



OCTOBER 2023 - ISSUE 10

The *BlazeAid* POST

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



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Raffle Results

A big thankyou to Charmaine Wheatley and Gail Courte who organized and ran a raffle for BlazeAid to help raise funds to assist the Miles Community in Queensland, who were affected by the February fires. We raised a grand total of \$8122.55. WOW! What an awesome effort! The raffle was drawn on the 1st July 2023 and here are the lucky winners:

First Prize: Cheryl Harris

Kruger Rand Value at AU \$2000

Second Prize: Letitia Nock

2 Nights family accommodation at Ingenia Nossa Resort, Sunshine Coast QLD

Third Prize: Linda Fitzgerald

40" Smart Blaupunkt TV

Fourth Prize: Paul Plass

2 nights family accommodation Ingenia Holiday Resort Byron Bay

Congratulations to all our winners and a huge thankyou to all involved!





Volunteer in the Spotlight: Lew Newman



We would like to introduce you to Lew Newman, who has been a dedicated BlazeAider since 2011. Lew is renowned for his unwavering commitment to assisting others.

Born in Kempsey NSW and raised in Wauchope, Lew's father was a timber worker and his mother was a dressmaker and domestic worker. Lew has been married to his beloved wife Shirley for over 51 years, and the couple has two boys. They currently reside in Corranbong NSW, having spent 16 years in Brisbane.

Prior to his involvement with BlazeAid, Lew worked as a Quality Control Food Technologist for Sanitarium Health Foods. In his free time, Lew enjoys piano tuning and playing the organ for his local church. He is also a skilled musician, who plays the tuba in a Brass band.

Lew first learned about BlazeAid back in 2011 through Macca on Australia All Over (ABC), and volunteered at his first camp in Bridgewater VIC. Every year, Lew dedicates several weeks to volunteering at different camps to help those affected by natural disasters. He has been volunteering at our Wauchope camp since 2021, even navigating the Covid restrictions. Growing up in Wauchope, Lew felt a sense of responsibility to assist the farmers and community in the area, many of whom he knew personally. Being out fencing and interacting with farmers he had known and gone to school with gave Lew immense satisfaction. He believes that BlazeAid is a worthy cause, as he values the contribution of farmers to our country.

Lew has been an invaluable asset to BlazeAid, and we are incredibly grateful for his continued support. Thank you, Lew, for your selfless service and unwavering dedication.



Dedication

Vale Mike Roberts

It is with great shock and sadness that we let our BlazeAid community know of the sudden passing of our volunteer and coordinator, Mike Roberts. Mike coordinated at Moonambel VIC and Taralga NSW this year, assisting many property owners in need to get back on their feet. Mike gave his time and energy so willingly, always with a smile on his face and energy in his step! Mike recently received a recognition in June 2023 from Wendy Tuckerman MP Member for Goulburn for his role as camp coordinator at Taralga camp. He will be so missed within the BlazeAid Family and we pass on our love and condolences to his family and friends.

Thank you, Mike, for your time and dedication to BlazeAid, your camp volunteers and the communities you assisted.



A Special Thankyou to a Special Board Member:

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Jeanette Fenwick, who has served as a greatly valued board member of Blazeaid (alongside late husband, Bob) for the past five years.

Jeanette has been a valuable asset to our organisation since the Coonabarabran Fires in 2013, contributing her expertise, passion and leadership to our mission of helping rural communities recover from natural disasters. Her quiet wisdom, constitutional knowledge and ability to actively listen and truly understand will be greatly missed. Jeanette has assisted in steering BlazeAid into the strong position it is in now, her 'can-do' approach and caring manner has added strength to our organisation.

Jeanette has decided to retire from her position and we wish her health and happiness for the future. Thank you simply doesn't feel adequate but it is with heartfelt recognition and gratitude that we bid you adieu. Take care Jeanette.





AROUND THE GROUNDS

A Heartfelt Thank You from BlazeAid Wickepin

BlazeAid Wickepin would like to extend our gratitude to the entire community of Wickepin for welcoming and supporting us during our time here. We are especially grateful for the food donations and the valuable time contributed by the community. Every member of our team was deeply appreciative of each donation.

Although our stay was brief, we felt very much at home and were hesitant to leave when our work was completed. I, as the last coordinator of the camp, found it especially difficult to say goodbye after arriving in late May to take over from the amazing team of Rhonda and Kevin. Jo and I, both from QLD, took over from a camp in Echuca, Victoria, and promptly contracted Covid, along with nine other members of the crew. This reduced our number of volunteers significantly, but those who did arrive made a fabulous effort and we were able to complete as much as we could, including planting salt bush and trees.

