



Fighting flames and caring for communities

How Boeing people gave back during the bushfire crisis

March 13, 2020

The bushfires that raged across Australia in 2019-2020 were devastating: families lost loved ones, properties were destroyed, and our beautiful environment and wildlife suffered incredible losses. The firefighters and ADF personnel who fought these tragic fires are heroes.

Boeing's Australian workforce is more than 3,500 strong. Australia is our home. And during Australia's time of need, we did our best to be there for our families, friends, communities and customers. These are a few of our stories.

OUR PLATFORMS

When our Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel joined the fight, Boeing was responsible for ensuring many of their aircraft and systems could be mobilised quickly and safely and kept on-task during operations.

At the forefront of the ADF's relief efforts were six CH-47 Chinook helicopters deployed from Townsville to deliver essential supplies and humanitarian assistance to remote and isolated communities and conduct night surveillance missions to support firefighting efforts.

The Chinook is the iconic workhorse of the ADF. Its versatile heavy-lifting capability enabled it to fulfil a variety of missions – from dropping Army personnel into areas that were inaccessible by road, to evacuating casualties, military liaison, and dropping vital supplies including food, fuel, livestock feed and generators.

Also supporting frontline operations was the Helicopter Aircrew Training System (HATS) team which assisted local emergency services' fire-fighting efforts in New South Wales, providing communications support and impact assessments of fire-affected properties.

Called in to prepare aircraft that had been stood down for the Christmas break, the dedication and professionalism of the HATS team was described as “exceptional” in a letter of commendation from the Commonwealth.

Behind the scenes, the P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft deployed over land to conduct reconnaissance flights over affected areas, feeding information back to ground crews. The massive C-17 Globemaster transported hundreds of firefighters, supplies, equipment and civilians in and out of affected areas. The Currawong battlespace communications system kept deployed Army staff connected as they supported community relief efforts. And modified Boeing 737 commercial aircraft dropped vital water bombs and fire retardant on many of the most ferocious fires.

OUR PEOPLE

The bushfires that ravaged Australia in late 2019 and into 2020 were horrific and devastating.

People from all walks of life banded together to support firefighting and relief efforts.

Boeing people were no exception.

They are leaders, innovators, collaborator and champions – both at work and in their communities. They gave of their time to battle fire fronts, volunteer in their communities, and deploy with the ADF as Army Reservists.

[Greg Maiden](#) is a Boeing employee and former Australian Army; Greg was called upon once again to service his country by flying as a member of a CH-47 Chinook crew. This is Greg's story.

“We were flying in some of the most intense conditions our crew had ever experienced,” said Maiden.

[Lee Blanchard and James Heron](#) work in Boeing's Adelaide and Canberra offices. During the bushfires, they were on the frontlines with other “fireys”. This is their story.

“As a volunteer firefighter, I was compelled to protect families, friends, homes and assets,” said Heron.

[Narelle Rawnsley](#) focuses on the environment, health and safety at Boeing. A terrible number of koalas lost their environment, health and safety during the bushfires. Narelle helped to save as many koalas as possible in the Adelaide Hills. This is her story.

Helping save koalas “was well suited to my background in incident command from my fire service days,” said Rawnsley.