

Service is at the heart of us all



LAC Clay Brown, from 65SQN, after creating a fire break near Tumut, NSW, during Operation Bushfire Assist. Photo: LCPL Brodie Cross

The value of Service has been embedded in Air Force since its inception; from the days of the Australian Flying Corps flying in World War I with limited flying training in the defence of our nation through to the modern day, on Operation Bushfire Assist.

Service is defined by the selflessness of character to place the security and interests of our nation and its people ahead of our own individual needs. It's what Air Force members do from the moment they join – and every time we put our uniform on, we are reminded of the deep sense of duty to serve our nation, protect its people, and safeguard its future.

On Operation Bushfire Assist, more than 800 Air Force members provided an important service to our nation – from creating fire breaks and providing health support through to transporting and housing evacuees from severely-affected fire regions.

Air Force members from 65SQN continued the unit's tradition of service, with the creation of

a 70km fire break to protect the community of Tumut, NSW. 65SQN has a long history of service to the nation, including the construction of airfields in the New Guinea and Borneo campaigns during World War II through their predecessor squadron, No. 5 Airfield Construction Squadron.



C-27J Spartan pilots, from 35SQN, fly in arduous conditions as they help evacuees during the bushfires in Mallacoota, Victoria. Photo: FLTLT Luke Georgeson

Works Supervisor SGT Ryan McMurtrie said the unit was proud to assist the affected communities.

“We were proud to support and work alongside emergency services personnel, especially exhausted NSW Rural Fire Service volunteer firefighters,” SGT McMurtrie said.

“Our team trains to operate in difficult environments to help build and maintain infrastructure, including providing power, water, shelter and road access – and we were privileged to play an integral part in protecting and rebuilding these communities.”

To live the value of Service, and all our values, Air Force members must act with purpose for Defence and the nation, and our long history of service will stand us in good stead as we look to our next hundred years.

Our Values hold all of us true to our purpose of diligently and resolutely defending our nation and its future.

Air Force’s commitment to service was also seen by the actions of 35SQN on Operation Bushfire Assist. As it did in World War II and the Vietnam War, the squadron carried on its tradition of service by flying in dangerous and difficult conditions to transport evacuees out of fire-affected regions in eastern Victoria, as well as taking firefighting personnel and critical relief supplies in.

Even with a forecast of heavy smoke and poor weather, Spartan crews flew through the eerie red glow on the chance that visibility around Mallacoota would be good enough for them to safely land.

C-27J Spartan Pilot FLTLT Sean Joyce said the biggest challenge to the mission was the smoke from the bushfires and the weather. The Spartan crews also did what they could to make their passengers comfortable in the stressful situation.

“Initially all the smoke was being blown in from the fires in the vicinity of Mallacoota [and]

was making it very difficult to land at the airfield,” FLTLT Joyce said.

“It was pretty clear to us that the Mallacoota residents had been through a lot, but once they got on the plane and got airborne, and they knew they were being evacuated out to a safe part of the community, they were pretty relieved.”

The dedication to service shown by Air Force members, throughout our history to now, is what continues to drive our individual and collective purpose – we serve in Air Force and with our joint partners, and we serve our nation and its people.

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