



The

# BlazeAid POST

FEBRUARY 2023 - ISSUE 7

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



## IN THIS EDITION

- News from Camps
- Supporter of the Quarter: The Murdoch Foundation
- IT: Sarah and Rhys
- Lisa and Bob, Wauchope Heroes!

## Volunteer in the Spotlight: Pete (Pierre) the Camp Cook

Meet Peter Goodall, 80 years of age and one of our great volunteers! He has volunteered with BlazeAid for an age, and is well known for his gentleness and kind nature. Pete is dearly loved in camp for this (as well as his fabulous cooking skills!). Born in London, Peter calls Barnawartha home, when he is not helping in one of our BlazeAid camps. He is blessed with a daughter and four gorgeous grandchildren.

Pete's hobbies include gardening, and he loves to cook. Before joining BlazeAid he enjoyed working as a fruit and vegetable grower (Pumpkins and Apricots) and he also contracted out to other farmers for over 30 years.

Peter heard about BlazeAid over 8 years ago when fires affected his hometown in Barnawartha. He himself was lucky not to have been affected, but wanted to help the community, so he made the decision to come along to the local BlazeAid camp and used his talents as a chef to feed the volunteers. He has now assisted at least 14 camps and enjoys the lifestyle, the volunteers, the atmosphere and the cooking.

Currently based at our Moonambel Camp, Peter has been a great asset to the camp - our Coordinator, Gene Purcell, has said he would be lost without him!

Every morning Peter is awake by 4am, showered, dressed and ready to go. He starts breakfast for the volunteers; a favourite crowd pleaser is having eggs cooked the way you like! With breakfast and dishes all done by 8am, he will then assist with preparation of the evening meal (if required) and help with other camp duties during the day. Peter likes to do a bit of sightseeing in the communities when he can.

When he was helping in our Casino Camp, Peter lost his name badge and our Camp Coordinator at the time (Spud) offered to help out with a replacement - he now proudly sports his new "Pierre Chef Extraordinaire"!

Thank you, Peter, for all your ongoing help and contributions to maintaining a happy camp and BlazeAid!



# News From Around the Traps

## Cessnock Camp NSW

Opened on Monday 13th Feb, Cessnock Camp was set up in response to the July 2022 Floods. The camp will assist many families and properties in the Cessnock and Singleton area, to help rebuild fences. After a community BBQ night held on Friday the 17th Feb to spread the word, the camp has 28 properties registered, and already completed 7 of those. Camp Co-Ordinator's Judy and Max are welcoming all volunteers.

## Kerang Camp VIC

Simon has ably led the Kerang camp for the last few weeks and has now handed to reins over to Martin and Eileen. Kerang is traveling along nicely and are receiving a lot of help from The Probus Club. They have just had a article posted in the local paper on BlazeAid, and are urging farmers to come forward and register so they can receive help while we are in the area. This camp has 33 properties registered, 24 started and 10 completed. More volunteers are needed, as the camp is down to one team going out to assist farmers.

Recently, the camp held a farmers BBQ night which had a great turnout of 45 people. Property owners, volunteers and the community were able to get together and share some stories.

## Oxley Island Camp NSW

We have 48 properties registered, of which 27 have been completed and 11 km of fencing cleared with 17 km of fencing rebuilt. There are currently 4 volunteers in camp, so more are needed.

## Molong Camp NSW

Current camp Co-Ordinator Col Coleman is in good spirits at Molong, having already started 12 and completed 3 properties in full! 11 volunteers have come on aboard this week. They are faced with the difficult task of completing fences with crops of 5 to 6 meters high near fencing, and also need to share willing volunteers with the current shearing season.

## Seymour Camp VIC

Opened on Monday 13th Feb, Ian and Karen - our 1st time Coordinators - had a welcome and information night on Wednesday 15th Feb. People enjoyed a BBQ dinner cooked by the local Lions Club and slices provided by Gwen and Andrea from Nagambie, with Kevin Butler giving an insight and a detailed vision on how BlazeAid helps communities, the night was a success. With 10 properties ready to go and 16 volunteers with expressions of interest, the first small team was ready to head out shortly after opening. A bonus to all volunteers registered with the Seymour camp you will have access to the local pool which is situated near the camp site!

## Wauchope Camp NSW

Wauchope camp had a wonderful experience earlier this month; "We are happy to say we have finally reached out to a farmer who hasn't come forward for nearly 2 years! He was struggling with money so he went to Sydney to start work as a builder and has finally managed to make a small home to stay in while clearing up. Bob has assisted him with clearing of his property and is making great progress." Currently, Wauchope has only 5 volunteers in camp, as we are facing the same issues as others with the hot weather. The camp has 150 properties registered and 123 completed, 62 km of cleared fencing done and 128km of fencing has been rebuilt.

