



BlazeAid

Helping Communities Rebuild
After Natural Disasters



The

SEPTEMBER 2024 - ISSUE 14

BlazeAidPOST

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



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- Supporter of the Quarter - ISUZU
- Win a BlazeAid hoodie and Tshirt!
- Spotlight on Board Member - Shane Stafford

Volunteer in the Spotlight Greg Williams

Greg Williams has been involved with BA since 2014 and has volunteered at more than 10 camps in this time. Not a stranger to volunteering, he also helped out with Ambulance Australia after studying for 4 years while working full time. Married to his lovely wife Vickie for 36 years (and who also volunteers her time to BlazeAid), the couple have 4 beautiful children, three daughters and one son. Greg was born in Newcastle and now calls Woodgate Beach in Qld home. Before retirement in 2013, Greg enjoyed a long career with Rio Tinto in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory for 26 years, beginning with operating heavy machinery to finishing his career as a Superintendent for maintenance planning. Now in his spare time Greg likes fishing, travel and is an avid collector of classic cars (buying and doing them up), having just completed a 1965 Mustang Coupe. Interestingly, that this is how Greg discovered BlazeAid!



After retiring, Greg returned from a trip to America to purchase a 5th Wheeler Caravan. He was traveling Oz on a fishing trip, when he heard Macca on Australia All Over, ABC Radio, about the plight of BlazeAid, and how volunteers were needed to help with fencing near Thoona. So, never having fenced before, Greg decided that he would give it a go. He liked the idea of giving back to the farmers.

"I remember when I was out fencing for the 1st time. John Lillico sent me out with another guy called Lance - our job was to get some patch up work done on a farmer's property. Lance would tell me, 'Now watch me and do as I say', and that is how I learnt to fence."

Today, with a bit of experience under his belt, Greg is the team leader, taking groups out on the fence line. He also encourages the volunteers in his team to go at their own pace, as he knows not everyone is built the same. "Each day in BlazeAid is different, but I do enjoy when we have finished working for the day, and the volunteers sit around the fire and have a chat and a few laughs."

So what keeps Greg volunteering?

"Firstly I believe in paying it forward our farmers who do not get enough recognition. It is also great to see how people from all different careers come together to volunteer their time because they share the same values as BlazeAid. There was a fellow I volunteered with in Casino named Laurie. He really inspired me. Laurie had one arm and to see the work he could achieve was amazing!" It's the people you meet in BlazeAid that makes it magic!

Greg, BlazeAid would like to say thank you once again for all your time and hard work. You're BlazeAid royalty!

Board Member Introduction - Shane Stafford

Introducing another valued Board Member to the BlazeAid Community - our very own Shane Stafford.

Shane is 60 years old and is married to his lovely wife Belinda. They have 3 beautiful daughters Penny, Megan and Samantha and 5 grandchildren. Shane is a Stock and Station agent and has been for 44 years. He owned two cattle properties in Richmond, QLD, until July 2022, but is now in the process of developing a small farm in the County Tipperary Ireland, UK.

BA: How did you find out about BA?

Shane: After the massive gulf floods in 2019, I made contact direct with Kevin and helped organise and provide facilities and assistance for the Richmond QLD Camp.

BA: What made you want to Volunteer for BA?

Shane: As well as helping BlazeAid in Richmond, I also received wonderful assistance from BlazeAid on our own flood affected property, "Lucerne". The team helped erect 20km of fencing. After this assistance, I felt due to put something back into the cause, helping to raise much needed funds and equipment. I also helped look after the "BlazeAid Too Far Away" program, allocating funds to those outside base camp areas throughout Eastern Australia.

BA: What made you want to be a part of BlazeAid Board?

Shane: BlazeAid is a wonderful organisation where every dollar goes to the recipients and not tied up in the management of such funds. From the top down, good management principles exist and funds are used to their maximum potential. The biggest reward that BlazeAid shows me is the mental health side of things with the recipients. The farmers and property owners that don't know where to turn or start are ably assisted and it helps and encourages the farmers to turn up everyday and see results, which brings their whole well being and purpose back to them.

BA: What occupies your time now?

Shane: I remain a stock and station agent in

QLD. I'm in my 44th year doing so and 34 of those years have been in my own business, Stafford Stock and Property. I have rural interest in Ireland as well as continuing to run Beef Cattle in North West Qld.

BlazeAid is so grateful to have Shane's continuing support, knowledge of the land and farming. He has consistently contributed with vigor and passion, especially when challenges have arisen, such as during the Black Summer period, when he spent countless hours answering emails and messages (they were coming in at a rate of around 5 per minute!) Thank you Shane for all you give!



