very gratifying and exceedingly worthwhile and for many of us this will not be our last BlazeAid.

Jenny Aramini TLCCWA



Volunteers

Vale Maggee Apps

It is with great sadness that we share the passing of Maggee Apps, BlazeAid treasure, Wulgulmerang Coordinator and wonderful friend.

Full of energy and spirit, Maggee dedicated close to one and a half years of her time leading the Basecamp in Wulgulmerang in the remote Victorian High Country, ably supported by partner Paul, after the devastating New Years Eve fires in 2019/20, leaving a legacy within the community and Blazeaid that is beyond measure.

Despite her many health issues, she ran the camp which became renowned for fun, plenty of music and quality of the food served in the toughest of country – the nearest shop was a 280km round trip! Like a mum to those in camp, particularly our international volunteers who were locked down throughout the covid restrictions, she was very much loved for her caring and supportive disposition.

Maggee led the camp to work on 22 properties, completing 133kms of clearing and rebuilding of fences over the 18 months.

Thank you for all you gave to BlazeAid, the volunteers and the many property owners you assisted to get back on their feet.

All our love and support to Paul and family.

Rest in peace now, Maggee, BlazeAid Legend.



Behind The Scenes

She is usually the person at the other end of the phone when you call BlazeAid HQ and knows BlazeAid inside and out! Of course I am talking about the dynamic Debbie Buttler – no relation to Founders, Kevin and Rhonda Butler, their surnames just sound the same, which is handy as Debbie is like family to them.

Debbie is BlazeAid's National Business Manager and has been with BlazeAid since 2015. She grew up in Kilmore, with her parents, Barry and Dot, and her 3 siblings. Barry was a mentor to Kevin from quite an early age. Debbie's efficiency in the role is very much prized by all, but it is her loyalty, devotion and commitment to keeping BlazeAid strong and working like a well-oiled machine that is truly invaluable. She has a fierce passion for helping property owners after natural disasters and is a great support to our wonderful camp co-ordinators across Australia.

During the Black Summer bushfires, Debbie was instrumental in keeping the organisation running, with 46 basecamps operating at one time. Her phone rang non-stop and she was fielding an average of one email every 20 seconds!

Thank you Debbie, for all that you do, we really appreciate it.



Behind The Scenes

My wife, Larry, and I recently embarked on a trip to many BlazeAid camps and storages of the East Coast. We had several objectives; main one being to fit Telstra trackers to new assets and ones that were inaccessible in the original rollout.

Telstra trackers were attached to 31 cars, caravans, combat trailers and a container.

In particular, we have 7 trailers in the Gladstone area since about 2018. They are in remarkably good condition in a very secure storage.

An unexpected side benefit of the trip was finding several mis-identified assets, in particular, a container in the Central West area of NSW which was masquerading as a combat trailer, and 3 trailers with confused identities.

Many of our trackers had failed to 'tag' satellites after a Telstra software upgrade. Most were successfully restarted, with only 3 being replaced.

We also checked defibrillators. They were in great order. All were functioning and fully charged, bar 1. This had been taken out of its yellow plastic hard case and put in a cardboard box with office supplies. Somehow it was accidentally turned on and the battery went flat. Our supplier, Corporate AEDs, has generously replaced this at no cost.

Another side benefit to the trip was meeting many BlazeAid stalwarts I have only known over the ether. Among other notables, I met Gary Waterson, who coincidentally was a couple of vans up from ours when we overnighted at Grafton Showgrounds.

It was great to work with Bob Abdo at Macksville – pretty much as I expected – big, gruff, efficient and immensely knowledgeable.

It was great to catch up again with Chris and John Male at Casino. As always, they run a happy camp with immense energy.

Finally, the irrepressible, innovative and energetic Spud Murphy hosted us at Murgon. I caught up with ex-Omeo co-ordinator, Harm Hoen, in Mackay; living the dream on his yacht, Serendipity, cruising the Coral Coast.

A dead heat between Murgon and Casino for 'best tucker'. A well-fed volunteer is a happy volunteer.

A secondary aim of the trip was to escape the Victorian rain and cold. Enough said!

I had 2 visits to Fernvale camp. On the first we enjoyed the hospitality of Gary and Linda and did some work on their trailers. Our next stop was Noosa, where I put my hand in my pocket and found the Fernvale amenities key! A rush trip back to Fernvale, then back to Noosa, turned an easy day into a marathon – the Bruce Highway traffic at 4pm was horrendous!

