

FROM THE COAST

Twelve Months On

Twelve months ago the Shire of Esperance experienced a day like no other, to be honest it felt like a day from hell and will live in our memories forever. Last week we took some time and reflected as a community on how we coped with that day and the days after and ultimately the full impact over the last twelve months.

We remembered Freddie, Tom, Anna and Julia and the shock and disbelief we felt when we heard the news they had died in the fire. We thought of their families and the heartbreak they have suffered and how they have coped.

We reflected on what happened to our community as a whole and how we dealt with adversity, distress and the massive challenges we have faced since Tuesday 17 November 2015. We looked at how much we have achieved in what feels like a blink of an eye.

Finally, I want to say thank you once again, thank you to our wonderful community who cooked, comforted, counselled and cared for one another, showing support and strength in whatever way they could. To our amazing local volunteer firefighters who fought the long, hard, dangerous battle against the fires, and a thank you to all the other volunteer firefighters and Department of Fire & Emergency Services personnel who joined our crews and helped us during that dreadful week. Thank you to our wonderful service clubs who cooked, supported and gave such generous financial contributions for our recovery. Thank you to the other local governments for their support and financial assistance; to the Red Cross, BlaizeAid, Baked Relief, the local police and emergency services, WA Farmers, SEPWA, CWA, Horizon Power, Parks and Wildlife, local machinery contractors, the Department of Agriculture...the list is endless...local businesses, farmers who came to help with offers of feed, machinery and resources to help get those on burnt out country up and back on their feet. What makes a community a community? It's when people come together, help each other and make sure everyone's quality of life is looked after.

Most of us have come through the recovery and picked up the pieces, helping where we could over the last twelve months, and have got back on with our lives. For a few, however, the recovery has been and continues to be a far longer road. I ask you to continue to be strong and compassionate, looking after yourselves and your families, friends and loved ones. Hold them close in your thoughts and your hearts as we acknowledge last year's November bushfires and the precious lives lost.