Shane and his wife, Belinda



Shane and volunteers in 2019



Shane with one of his prized cattle

My Experience as a BlazeAid a Co-Ordinator

By Christopher Chance

Christopher 'Chance' shone as bright as a light at our Goornong VIC basecamp the moment he arrived! It didn't take long for our fabulous coordinator, Debra, to scoop him up and start training him to be a coordinator. BlazeAid hit the jackpot with this superstar—Chance is truly a natural leader!

Initially, I had no thoughts or considerations for becoming a coordinator at all. It was through a casual conversation with my then coordinator, Debra, in Goornong Camp. What started as genuine curiosity to what the role entailed, led to eventually feeling as if I was here (at BlazeAid) for something greater than fencing, especially after meeting Melissa and Kevin when they visited Goornong. That is not to say I did not feel fulfilled doing volunteer work as a fencer – I had the best time with newfound friends, including one farmer whom I stay in touch with to this day. I suppose I was equally excited and terrified at the thought of becoming a coordinator, admittedly a lot more terrified towards the day leading up to moving to Buangor. I am thankful for Jude to have stayed four days before leaving the camp, though nothing could have prepared me for the experience that was my first two weeks. For starters, I received a phone call from one of my team leaders that a volunteer had hurt herself and needed directions to take her to the nearest urgent care facility. This was the very first morning of running the camp on my own! Thankfully I was able to assist swiftly, though unfortunately, she ended up having to wear a cast over her arm for her final two weeks with us. Over my time in Buangor, we had



Chance on the fence lines in Goornong

volunteers from 19 nationalities in total, and I can safely say not one individual felt left out or out-of-place.

In addition to the 13 of us arriving to Buangor from Goornong, we had another 13 volunteers arrive seven days later, this time from a 4WD Club. One of my biggest weaknesses was my inability to be loud vocally to command everyone's attention – especially when the camp grew to over 40 volunteers for at least a whole week. However, I also learnt that you don't always have to do everything yourself. Delegate. Delegate. Delegate.

As I was trying to figure out everything by myself, one of my volunteers offered to raise his voice to get everyone's attention each morning and evening so I could carry out muster. I was also



initially worried I may not be able to command the attention or respect of individual who were easily twice my age, but that proved to be a non-issue as people end up getting along with one another, and on the off-chance a few of them had differences, they managed to stick to their own groups and co-exist instead of causing any drama. After two weeks into being a coordinator, with a camp that had since halved in size and myself being more familiar with the daily responsibilities, it became a lot



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By Chance

more manageable. Being a Coordinator became a genuinely great time. Although, I can not take the credit, as I felt blessed to have volunteers who had such a great time in-camp that they decided to stay well past their 88-day visa requirements. They stayed because of the joy it brought to them to give back and the relationships they had made. At least seven of us decided to stay till the very end, four of us staying well past an additional month.

We also had a veteran BlazeAider, Joe, who has worked in over 25 BlazeAid camps, come and help us. Joe and his adorable Kelpie, Kelepy, (who has graced a staggering 20 BlazeAid camps himself), only radiated positivity and joy in the whole camp. There were a lot of factors that contributed to the overall camp experience being lively and joyful. Perhaps one of the earliest that began before I had arrived were the neighbours who lived across the road (Tim and Margaret). They hosted music nights every Tuesdays and Thursdays, where they had a jazz band rehearsing for an upcoming gig that we were invited to watch, and on some occasions open their recording studio and instruments for us to jam out too. Various volunteers showcased their talents from singing and playing different instruments, while the rest enjoyed the evening atmosphere.



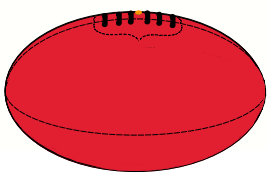
Buangor crew on a night out at the cinemas

I felt inspired to play the piano for the first time in 14 years too, after having grown up learning and playing the instrument for over a decade as a child. Between music nights, regular movie nights post-dinner, a 21st birthday party of a local's daughter being thrown within the camp premises, and even creating our own events such as hosting an awards ceremony on our final week to recognize everyone and having a campfire, I felt right at home in-camp more so than I did back in Melbourne. In fact, I turned 30 in our final week of camp, and everyone threw me a surprise birthday party that would always be something I remember for years to come. Looking back at how I felt on my first week of being a coordinator and my last week of camp, I cannot be more grateful for not just the personal development I had noticed within myself, but for all the experiences that I regard as core memories and individuals I have met that would likely become lifelong friendships. I was not sure how capable I was to lead an entire campsite, but not only did I learn as events unfolded, I realise today that the best thing one can do when in a state of uncertainty and anxiety is to focus on what can be done in the present moment