## Donnybrook Camp WA

Paul and Peter began our Donnybrook camp in early Feb and set up efficiently, ready for opening on Mon 13th Feb, before handing the reins over to Kevin and Rhonda Pilgrim.

With 5 volunteers, 1 cook and 2 in admin, they have been productive with clearing 5Km of fence line to date. The team recently had a 'meet and greet' night with farmers - BBQ and sweets provided - with a turn out of 29 People plus 11 from in the camp. 33 Properties have shown expressions of interest and should be fully registered soon for assistance. Kevin and Rhonda have visited the Men's Shed and are looking forward to a strong community relationship, as often happens in many camps across Australia. A shout out to a couple of locals, Colin and Vic, who assisted with moving the trailers from Narrogin to Donnybrook and hosting the coordinators for the week until the camp was up and running. Also, to Suzie from the Donnybrook Shire THANK YOU.

## Moonambel VIC

This camp started back in Dec 2022 with camp Coordinators Bruce and Bron, before they handed it over to Gene Percell. Gene boasts that the camp has one of the best chefs in BlazeAid! To date, this camp has 39 properties registered, has started 24 and completed 22.

The camp has had 74 volunteers pass through the doors, clearing 35 kms of fencing and rebuilding 10kms - what an effort! The camp is always in need of volunteers and if you enjoy eggs for breakfast, Pete "The Chef" will cook them to your liking.





# News From Around the Traps...

## Lockington Camp

Lockington is a small community with a huge heart. Several of the businesses in town are owned by the community and are also manned by volunteers in the community. Since Camp Coordinator Kerrie arrived in Lockington, the community has been super helpful and supportive. A generous array of biscuits, eggs and stewed fruit have been delivered, and the cook can even go and pick fresh herbs and veg from a community run garden! At the present time, 54 farms have requested our assistance, 12 of those are in an area too far out for the Lockington Camp to help (Wunghnu/Barmah), so we are in the process of setting up another camp in that area, enabling us to help those effected farms too.

Some of our Volunteers are repeat offenders, who come back time and time again. One of them has attended around 10 camps and is 83 years old! Another volunteer has been at 22 camps and is amazing at fixing the equipment and keeps all the tools in tip top condition. He is also a big practical joker; when we have a meal he doesn't like, he will eat a can of stew that he brings with him, but he will swap out the label on the can to one of the dog food cans he feeds his dog. That inevitably causes a bit of a reaction in the dining area! All in good fun!

The camp has spent a couple of weeks on one of the bigger farms, where the farmer lost a lot of classic cars he had lovingly restored, his house and all it's contents. Sadly, his insurance company is fighting him all the way about recompense. He has also just been told he has a nasty cancer in his lower lip, which will have to be removed. His partner also lost her beautiful garden, and is so traumatized that she can't go back to look at it. When our team heard this, they have all volunteered to go out in their own time and spend a few hours restoring the garden.

We have some awesome volunteers here in Lockington, and humor and fun are a big part of why this camp is successful, along with our 2, sometimes 3 fabulous cooks, who serve up incredible meals. One of the volunteers also has a big goofy rescue dog, who keeps the camp entertained with his antics.

## Forbes Camp

After arriving in mid Jan our first job was to pressure clean and wash up as the show committee didn't have time after the devastating impact of the floods. Now into the full swing of things, fencing has commenced with 70 farms registered and 2 completed. We currently have about 2-3 teams of volunteers a day going out to fence. Boundary fencing is our main priority, at this stage, to help farmers control their stock.

It is heartbreaking to hear the stories of how many pets, stock and homes have been lost. It is difficult to see people sifting through on their hands and knees for that personal item that has so much meaning to them. The loss of a fridge or television can be overcome but those items that have more of a sentimental meaning are hard to get back. Chris Male who is one of our Camp Co-Ordinator's at Forbes said "In all my time volunteering with BlazeAid, I have found this camp to be the most that has required our help. Not only in fencing but in compassion, talking and listening too and just being involved with the community."

The community has really bonded together and are very helpful to one another and working hard. It is great to hear farmers say when we have started to assist them, that 'this is great I now know what I have to do'."



# Coordinators of the Quarter!

## Bob and Lisa

## Abdoo

## Wauchope, NSW

A great husband and wife Coordinator duo meet Bob and Lisa Abdoo. Currently both coordinating at Wauchope and Oxley Island (our Satellite Camp), they joined BlazeAid back in 2019. They have also Coordinated and volunteered at our Macksville, Corrindi Beach, and Coolah camps.

Married for 15 years Bob has 6 children and both Lisa and Bob share 12 grandchildren and 2 great grandsons. Lisa's family was from Qld prior to them moving to Sydney where she was born and raised near the Northern Beaches.

Lisa and Bob now call Macksville home when they are not volunteering at BlazeAid.

