

Blue Mountains Firewatch and Recovery Project

APPENDIX D

Surveys - admins

The BMFR project surveyed both the administration team and FR members to ask about their experiences both as admins and members.

Admin survey

This survey looked at the experience of everyone who has been an admin to the group in all three stages. Several people who were active during the fires are no longer involved, and several current admins have been recently recruited. The survey will also cover how to make the voluntary admin commitment more sustainable to ensure the FR group's long term health.

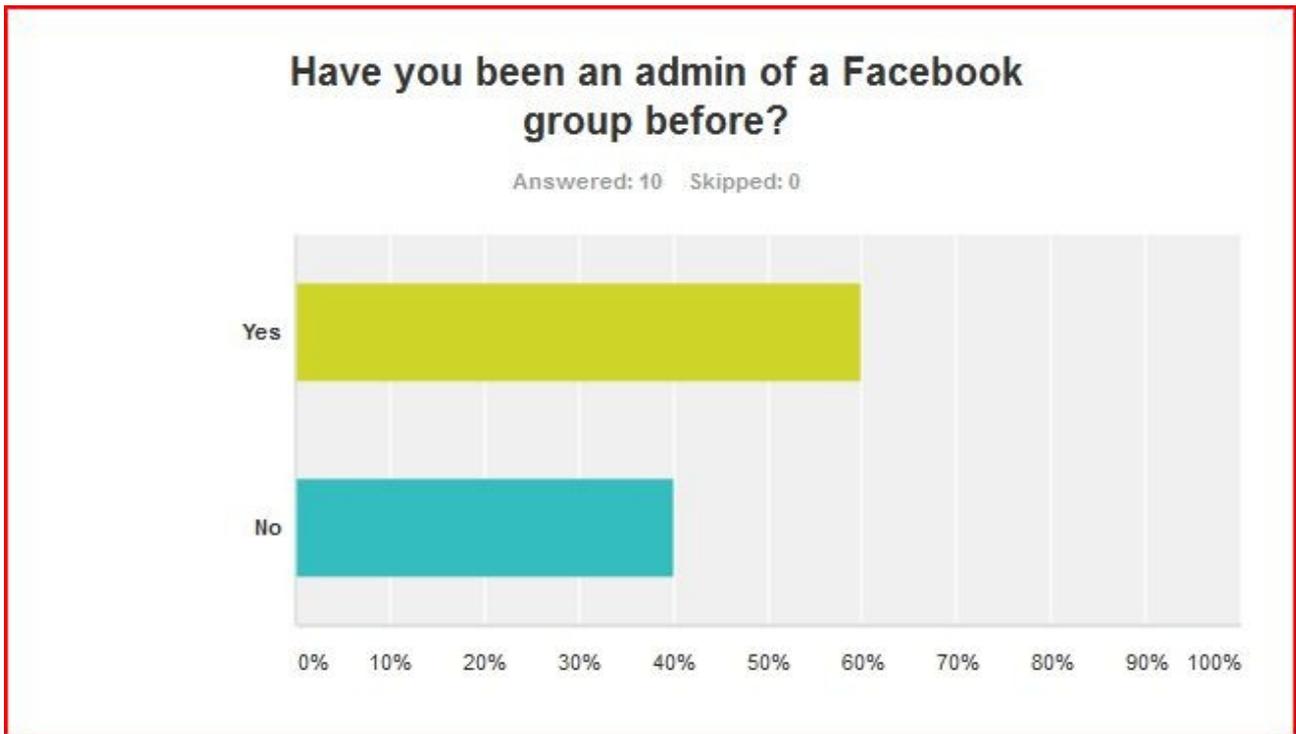
Ten admins answered the surveys, including three who are no longer part of the admin group, but were active during the fires. Admins come from across the Blue Mountains region (Little Hartley, Lawson, Leura, Katoomba, Hawkesbury, Winmalee and Sun Valley.) This diverse spread of admins was useful for both the diverse social networks each one brought to the group, and for specific local knowledge. Most of the admins are women, and the average age is 41.