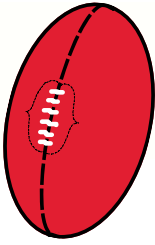
instead of worrying about a future that may never come to pass. There is never a moment where I can sit and tell myself that I have done everything I could do with nothing on my 'to-do' list. New tasks come up as old ones get cleared, and as you get by each day feeling as if you were merely flowing through time as it fleets, you later realise that all of the circumstances that took place, built you to become the person you needed to be, arriving at where you were meant to be, at the exact time that you should be at. In other words, trust the timing of life and worry less about what happens next. If you focus on the present moment, new doors will open and the foreign paths that may appear daunting ahead will end up providing a sense of reassurance. If anything, I feel as if my four months with BlazeAid has served as a form of 'reset' to how I approach life, with a newfound philosophy that I imagine would take me far in this newfound life in Australia.

BlazeAid thanks you, Chance, for all your time, energy, enthusiasm and care in looking after Aussie farmers and our wonderful volunteers.





Around the Grounds



Buangor VIC

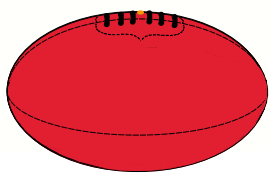
After the devastating fires that came through the Pomonal area, BlazeAid setup came in Buangor in March 2024. The camp came to a close during the first week in August. The camp saw 198 different volunteers come through the doors and help 80 Farmers/Property Owners, The volunteers cleared 114kms of fences and rebuilt 81km. The camp was overseen by 4 different Coordinators over its length, Jenny and Sam who was first followed by Graeme Allen, followed by a popular Coordinator Jude Turner and then a new diamond in the rough Christopher 'Chance'. Well done to all involved, to the volunteers, the community and the local businesses who donated their time and efforts. Buangor camp was a great success, even with the challenging weather conditions. BlazeAid is very grateful to have had the support from the two councils involved, the Pyrenees Shire Council and the Ararat Rural City Council to make this possible.



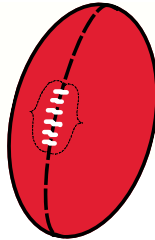
Tara QLD

Tara camp struggled in its beginning with low volunteer numbers, but after we came out of hibernation we had a staggering 79 volunteers come through the camp. We saw many backpackers from different nations come to help and what an excellent job they did! A big thankyou to all our coordinators - Linda, Paul, Ian and Nexi, an international volunteer who took the camp through to closure. The team managed to reach out to 37 property owners and clear 12 km of fencing and complete 33km. The camp ended with a little bit of fun and had a Xmas July party with all the trimmings.





Around the Grounds



Kulin WA

Kulin camp has been a wonderful camp, with some amazing volunteers, and very grateful farmers.

The weather has been a little cold, which has limited the number of volunteers we had in camp, but we have fenced over 56km of Ringlock. We also cleared over 4km. Just on 7000 pickets were installed all up.

Most of the camp, was spent in a Hostel at the caravan park in Kulin, but as the weather warmed up, the caravan park needed all its facilities, so the last week of camp was spent in the shearing quarters on one of the farmers properties, where we could have a great fire in the evenings. The first night here we had Damper from a camp oven, potatoes and corn cooked in the coals and sausages and onions cooked over the fire. A lovely night was had by all. These small towns in the Wheat Belt area of WA are very generous and extremely helpful when we needed anything. The Lions Club in Kulin gave us a \$500 gift card and the Men's shed, [average age 85+] made us a new bar for rolling out the wire, when ours snapped



Nymboida NSW

Well done to our Nymboida camp that has come to a close after a successful stint. We were lucky to have three coordinators run this camp - a huge thanks to Judy, Karen and Greg and Lisa and Bob. With the camp embracing 69 Volunteers with a total of 1188 days, 25 properties were completed, with 29kms of clearing and a further 27kms rebuilt.

Clarence Valley Council were

marvellous in their support and very grateful to have BlazeAid there to assist. The camp had many memorable moments, with stories and adventures from our backpackers and volunteers. Congratulations to all involved.



