



Dunns Creek Fire - 13 September 2017

History – A Malua Bay Fire Brigade Perspective

(Refer to attached map and three line scan images for assistance)

At approximately 2.30pm on Wednesday 13th September 2017 a bushfire ignited on private property at Portion 158 Dunns Creek Road, allegedly a reignition of a small pile burn.

Under strong northwest winds, low humidity and droughting conditions, and despite initial frantic efforts by firefighting units, the fire escaped into the adjacent Mogo State Forest. Under heavy fuels the fire began a vigorous southeast 1.8km run along an almost perfectly aligned ridgeline. The intensity of the fire and the poor condition of the internal fire trails prevented direct attack. The main suppression effort then moved to meeting the head fire in the east near Ivy Place, Burri Road where private property assets associated with hobby farm developments were threatened.

At approximately 5pm spot fire ignitions were observed within and around these properties and fire crews responded accordingly. In the ensuing four hours, under reduced wind conditions and cooling temperatures, these fires and the head fire were attacked. By 2300 hours the head fire was largely contained. The northern and southern flanks continued to burn freely within the State Forest but much more slowly and, importantly, west of the main fire trail which largely defines the eastern boundary of the State Forest.

Meanwhile, what are assumed to be, spot fires were detected well east of the main fire. The first, an easily accessed half hectare fire near Annes Lane, Rosedale was extinguished by approximately 8pm. A second fire, inaccessible on a blind ridge between Burri Road and George Bass Drive, was ignored, to be investigated in daylight. Neither fires directly threatened dwellings at the time.

On the second day, Thursday 14th September, and under better weather conditions, most of the suppression activity on the main fire concentrated on containing the two flanks using heavy machinery mainly on existing firetrails, backburning where necessary, and mopping up.

The uncontained spot fire to the east had overnight spread northward onto the ridge containing the Malua Bay quarry and was still actively spreading. Helicopter bucketing significantly slowed the front. Because of lack of access to the area, it took some hours to assess the fire's position, its rate of spread, and containment lines proposed. By midday, and following a dozer constructed track, backburning in heavy fuels began near the northeast side of the quarry and proceeded anticlockwise under difficult conditions and with limited resources.

By 5pm both containment of the fire, and backburning where necessary, was complete and fire within the heavy fuelled area largely spent.

At this time, another ignition was detected beside a track on the ridgeline to the northeast. This small fire was quickly suppressed.

At the end of the third day, Friday 15th September, containment of the main fire at Dunns Creek/Burri Road was complete and mopping up successful.

The entire fireground was then patrolled on the Saturday, Sunday and Monday and, despite some false alarm callouts, there were no further incidents.

The final fire area was 267 ha (253 +14) with a perimeter of 9.4 km. No structures were lost and there were no reported significant injuries.

Ian Barnes

Malua Bay Captain

20 September 2017