The admins became involved with Firewatch or Recovery for a range of reasons, but it is clear that existing relationships were an important part in connect the admin team.

1	Firewatch, began with first fires of 2013, wanted to help and had some experience with social media and scanners etc
2	Offered my services to existing admin
3	After a fire nearly destroyed my home I found the group, became a member of Blue Mountains Firewatch and then I asked the group creator if she would permit me to be an admin, as I have strong IT skills and wanted to assist.
4	Fire Recovery - owner of group Firewatch & Recovery - invited at time of amalgamation
5	I was approached to become a Firewatch admin
6	I started out posting as a member first during the October fires emergency. As the workload increased during the emergency, it became evident that more hands were required on deck so I was one of a few made admin to help out during the summer 2013 season.
7	Invited by existing admin after the two groups had combined.
8	was added years ago
9	Invited by Firewatch admin.
10	I was a member of Firewatch, and was approached by the existing admin team.

Admins joined during the October 2013 fires, and in the immediate aftermath. Others became admins throughout 2014.

60% of admins had previous experience with managing Facebook groups.



1	Political Parties (The Greens - Federal, State and Policy Groups) and various community Groups
3	I did admin my hairdresser's Facebook page, but no groups. However, I was a strong contributor to several groups, which I think assisted me with adminning this group.
4	Fire Recovery previously Semi Professional online moderator
5	Being an admin in Firewatch is a great experience, lots of support & knowledge to be shared. It's very well organised which makes it easy (unlike other groups I am admin which don't have a roster etc, it's just a free for all)
7	Not as complicated as BMFWR, due to lower subscriber numbers and much less activity by members.
8	I have my own secret group
9	Have been an admin of pages not groups

(Removed responses that were irrelevant.)

The next set of questions aimed to find out the extent of the existing relationships away from Facebook. As the answers made clear, many of the admins did not know each other, but did subsequently meet other admins in a social setting.

How many of the admins did you know outside Facebook?

1	1
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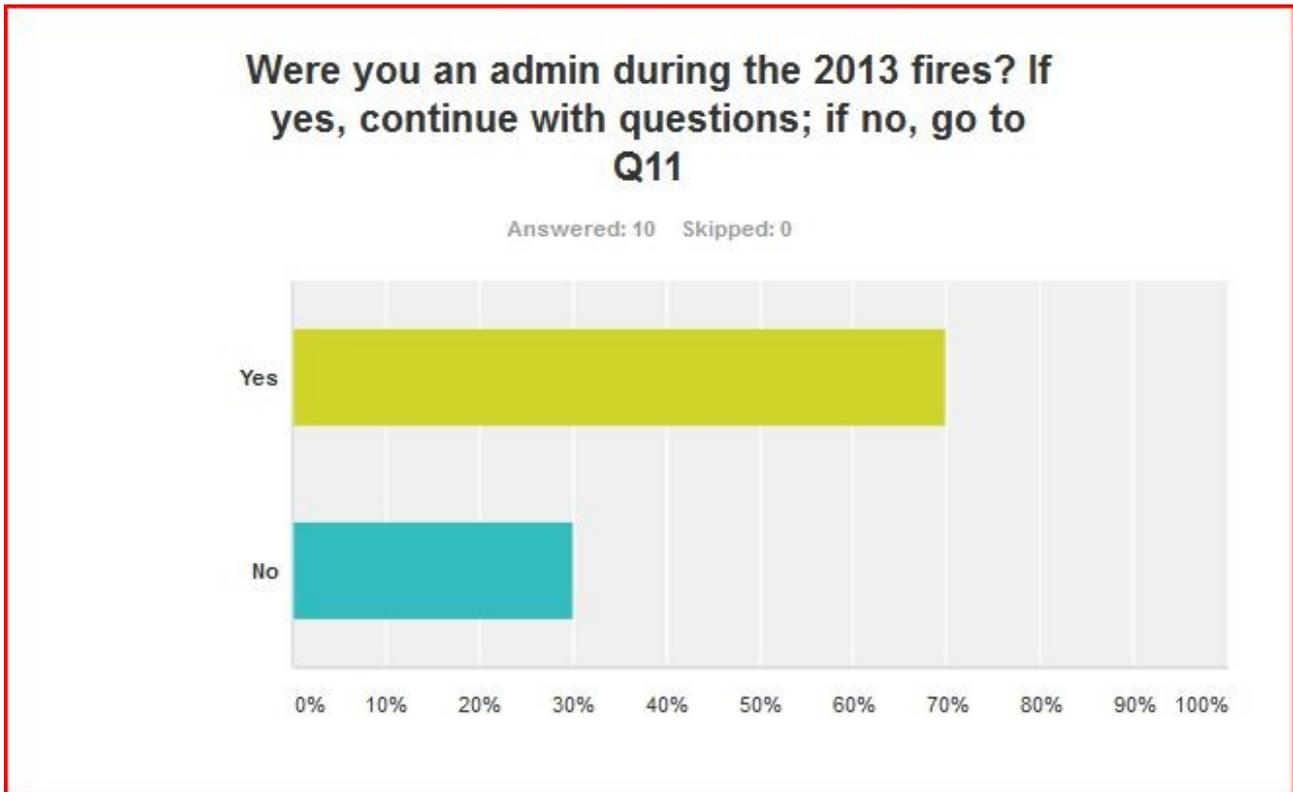
2	1
3	0
4	2
5	0
6	2
7	3
8	0
9	3
10	0

