

Bush Search and Rescue Annual Report

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It has been a busy 12 months for Bush Search and Rescue Victoria with a number of searches and training events in that time. In May 2009 BSAR assisted the Victoria Police with the search for a 3 year old boy missing in freezing conditions overnight near Gormandale, in Gippsland. Fortunately he was found alive and well early the next morning in a pine forest less than 2kms from the family farm from where he was last seen. BSAR members David Tingay, a doctor and a nurse, provided on site first aid before the child was transferred to hospital via ambulance for further checks. Indications were that his core temperature was low but he quickly recovered after being supplied with warm coverings, warm drinks and food.

In August 2009 BSAR was involved in the search for missing Victorian Minister for Water, Tim Holding in the Mount Feathertop area. The search was a serious one due the fact it was mid-winter in alpine conditions and dangerous terrain. BSAR was quickly on site and was deployed to the areas of greatest concern and as well as the areas where the minister was likely to be. In bad weather overnight, a small group of BSAR members camped near the summit. Equipped with full alpine gear, they were able to quickly scout the summit areas and avalanche prone gullies. Other BSAR groups stayed overnight near Federation hut and were deployed early in the morning to nearby gullies. Tim Holding was briefly spotted overnight by plane and later by helicopter mid morning the day after BSAR were sent to the search. He was winched to safety before groups could reach him in the heavy terrain. Minister Holding had been missing for two cold nights in below freezing conditions but was fortunately reasonably equipped. Nonetheless, he did suffer some exposure to the cold and required a few hours to return to normal body temperature on being found.

In September 2009 BSAR were briefly called out to the search for a missing photographer in the Cambarville area. He was found before searchers reached the area.

In October 2009 BSAR were involved in the search for a woman missing at Point Nepean national park. BSAR searchers combed the park being mindful of the former use of parts of the park for use by the Defence Force. The missing woman was later located by Police in the nearby township of Sorrento in a mentally unsound state.

In November 2009 BSAR was involved in the search for a brumby hunter missing in alpine country near the Victorian-NSW border at Davies Plain. He was located after a few days of being lost. Apparently he had been knocked unconscious after coming off his horse. After regaining consciousness the next day, the hunter has lost his horse and one of his two dogs and was not fully aware of his location. In freezing conditions and with only minimal clothing on, he managed to stay alive for another two nights by sleeping in hollow logs and staying with his companion dog.

During the last twelve months BSAR also undertook some successful training events. The alpine winter practice at Mt Hotham focussed on the use of newly purchased avalanche beacons. The training and investment on the items paid off when there was successfully deployed the next month during the Tim Holding search in the high risk area around the Feathertop summit. The annual BSAR training weekend was held in September 2009 at Wombat State forest where a large number of BSAR searchers were involved in training with new radio and GPS equipment.

During the year, and especially as a result of the Tim Holding search, there has been more interest in BSAR from the media. Many interviews have been conducted with the press surrounding recent searches. This has proved valuable as a means to inform the community about our organisation as well as being of benefit to current BSAR members as it lets their family and work places know about the important community contribution to which they graciously volunteer their time and energy.

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