During our time here, we spent 388 hours in the field, not including the hours our volunteers spent in the kitchen feeding our crew. We assisted 11 properties and completed as much work as possible on all of them with the volunteers available.

Our team built nearly 20km of fences, removed almost 7km of fire-damaged fences, and planted 20,300 saltbush and trees. Once again, we would like to express our love and appreciation for the Wickepin community and all the farmers in the Yilliminning area. Thank you for everything.

Best regards,
Kerrie and Jo
BlazeAid Wickepin



THE 2023/24 DISASTER SEASON

According to the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (Afac) outlook, the fire season 2023/2024 is likely to be the most significant since the 2019-20 black summer fires. Large areas of Australia are expected to face an increased risk of bushfires due to above-average temperatures, decreased rainfall, high fuel loads and changing weather patterns. Some of the areas at increased risk include regions in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

Our current key planning points are as follows:

- Prepare for high demand: Blazeaid anticipates a high demand for assistance from rural families and communities affected by the fires.
- Identifying high risk areas and potential impact of the fires on different regions. Areas that were largely untouched by the 2019-20 fires, such as the Sydney basin, coastal regions and the Hunter, as they have higher fuel loads that could dry out in the coming months are on our radar.
- Developing contingency plans for different scenarios and challenges that we might face during the fire season. For example, having plans for how to deal with Covid-19 outbreaks, road closures, power outages, communication issues, supply shortages, and safety hazards.
- Raise awareness and support for our cause and work among the public, the media, and the government, highlighting the importance of our role in helping rural communities recover and rebuild after the fires. We are looking to seek donations, sponsorships, partnerships, and endorsements from various sources.

BlazeAid will need you! Please consider volunteering

Wauchope & Oxley Island NSW

Closure of Wauchope and Oxley Island Camps - A Heartfelt Thanks to All Involved



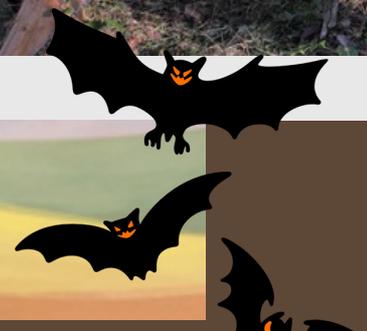
In August 2023, we bade farewell to the Wauchope and Oxley Island camps. We are deeply grateful to the community and volunteers who supported us throughout. After the bushfires ravaged the area in 2019/2020, and again after the floods in 2021, Wauchope camp opened its doors, providing much-needed relief to affected residents. We had the privilege of working with several outstanding Co-ordinators, including Chris & John Male, Steve Mathews, David Geekie, and Bob and Lisa Abdo.

Bob and Lisa, our last Co-ordinators, did a fantastic job, ensuring that we helped and fenced as many affected properties as possible. Together with 890 volunteers, the BlazeAid Team managed to clear and fence over 490kms, assisting 450 properties. What an incredible achievement! We appreciate everyone who contributed to these efforts. Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts!



Lismore NSW

We have just opened up a new camp in the Lismore area (after the 2022 Floods) at the Greyhound facility on Molesworth Street. The camp Co-ordinator is Gary Lawrence and would welcome any volunteers who can assist .The Lismore council has welcomed BlazeAid with open arms.



DID YOU KNOW?

Based on data collated from the last financial year, it costs BlazeAid (on average) \$85 per meter to build a fence. This is calculated by the a costs accrued in running each camp vs how many kms of fencing built . BlazeAid keeps meticulous records on camp spending and volunteer work completed in each camp so that we can show accountability for each and every dollar donated.

Forbes NSW

Forbes camp opened 257 days ago (on the 16th January 2023) and currently has 93 properties registered. 59 Properties have been started with almost half completed. We have enjoyed the luxury of strong volunteer numbers and averaging at least 3 teams traveling out each day so we are making good progress as we work our way through the properties. We are proud to say we have cleared over 93km of fencing and rebuilt over 83kms. It is good to see the local communities starting to rebuild and life getting back to a new type of normal. Ewgowra in particular has its supermarket open again as well as the butcher and café. Work is being done on the pub and the town has pep back in its step. It is wonderful to see the optimism in the local's faces. So proud of our team and the positive impact they are having in the rebuild-good people doing good work. Back in camp we are working away trying to support our paddock teams our wonderful kitchen crew who have produced almost 10,000 meals, feeding 175 volunteers over the life of the camp and making sure the BlazeAid Army is traveling well.

