

27 OCTOBER 2008

Bushfires in high country communities

The events of the 2006/07 Great Divide Fires will be remembered on Tuesday 28 October when *Wildfire in the High Country* is launched.

Wildfire in the High Country is a collection of reports, stories, letters, poems, art works and photographs from the fires compiled by the Mansfield Writers' Group.

Victoria's longest-running fires, the Great Divide Fires, burnt almost 1.2 million hectares over 69 days after beginning on 1 December 2006.

The book describes the impact the fires had on the local communities in the Mansfield area and details the recovery and rebuilding process. The project had many enthusiastic contributors, including Publication Editor Robin Purdey who said the book is an insight into the fires.

"*Wildfires in the High Country* is very important to the Mansfield community and is another step in the local area's recovery."

"There were so many amazing people including volunteers who worked during and after the fires. The event really pioneered our community spirit, something which the book hopes to capture and display to all readers."

The book highlights the significant cost of the fires, focusing on the effects on the community and the stories of those on the frontline.

Mansfield was at the heart of three major fires – the Tatong, Mansfield Complex, and the King Valley fires – and its spirit shone through as local residents rallied together in support of each other.

Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) Chairman and local resident Len Foster AO has invited CEOs from all Australian fire and land management agencies to the launch. "*Wildfire in the High Country* shows that as a community facing the threat of a major bushfire we were prepared, we dealt with the challenge and now we are learning how to recover," said Mr Foster.

"Recovery can be a difficult process but it is made all the more rewarding with the support of family, friends and the broader community. Books like this help us to better understand what we have been through and to more fully appreciate the sort of community that we become after a bushfire. This publication helps us all to continue to move forward, as we prepare for another hot, dry summer."

Attending the launch will be representatives from organisation that funded the book including Bushfire CRC, CFA, Department of Sustainability and Environment and Department of Human Services.

All profits from sale of the books will be donated to local CFA Brigades.

The book is available from retail outlets around Mansfield or can be ordered online at:

<http://www.bushfirecrc.com/news/wildfirehighcountrybook.html>

***Wildfire in the High Country* will be launched by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, The Honourable Bob Cameron, at the Metropole Hotel Fitzroy at 6pm on Tuesday 28 August 2008.**

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