



## Bar Firefighters

By Stephen Ryan

As Australia recovers from its worst bushfire season on record, a number of members of the NSW Bar are back at work following a gruelling summer of service.

The season for many began in October with bushfires in northern NSW before towns and villages in the state's south were left devastated. For Belrose Senior Deputy Captain Josh Beran it was like nothing he'd ever experienced in his 20 years in the Rural Fire Service.

'It was the worst I've ever seen it and I've seen a lot,' he said. 'There's absolutely no doubt in my mind about that.'

Beran, who practises predominantly in the areas of insurance, criminal and commercial law, said he had hoped to catch up on chambers work during the Christmas holidays, but instead found himself fighting fires from Cessnock in the Hunter Valley to Bredbo in the Snowy Mountains. Tom Davie, a member of the Davidson Rural Fire Service, was part of a Northern Beaches strike force that was deployed as far north as Glen Innes and as far south as the Snowy Mountains.

'Some of the time you're truly in the thick



of it,' said Davie. 'Some of the time you're just waiting around.' Beran agrees that much of the work of a volunteer firefighter is not as it appears on the evening news.

'The stuff you see on the television is like one per cent of what we do,' he said. 'The majority of it is extremely hard work – physically gruelling work. It can be hard.'

Beran was inspired to join the RFS after flying over the Sydney bushfires of 1994. He joined while still a teenager and is in his 21st year. Davie, who practises predominantly in

commercial, building and construction law, joined in 2017 after moving into a bushfire prone area.

'I would like to get to know other people in the neighbourhood and I thought joining up would be a good thing to do,' he said. 'It's really quite rewarding. I couldn't say you enjoy it, especially when you're seeing people lose their homes and property... but it's really quite rewarding.' Beran agrees.

'I love the mateship and the camaraderie,' he said. 'You really do feel like you're part of something bigger than yourself. You can't describe the feeling of doing something good for no reward.'

The advantage of life at the Bar is that it provides flexibility to volunteer when needed. Beran, Davie and the other members of the Bar who volunteer have each given up work over the summer months to fight fires.

'Being at the Bar has allowed me to do more than what other (volunteers) can do,' Beran said. 'At times I've relied on solicitors more or flicked stuff to members of my floor to help out.' Davie has had similar experiences.

'It's a bit like taking holidays, sometimes you've just got to say no to things and make the time,' he said.

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Belrose Senior Deputy Captain Josh Beran



Belrose Senior Deputy Captain Josh Beran after fires passed through Bredbo in February



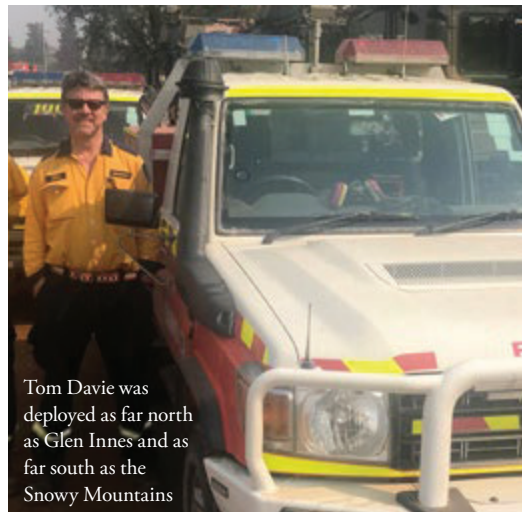
Josh Beran at The Oaks bushfire on 6 December 2019



Josh Beran and other members of the RFS extinguish fires near a creek bed at Bredbo on January 28 2020



Josh Beran chats to fellow volunteer Nick Coetsee at The Oaks in in December last year



Tom Davie was deployed as far north as Glen Innes and as far south as the Snowy Mountains



Josh Beran at the Bredbo bushfire in late January 2020