Our highlight was the great work at Casino camp where 5 trailers have been stripped back and repainted.

Our lowlight was Larry's fall on the road at Yorklea storage. She chipped a tooth and wore a classic 'shiner' for the rest of the trip. Needless to say, I got plenty of black looks from women for the rest of the trip.

All in all, it was a successful 4300km trip. We visited 18 BlazeAid sites, got a good feel for how our gear is holding up, met many great people and delivered a BlazeAid caravan from Victoria to Queensland. We did some useful work for BlazeAid and had a great time.

As you grow older you will discover that you have two hands - one for helping yourself, the other for helping others

Audrey Hepburn



Badly needs a birthday
Olinda NSW

Undercover storage at Corowa NSW

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TRANSPARENCY

Donors and Sponsors

Growers Provide Record Donation To Charities From Forfeited Grain

Bushfire support, mental health programs and skin cancer screening services in the regions were among the key charitable causes which shared in the record \$400,000 of Harvest Mass Management funding this year.

Developed by the CBH Group and Main Roads WA, the Harvest Mass Management Scheme (HMMS) seeks to reduce the frequency of overloaded grain trucks during harvest.

Under the HMMS, growers can forfeit grain from overloaded trucks, which is then sold, and the funds provided to Western Australian charities who are nominated by growers and CBH employees.

The 2021/22 harvest smashed records with growers delivering 30 per cent more than the previous harvest record in 2017, resulting in the biggest Western Australian harvest on record with 21.3 million tonnes delivered into the CBH supply chain system.

The record-breaking crop and high grain prices contributed to the largest donation to date under the scheme since it commenced in 2012, with 1,053 tonnes of grain voluntarily forfeited into the HMMS program.

The \$400,000, which was raised from the sale of the forfeited grain, has been donated to a total of 16 charities which provide support and services to our grain growers and their communities.

CBH Chair Simon Stead said the scheme provided grass roots charities and community organisations with valuable funding, with over \$2.1 million distributed since the scheme began in 2012.

“The HMMS continues to be an effective deterrent to the overloading of grain trucks during harvest while giving back to regional communities at the same time,” Mr Stead said. “Through HMMS, growers are extending their support for charities that play a supporting role in their communities.”

The Northam event held on 21 July 2022 saw six charities presented with their cheques. The charities included Foodbank WA, BlazeAid, Volunteer Bushfire Brigades WA, Regional Men’s Health Initiative, Lions Cancer Institute and Community Vision Australia.



Pioneering volunteer/co-ordinators, Kevin Nettleton and Rhonda Pilgrim accepted the donation on behalf of BlazeAid

Source:- CBH Group Draft Media Release 22 July 2022

BlazeAid Website Development

Evolve Infotech have donated their resources to re-developing our website, we are extremely grateful for their kindness and look forward to the new site going live soon. Evolve Infotech is a tech-enabled IT and digital marketing solutions provider company. Their passion is the web, including website and app development, social media marketing, and search engine optimisation. The team at Evolve Infotech is made up of marketers, designers, and developers, they know what it takes to get real results online for many industries, including not-for-profits like BlazeAid.

BlazeAid were working with the University of South Australia (UNISA) who had offered to redevelop our website pro bono, as part of their students’ practical work plan. It was via his involvement with UNISA that Evolve Infotech’s founder, Karan Parneria came across our need for professional help with our website. He thought the company could add immense value to the website, in particular in navigation, and areas flagged by our readers, eg requesting assistance, donating, and volunteering.

A big thank you to the team at Evolve Infotech, we can’t wait to share the new site.



HONESTY

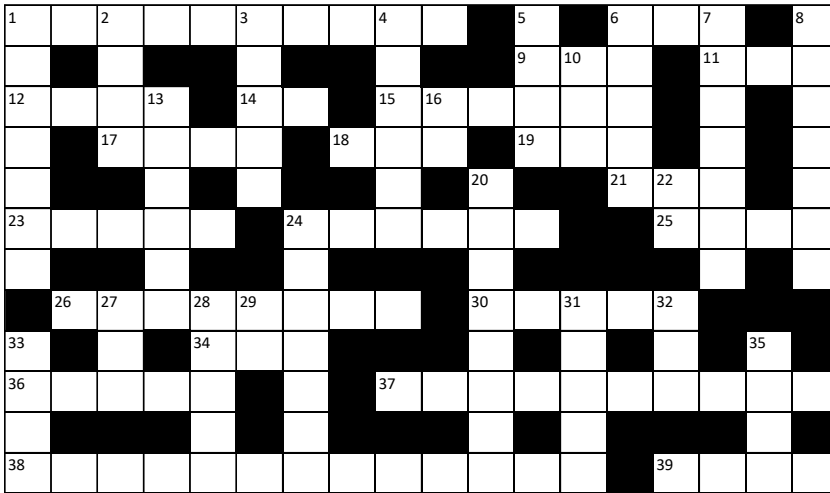
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Break Time