Lisa worked as a Drafts and Designer by trade. Her hobbies include gardening, walking and travel.

Bob was born and grew up on a dairy farm. For most of his adult life, he worked as a truck driver. He chose this work so he could travel and see Australia. Bob enjoys deep sea fishing and riding motor bikes and was the President of the Marine and Rescue for 3 years.

**BlazeAid:** When did you start volunteering?

**Lisa:** I started volunteering with Bob back when the 2019 fires happened in Macksville, our place was smoke damaged, and we wanted to help others. We were also affected by the floods in 2021.

**Bob:** 2019 Macksville fires is when I started. I knew a lot of farmers who were affected and hurting after the disaster and wanted to help.

**BlazeAid:** Why did you want to volunteer with BlazeAid?

**Lisa:** It was mostly through Bob, and his wanting to help that I wanted to follow him and be involved. I couldn't help as much as Bob at the start as I was at home looking after our dogs.

**Bob:** Growing up on a dairy farm I knew what it was like to go through fire and floods. I wanted to help other people in the same situation.

**BlazeAid:** What are your duties, functions, and responsibilities in camp?

**Lisa:** I mostly help with the Administration tasks, cooking and cleaning at camp.

**Bob:** I help with the fencing on the farms, safety muster in the morning and assessing the properties that need help.

**BlazeAid:** What is it that you enjoy about coordinating a camp?

**Lisa:** I find it very rewarding; you meet interesting people. It's challenging and at times problematic, but I enjoy helping others. I am also very passionate about helping my volunteers - we have a lot of them that follow us from camp to camp.

**Bob:** I like the challenge, meeting new people and enjoy the social side after a hard day's work; catching up with the volunteers in the afternoon and having a good chat while we debrief and discuss how their day went.







# *BlazeAid's* Supporter of the Quarter

## The Murdoch Foundation

---

The Lachlan and Sarah Murdoch Foundation works with organisations across Australia to improve the lives of children, families, and local communities. Our primary interests include children's health and wellbeing, rural natural disaster recovery and the performing arts. Since inception in 2019, the Foundation has given more than \$10 million to not for profits including BlazeAid, Women's Community Shelters, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation, the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Royal Far West, Qtopia, the Australian Ballet and the Cambodian Children's Fund. The Foundation's initial grant of \$250,000 has been put towards funding BlazeAid's Tree Planting and GRAFFI (Grass-seed Rehabilitation after Fires Funding Initiative). The initiative aims to help bushfire-affected property owners replant trees and grass seed after their property is burnt out.

The first project took place at Edenhope, Victoria, helping farmers affected by the Poolaijelo fires of December 2021. Funds were used to purchase native trees, perennial grass seeds, fencing materials as well as running costs of the basecamp. At the end of the project, more than 5000 trees, fencing and shelter belts were established on nine properties. Another portion of the grant is planned for regenerative tree planting and GRAFFI around BlazeAid's camps in Narrogin, Wickopin and Corrigin, Western Australia. The remaining funds will be set aside for regenerative tree planting and grass-seed rehabilitation in communities affected by bushfire in the future. Sarah and Lachlan are thrilled that, due to their initial funding, BlazeAid now aims to offer the initiative to every community where a basecamp is established.





# BEHIND THE SCENES WITH SARAH BUTLER AND RHYSLONG

*Sarah and Rhys are our IT wonder team, who have not only built the iPad registration, but also our new cloud based console, creating a system that is safer, easier to manage and saves an enormous amount of paperwork!*

Rhys and I met about 5 years ago and now have 2 little kids, Grace -2.5 years and Charlie 7 months. We live in Melbourne and Rhys works as an IT manager in the oil and gas industry. Rhys originates from Wales and moved over to Australia for work prospects in 2010. He enjoys playing soccer and building things like caravans.

My full-time role is an account executive for a mattress manufacturer, where I help retailers get the most out of their business. In my free time I enjoy Pilates and going for walks with my friends. Rhys and I work on BlazeAid tasks together and head up the IT component. Rhys is currently writing the app for BlazeAid and I help to train the coordinators on how to use it. We are also currently working on perfecting the new BlazeAid website. I have been a part of BlazeAid since it started in 2009. I still remember sitting on top of the hill the day the fires started with Dad, Kevin Butler. We were in awe of the smoke incessantly taking over the skyline.

Since then, I have volunteered at a few camps, and Rhys & I have worked at a couple together also. Being a daughter of the founders- the organisation is very close to ours hearts.

We can see how many people it has impacted, and

it feels so rewarding to be able to assist those that are in need.

