



Media Release

6 September 2016

VicForests staff recognised for bravery as fire season nears

As experts predict another difficult fire season, the VicForests staff who bravely battled the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires have been publically recognised.

The 50 staff members from VicForests, both past and present, who fought against the fires were recently presented with the National Emergency Medal at a special commemorative ceremony.

Robert Green, CEO VicForests said that he has an immense amount of respect for all his staff that play a role in fire management.

“These are highly skilled, courageous men and women that often put their lives on the line during a bushfire,” Mr Green said.

“Our contractors also play a very critical role in these events by supplying vital equipment and invaluable knowledge of Victoria’s forests.

“As we move into the hotter months, we are reminded of tragic events such as Black Saturday that many of our staff battled through leaving lasting effects on communities, jobs and lives,” he said.

Matt Potter, Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer at the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) presented the medals and acknowledged the recipients for their bravery.

“The VicForests staff and contractors are not only skilled fire managers but they also bring with them exceptional safety practices and experience and knowledge of the forest they operate in every day in their jobs,” Mr Potter said.

“On behalf of DELWP, I would like to thank all VicForests employees for their contributions in the 2009 fires and for their ongoing commitment and support to bushfire management in Victoria,” he said.

The Hon Jaala Pulford, Victorian Minister for Agriculture wrote a heartfelt letter thanking VicForests for their bravery on that day.

“The National Emergency Medal is an important public recognition of the sustained efforts made by VicForests staff during an exceptionally difficult period,” Minister Pulford said.

“Thank you to all VicForests staff and their families. A long and intense fire season not only affects those with direct fire roles, but also those who maintain VicForests’ day to day operations. My gratitude goes to all of you.”

There are 54 current employees at VicForests that are skilled and trained in dealing with bushfires and every year they work together with the Country Fire Authority, DELWP and Parks Victoria to help minimise the risks and devastation that major bushfires bring with them.

The Black Saturday bushfires were the worst in Australia’s history. Across Victoria, the Black Saturday fires took 173 lives, destroyed thousands of homes, and directly affected almost 80 communities and almost 430,000 hectares of land.

Media Release

The National Emergency Medal is an operational service medal which recognises significant or sustained service to others in a nationally significant emergency.

-ends-

Notes:

The VicForests staff members, past and present, that received a National Emergency Medal were;

Paul Agterhuis, Jeremy Allen, James Anderson, Rebecca Bailey, Kim Barned, Judith Blakeney, Rhodney Bowman, Nicholas Bush, Peter Campbell, Dane Carozzi, Josh Chikuse, Marc Conte, Mark Crouch, Glenn Dooley, Patrick Dowling, Ben Drouyn, Peter Elms-Smith, Adam Green, Adam P Green, Michael Hansby, Leigh Hender, Tom Hill, Peter Jenkins, Matthew Kavanagh, Darrul Kennedy, Ian King, Paul Kneale, Constatine Kontos, Mikhail Leikin, Jarrod Logue, Basil Lyon, Ray Mackey, Hubert Mapleson, Fiona McDermott, Andrew McGuire, Graeme Mitchell, Liz Monea, JP Morice, Bryan Nicholson, Trevor Nicklen, Helen O'Brien, Stuart O'Brien, Emma Orgill, Quinton Pakan, David Pollock, David Potter, Ross Potter, Nigel Reid, Bernard Robb, Ross Runnalls, Craig Rutherford, Michael Ryan, Tim Sanders, Peter Scales, Jason Schaefer, Charles Stansfield, Rodney Walker, Vincent White.