Stanthorpe QLD

Here we are and its about 3 months to Christmas! Our backpackers are here working with our more experienced volunteers and the interaction between the younger and older, western and eastern cultures, novices and experience makes life exciting and challenging here. Smiling faces and aching bodies, these amazing people continue to work to repair the damaged community in the Granite Belt region of the Darling Downs in southern QLD. Contrasts are everywhere - look at the cow and calf in the bare paddock, and the volunteers enjoying the rich pastures in the farming districts. Millennials (Whatever they are), indefatigable grey nomads, backpackers who cannot leave after 88 days, they need to finish the job they are on and us - coordinators who are holding things together! I love life! Statistically we have built over 73.5kms of fences (New and repaired), and cleared over 60km of fencing in the 283 days we have been open. We started this journey on 27th November 2023 and will try and be finished by 27th of November 2024. At this stage we have worked on 45 properties completing 33 of them. More work to do, more fun to be had and new people to meet. We have had up to 16 nationalities here at a time. From our near Pacific neighbours to more far-flung parts of the globe, reaching into South America, Europe and South Africa we will continue on for the next month at least.

Stay safe everyone, regards from Stanthorpe.



Supporter of the Quarter:

ISUZU



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Designed to deliver day in and day out, Isuzu is a brand that's become synonymous with reliability. For over 50 years, they've carried almost every payload imaginable. Today, 1 in 3 trucks on the road carries an Isuzu Trucks badge. With that in mind, it's little surprise that they've been Australia's favourite truck brand since 1989. It's this reputation for reliability that they've carried across into their other product ranges as well.

Their range of parts and the Isuzu Power Solution's range of Power Units and off-highway engines have become a favourite of many. Supported by their Care and Aftersales divisions, Isuzu remains focused on delivering for their customers and their community.

The wholly owned subsidiary of Isuzu Motors Limited, Isuzu Australia shares many of the values of their Japanese parent company. Their goal is to help build a better future for everyone. By developing products for the future and aligning themselves with like-minded partners, Isuzu aims to deliver innovative solutions for today's problems.

With the help of Blaze Aid, Isuzu hopes it will be able to create a meaningful impact on our society and the environment. Our partnership assists in the delivery of justice programs, supports rejuvenation efforts and provides support to those in their time of need. It's this sort of people first attitude that makes Isuzu an obvious partner for Blaze Aid. Not only is it a core value of theirs, they've also taken real action towards a proactive partnership with Blaze Aid and our supporters.

Together with their partners, Isuzu's supporting Blaze Aid with the delivery of two dual cab tray back trucks and will support their staff to volunteer regularly at Blaze Aid events. Driven by a shared passion for the betterment of the environment and a desire to see local communities flourish, Isuzu's an ideal partner for Blaze Aid.

In addition to their support by way of trucks and volunteers, Isuzu is also working with their local dealer network to provide ongoing support and servicing post truck delivery.

Partnering with Isuzu creates a variety of opportunities for proactive activations between Isuzu, Blaze Aid and our partners. It's an opportunity both Blaze Aid and Isuzu can rely on.



Isuzu Power Solutions have also generously donated a 37KVA GenSet to power volunteer caravans at our Raglan Basecamp!

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POWER
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TRIVIA

How well do you know the BlazeAid Board Members ??



WIN A BLAZE AID *Hoodie and TShirt!*

Match up the names below to the cutest babies photos and email your answers to admin@blazeaid.com.au for the chance to win a prize for the highest correct guesses!

David Caple

Andrew Gibson

Shane Stafford

Rob Edwards

Rhonda Butler

Kevin Butler

Bronwyn Edwards

Debbie Buttler

Gary Waterson

Gary Lawrence

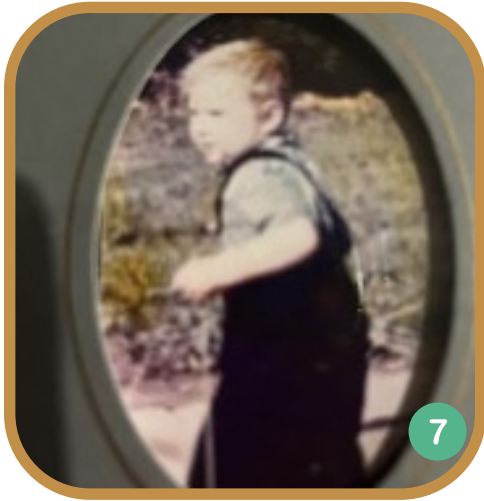
Melissa Jones

Graeme Allen



DO YOU KNOW?

WIN A BLAZEARD *Hoodie and TShirt!*



HEINER

Feel free to google what our
Board members look like now
to give you some clues!



BlazeAid Merchandise

Don't forget we've got some great BlazeAid items for sale.

Just sent an email to admin@blazeaid.com.au with your details and what you would like, then we can pop your purchase in the mail!

These water bottles are triple insulated and keep drinks cool or hot for up to 8 hours!
\$30 each



BlazeAid TShirts in a variety of colours (front pocket) sizes XS-4XL



Insulated reusable coffee or tea mugs!
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High - Quality Hoodies with front pouch for only \$50 each