Heartfelt thanks to our volunteers who support us so ably, to the Admin team who answer our calls and the wonderful network of Coordinators who offer friendship and support to each other. Take care all.

Thanks from Chris



Ewgowra footbridge



Ralph the Camp Supervisor

Taralga NSW

Taralga camp opened in the last week of May 2023, following a series of fires that ravaged numerous properties. Since then, we have received ten requests for assistance, which we have been diligently addressing. Our team has cleared nearly 18 kilometers of fencing and constructed an additional 26 kilometers of fencing. We have had the pleasure of hosting and working alongside 41 exceptional volunteers from various nations.

Despite enduring an exceptionally cold winter that posed additional difficulties, we are now looking forward to warmer, drier weather as we continue our efforts to serve and support the community.





BlazeAid Management System (BMS)- Concept Cloud

The BMS is to provide a single cloud base system to aid in the coordination and management of all BlazeAid camps whilst seamlessly integrating with the BlazeAid Back Office Administration Team.

BlazeAid aims to achieve the following objectives through the creation of this system that digitizes the volunteer and farmer registration process:

- Consolidate volunteer and farmer data into a central location
- Enhance data quality via standardization
- Decrease data entry errors by reducing the amount of manual input
- Optimise the Admin Team's productivity by reducing their workload.

PHASE 1: BUILDING THE APP

- Establishing secure protocols for volunteer record-keeping
- Implementing iPad technology for streamlined volunteer registrations
- Automating the registration process for returning volunteers
- Developing a back-end database to facilitate recognition by the Honor Board.

PHASE 2: SECURELY AUTOMATING APP FUNCTIONALITIES, INCLUDING:

- Ensuring the safety and confidentiality of property owner records
- Streamlining farmer registration
- Simplifying property registration
- Enabling volunteers to view properties on the map for travel planning purposes.

PHASE 4, THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS ARE TO BE TAKEN TO ENSURE SECURE AUTOMATION WITHIN THE APP:

- Establish teams based on volunteer arrivals and departures
- Assign teams to respective properties
- Automate merchandise purchases and inventory management.

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTING SECURE AUTOMATION WITHIN THE APP, WHICH INCLUDES:

- Property Progress Reporting and Camp Data
- Volunteer Achievements which encompasses the calculation of kilometers of fencing/clearing, number of volunteer days, and the total number of volunteers in camp.

PHASE 5: SECURELY AUTOMATING FEATURES WITHIN THE APP:

- Equipment Register
- Vehicle Register
- Equipment allocation to teams

Our latest technological advancements enable us to register new volunteers and view all volunteer information, including adding returning volunteers without the need for repetitive data entry. Additionally, this innovation allows for secure information sharing with our head office for insurance purposes and streamlined record keeping, eliminating the need for excessive paperwork. We can now view new farmer details and property registrations, and access their information effortlessly. To ensure a smooth transition, all Coordinators have received comprehensive training and user guides to refer to.





Bite into Some Spooky Spider Cookies



Prep time 20 mins

Cook time 15 mins

Total time 35 mins

Ingredients

150g Butter
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup white sugar
1 Egg
1tsp vanilla essence
2 Cups plain flour
1/4 tsp baking soda
2Tbsp cornflour

Spider decoration

140g Maltesers
100g Dark Chocolate
Candy Eyeballs

Method:

1. In a bowl melt butter in the microwave for 30 to 50 seconds.
2. Whisk then add both sugars, egg and vanilla. Mix together until smooth. (No Lumps)
3. Sift flour, salt, baking soda and corn flour over the bowl then fold everything together until combined. The dough will be very soft but thick. If the mixture is quite warm and soft: chill it in the fridge or freezer until it is cool enough to roll into balls.
4. Pre-Heat the oven to 170C fanbake.
5. Roll the dough into balls about 2 tablespoons 30-40g each and place on a lined baking tray. Push down slightly.
6. Bake the cookies for 12-15 mins until turning golden on the outside but still very soft in the centre. Remove from the oven.
7. While the cookies are still warm push two Malteser's into each one and two candy eyeballs. Remove from the tray after 10 mins to a wire rack to cool.
8. Melt the chocolate then add to a small ziplock bag. Cut a tiny hole in the corner of the bag.
9. Pipe 4 chocolate legs to each side.
10. Once chocolate has hardened it is ready to serve.

Joke of the Quarter