We have such jam-packed days throughout our working week, as we have a young family (two children) and have full time jobs. We are usually up at 7am with the kids, they go off to daycare and then we go off to our jobs (both mostly in Melbourne- although we also do interstate and country travel), then home to cook dinner, bath, and bed the kids. We aim to work on BlazeAid tasks for about 2-3 hours every evening. It all sounds very hectic, but we love it. Rhys and I feel so fortunate to get the opportunity to work with BlazeAid. We are very excited knowing that we can implement IT processes into the charity to help to make it more efficient and cost effective.

Rhys has written the apps for the iPads and the laptops in each camp for the coordinator to use. I have written the training modules on how to use the apps and also do one-on-one training sessions via video conferencing with coordinators. We also are helping to set up their laptops and iPad, so they are ready to use once the coordinator comes into camp. Essentially, we try to give help and share our knowledge as much as possible with all things Information Technology!





# Board Member in Review

David Caple (AM) is one of our very humble and knowledgeable board members.

David grew up in the town of Warrnambool, Victoria. He is married to his lovely wife, Nancy, and together they have four children - two of which are twins! The Caples also have eleven grandchildren. In total, his family pool is up to 21. WOW! I was even more impressed when he said they all had a holiday together recently!

David has run a management consulting business for over 40 years, which targets helping industries with Health and Wellbeing of staff, productivity, and improving the quality of their work. Half of the business efforts are concentrated on engaging in Government projects and the other half is focused on the private sector. David has held an honorary appointment at Latrobe University for 20 years, and was gratefully supported by Rotary who allowed him to complete university studies in England in the 1970's.

David first found out about Blazeaid through one of his daughters, who is good friend of Sarah Butler, one of the daughters of founders, Kevin and Rhonda Butler. After connecting with Kevin, David chose to visit his first camp in Bruthen, during the 2019/2020 bushfires.

After having first hand experience of the work that BlazeAid do for the community, David decided to get involved with BlazeAid in some small way. He began by assisting to audit and maintain the Blazeaid Asset Database, and from there, was elected to the BlazeAid Board.

David has recently helped on the fence lines at our Lockington camp, with the aim to get an understanding of the difference between fire and flood affected recovery work. He has a high respect for BlazeAid's wonderful Coordinators and the Butler Family in everything they do, believing their time and talents are an asset to the communities BlazeAid works in.

David often visits his family property on Kangaroo Island and is proud to hear about the fantastic work that BlazeAid completed there. It is rewarding for him to see that people are still talking about the work and the volunteers that came and helped after the fires in the area.

David's current involvement with BlazeAid is primarily supporting the Governance such as the reviewing the Constitution, elections, external agreements, and a big problem solver. David is always willing to help with any questions or problems whenever we reach out to him. In BlazeAid David's nickname is known as "Mr Capable". He's a blessing to BlazeAid and we are privileged to have him in our team.



# Camp Location Quiz

# Joke of the Day

## Current Basecamps:

Donnybrook WA  
Seymour VIC  
Riddells Creek VIC  
Moonambel VIC  
Lockington Vic  
Kerang VIC  
Cessnock NSW  
Forbes NSW  
Molong NSW  
Oxley Island NSW  
Wauchope NSW

What did the mama cow say to the baby cow?

It's pasture bedtime!

Zzz



Match these local facts with our Basecamp Locations. 1 point for each correct answer:

1. Which town was named by Scottish settler John Campbell?
2. Which camp has a military base nearby?
3. The Dromkeen Gallery is located here.
4. Where is the Lachlan River?
5. I belong in the Shire of Campaspe.
6. In 1824, this area was explored by Hume and Hovell.
7. I'm considered the apple capital of the west.
8. My name is Iva Davies I am a musician from the band Icehouse, where do I come from?
9. My name comes from the Aboriginal word for "all rocks".
10. We have the best wines in the Pyrenees Region.
11. I am a satellite camp.

## ***VOLUNTEER INSURANCE:***

While working with BlazeAid, any volunteers aged 12 years and up are covered under BlazeAid's Volunteer Insurance. There is no age limit restriction on a volunteer being included however, the Volunteer must be able to take direction and work independently in order to be included.

Any work completed on properties outside of BlazeAid Camps will not be covered under BlazeAid Volunteer Insurance. You will need to organise your own insurance to make sure you're covered. We strongly advise you have ambulance cover when you volunteer at our basecamps. We have Volunteer Insurance (Not Work Cover) for incidents that occur while you are working.



### ***Did You Know?***

Did you know that BlazeAid has a YouTube Channel? It includes links to the amazing documentary series produced during the Black Summer Bushfires. Well worth a watch!

You can find it here: [BlazeAid YouTube](#)

Or just google YouTube BlazeAid.



Answers: 1. Cessnock 2. Seymour 3. Riddells Creek  
4. Forbes 5. Lockington 6. Swanpool 7.  
Donnybrook 8. Wauchope 9. Molong  
10. Moonambel 11. Oxley Island