

SES Gosford Unit – 2020 – For Central Coast Kids Day Out (CCKDO) Time Capsule Project

2020 started with the continuation of severe bush fires, the Gosper's Mountain Fire which had started from a single ignition point worsened and was now known as the 'Mega Blaze', out of control and spreading towards the NSW South Coast. At its peak in December 21 2019, it had burnt over one million hectares of land.



Over the Christmas 2019 and New Year 2020 break, 60 members of our unit were on rostered standby, and 25 others non-rostered standby to provide assistance with RFS support if needed and any other emergency agencies. Members assisted with clearing roads in fire ravaged areas, felling dangerous burnt out trees, and providing logistical support. 15 members were involved in RFS support from New Year's Eve through to New Year's Day with road closures and clearing.

By mid-January the fire was finally declared contained. It was a Pre-COVID-19 time in SES and the usual Unit Maintenance Day went ahead; 48 members attended to improve the setup of the Unit and ensure all resources / supplies and equipment were up to date and in working order for the year ahead.

The weather Information from the Bureau of Meteorology predicted a La Nina weather pattern for 2020, causing increased rain, higher winds, lower average daytime temperatures, bigger temperature fluctuations, and a higher likelihood of tropical cyclones.

In February, COVID was getting more news attention and awareness in the community, however no restriction ensured business as usual for volunteers. Werner Klumpp attended a preschool session and educated kids about Storms and Floods. A storm can be very scary for young children so being bettered prepared and informed always helps. The main message for kids in 2020 is "Don't ride, walk or play in floodwaters".

NEVER ENTER FLOODWATER

NEVER DRIVE
NEVER RIDE
NEVER WALK
NEVER PLAY

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floodsafe.com.au FloodSafe

The first 2 weeks of Feb brought an East Coast Low to NSW, heavy and continuous rain meant the community was in dire need with nearly 1000 calls to SES Unit and 700 to SES Wyong Unit. During this weather event, more than 3 times the average rainfall fell. 53 teams were set up – Field, Logistics, and Operations. We had valuable assistance from Fire & Rescue, providing us with Liaison officers, 6 field teams and 1 RFS Team. The only good news from this rain was that the Gosper's Mountain fire was finally put out. Many properties around Tuggerah Lake were flooded. Livestock including sheep, horses and an alpaca were rescued by Gosford SES flood rescue techs from a property on the Central Coast. Wendy Whitmore arranged for Point Clare Guides to visit Gosford Unit, to improve awareness and how to prepare for Storms, Floods & Tsunami.

During March COVID-19 restrictions has stopped all face-to-face training, weekly muster meetings were suspended and Community engagement events were cancelled indefinitely. Where possible training was moved online, to maintain operational capacity, the original 4 sub-teams of the Gosford Unit were amalgamated to 2, rotating on a fortnightly roster, designed to keep our members safer and reduce the chance of COVID-19 spreading through the Unit. COVID changed a lot for the world, and the for the first time in Australia, ANZAC Day celebrations were cancelled. New cleaning processes, social distancing, and attendance limits were being used. The unit organised face masks, hand sanitiser and gloves for added protection.

Flood Rescue tech Phil Shields assisting Out of Area in Goodooga and flooding at the known hotspots around.

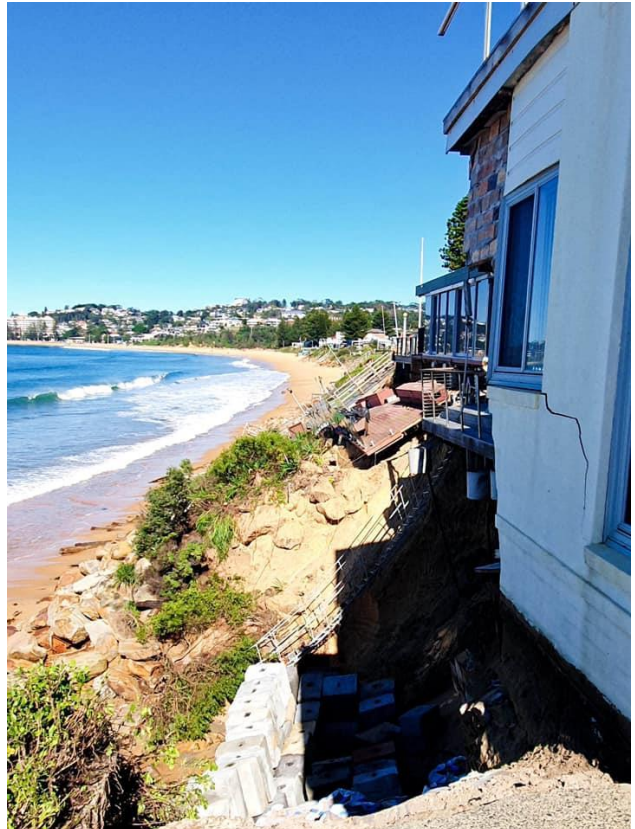


In April the first online MS Teams Muster meeting was a success with over 60 members attending virtually. The SES Volunteers Association magazine had an article about Shea Cullen, Gosford Units first female In Water Flood Technician.