ACROSS

- 1 Wonderful group of people who put others needs ahead of their own
- 6 Found on volunteer's boots after working on flood affected properties
- 9 Spreader, _ . _ . , dropper
- 11 ___ farmers provide food for our tables
- 12 Volunteers join one of these and travel to properties to help
- 14 Abbreviation for one of the Australian states where BlazeAid provides assistance
- 15 Star _ _ _ _ _ ; used for holding up a fence
- 17 There is much of this blown up by the wind after fires
- 18 BlazeAid volunteers have a _ _ _ do attitude.
- 19 Our volunteers apply a keen _ _ _ to straightening fences.
- 21 Wear your sunscreen and sunglasses to avoid the glare from this.
- 23 A chemical reaction that occurs to fences after fires, turning them _ _ _ _ .
- 24 The act of tightening a wire or fence..
- 25 Along with hearts and minds, volunteers touch this.
- 26 This type of fencing can bite your fingers if you don't wear gloves.
- 30 One of the industries affected by natural disasters.
- 34 "Our team leader _ _ _ a string line to show where the fenceline was to go.
- 36 Volunteers often work on boundary fencing to contain this type of livestock.
- 37 Nickname for the team at Doing It For The Drought who did an amazing job fundraising for BlazeAid on their trip to Cape York.
- 38 A tool for ramming star pickets into the ground.
- 39 Make sure you have the right one for the job.

DOWN

- 1 This SA grain company provides space for us to store trailers and other equipment.
- 2 Someone in your team will take on this responsibility.
- 3 This word describes all the meals provided in our BlazeAid camps.
- 4 Volunteers do this to broken fences.
- 5 This is a handy tool to get debris off fences after floods and cyclones.
- 6 You will gain a lot of these when you join a BlazeAid camp.
- 7 A pizza making sponsor which provides much needed funding.
- 8 A wire fastener or brace.
- 10 Kindness is the _ _ _ to volunteering.
- 13 It is mandatory for all volunteers to attend this every morning.
- 16 Your team leader relies on you to place all the tools _ _ the trailer.
- 20 A type of fencing used by many Australian farmers.
- 22 You, Me, Them = _ _ .
- 24 This tool is used to wind and unwind fence wire.
- 27 There's a lot of laughter in the _ _ _ at the end of a good day volunteering.
- 28 Volunteers should take one of these to rest and recoup.
- 29 Abbreviation for one of the Australian states where BlazeAid provides assistance.
- 31 This tool is used for digging post holes.
- 32 The _ _ _ on the chainsaw needs to be tight to ensure the chain does not come off.
- 33 BlazeAid assist at this annual event in Bendigo - The Sheep and Wool _ _ _ _ .
- 35 Every volunteer is one of these.

Editor – Jo Delaney



Do you have a BlazeAid story to share about a person, place, or experience? If you do, drop us an email at admin@blazeaid.com.au or contact Jo on 0417614446. We would love to hear from you!

Answers:- Across 1 Volunteers, 6 Mud, 9 AKA, 11 Out 12 Team, 14 SA, 15 Picket, 17 Dust, 18 Can, 19 Eye, 21 Sun, 23 Rusty, 24 Strain, 25 Soul, 26 Barbwire, 30 Grain, 34 Ram, 36 Horse, 37 Droughties, 38 Whackerpicket, 39 Tool
Down:- 1 Viterra, 2 Lead, 3 Tasty, 4 Repair, 5 Rake, 6 Mates, 7 Dominos, 8 Gripple, 10 key, 13 Muster, 16 In, 20 Ringlock, 22 Us, 24 Spinner, 27 Air, 28 Break, 29 WA, 31 Auger, 32 Nut, 33 Show, 35 Hero

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