In May the Gosford Unit Community Open Day was postponed due to COVID-19. However, COVID couldn't stop our volunteers, who had to use 7 tonnes of sand to make up sandbags for intense weather events. With demand so high a second sandbag location was organised in Davistown for local residents.

In June, COVID restrictions continued however small groups were allowed to continue their skills training – a select few were able to complete their 4WD training



With July came severe coastal erosion at Wamberal Beach, highly published by local media. SES volunteers were called on to assist with emergency evacuations of the properties, and to assess the amount of damage. Structural engineers were called in and the affected area had to be evacuated.

In August essential training was able to go ahead due to the slightly relaxed COVID regulations, volunteers were able to undertake First Aid Training and PIARO (Participate in a Rescue Operation) training.



More training followed in September, with a land search training event planned by Phil Whitmore and Peter Evans in Rumbalara Reserve.

The official Storm Season began in October (October-March) and Social Media was used in place of community events to improve awareness. Werner Klumpp was interviewed for the Central Coast Kids Day Out (CCKDO) YouTube channel as the actual event was cancelled due to Covid-19. The Community Capability team with our mascot Paddy, attend this and many other community events during the year to improve awareness of SES and how to better prepare our local community for storms and floods.



Help your family prepare for floods and storms



Things you can do NOW to prepare your home and family



Make a plan for your family that outlines what you would do in an emergency



Prepare an emergency kit in case you lose power or need to leave your home in a hurry



Secure or put away items that could blow around in strong winds

and... when a storm is coming



Head inside and bring pets with you



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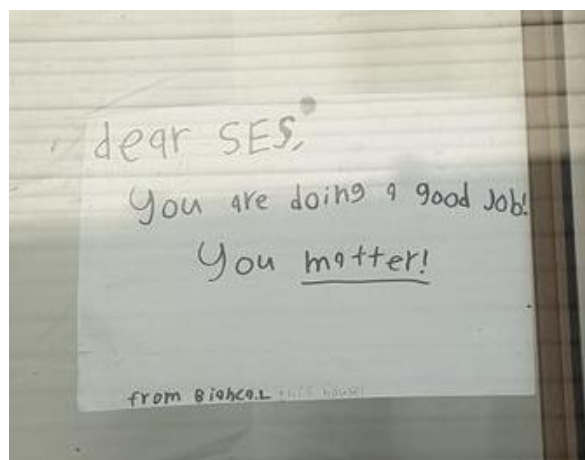
FOR EMERGENCY HELP IN
FLOODS AND STORMS CALL

132 500

Storm season brought the weather, with Sydney and the Central Coast battered by wild wind, torrential rain and flash flooding. Gosford flood rescue teams pulled a family from their car stuck in floodwaters in Holgate.



November was a busy month despite COVID flaring back up. World Tsunami Awareness Day was on November 5, the Community Capability team organised a project with Surf Life Saving Association and the Surf Clubs to raise awareness across the Central Coast. Gosford SES was inducted as a capable unit (Public Access Defibrillation), assisting NSW Ambulance in times of need. During ongoing COVID restrictions and weather events, one of our members (Sharon Cole) spotted this poster in a window.



Severe weather struck Queensland with intense hail damage and despite COVID restrictions, calls for help to select units were requested. Newcastle also was hit by hail with more Gosford members answering the calls for help. (Luke Bartley below)



Deputy Commander Philip Whitmore participated in the first Flood Rescue Trainer and Assessor Endorsement Pathway, focussed on providing potential trainers the opportunity to develop their skills to ensure a consistent base for delivering training in the future.



In December, a slight relaxing of the COVID-19 restrictions allowed the Community Capability Team to attend a (hot and windy) Christmas Markets at Mount Penang, COVID safe restrictions were in place throughout the event (Eleanor Whitmore, Velinda Lee and Paula Jarman).



Essential training such as Level 1 Flood Technician Training at Penrith White Water Stadium continued (Brett Brown and Kerry Dambrauskas). A severe storm with over 150 RFAs for Gosford Unit kept volunteers busy into January 2021.



The Christmas and End of Year Awards night was cancelled due to fluctuating COVID risks. COVID-19 really has dominated the year, but despite the ongoing stresses and constantly changing advice and restrictions, our resourceful volunteers have rallied to ensure their skills are up to date and that the community is always safe.

2020 in Short

SES is the combat agency for Storms, Floods and Tsunami, run almost entirely by volunteers. Gosford Unit is part of the Central Coast Cluster along with Wyong, in 2020 we have over 100 active volunteers and are located in Pateman Road, Erina, NSW 2250.

Unit Management

Local Commander – Rolf Garda

Unit Commander – Steve Tobin

Deputy Commander – Phil Whitmore

Deputy Commander – Werner Klumpp

The total hours of operational members during 2020 was 15,189

2020 Gosford Unit RFA's (Requests for Assistance Jobs) in Review

Total jobs Received – 2153

Flood rescues - 21

PAD Activations – 1

Flood assistance calls – 120

Storm assistance calls – 1985

Support assistance calls – 26

OOA (Out of Area) team deployments - 3

The world was very different in for everyone in 2020 - We hope the future is bright, and that you enjoyed reading this report from the past at Gosford SES Unit.

Written by Wendy Whitmore (Community Capability Coordinator) edited by Katrina Fowler (Social Media Officer), Photos from various SES volunteers via Facebook Account.