Subsequently, how many admins have you met in person?

1	0
3	15
4	3
5	2
6	4
7	1
8	5
9	6
10	6

The admins have often remarked about 'getting lucky' with a team of people who worked very well together. However, this is also due to the careful screening of admins and the support given to newer ones from existing people. Admins were chosen both from personal networks, but also from their behaviour within the group. Often, if a member was particularly helpful, and knowledgeable, their backgrounds would be checked through existing admin networks, and they would be asked if they wanted to join the admin team.

70% of admins were in those roles during the 2013 fires.



The admins were motivated to take on these volunteer roles for a variety of reasons.

1	Partly wanted to know what was happening myself - concerned, have young children etc. Realised at times I had better information than many others due to scanner monitoring, so started helping with updates
2	Helping and serving the community
3	As I am living with a disability, I would find it difficult to be a member of the RFS. However, I desperately wanted to do something productive to help my community, and to keep busy so that I didn't think too much about the traumatic situation.
4	To help friends and community
6	Our little family had our bush fire plan in place but we're a bit freaked out by our first major fire season since moving to the mountains. I found the page very helpful and just kind of fell into helping out more and more as the situation escalated. It seemed the best way for me to contribute whilst working and looking after my fam.
8	Staying informed for the sake of my own family
9	I was asked and wanted to help do something positive in assisting others with information

Admins reported spending a great deal of time working on the groups during the October 2013 fire emergency.

1	I did quite a few days as I recall, took some time off work
2	Unknown. 12 hrs or more a day while the fire was going maybe
3	Approximately 8-16 hours every day.
4	20-30 hours per week minimum
6	I honestly can't remember. I have a vague memory of 2 - 3 hour shifts and night long online attendance. To be honest, it felt like I was on the page constantly but so were the other admins. I think as we got through the worst of it agreements and rosters were made up.
8	about 10 per day
9	A lot -

The admins did the following tasks during a fire emergency.

1	Helped organise threads, Help dispel rumours, and point people in right direction for latest info. Calmed people. Helped improve resource guides.
2	Moderating the page and assisting other admins
3	Admitting members (although I eventually left that to less experienced admins), moderating posts, asking members to clarify information and provide sources, expressing gratitude to well-informed members (such as Hugh Paterson) for their contributions, and finding information on Facebook, the RFS website, ABC 702 and ABC News 24 to add to the group. I also live-blogged the RFS community meeting in Katoomba with Angela Zadro- Jones. I developed group documentation such as the important links and emotional support documents and I created the admin group, which was and is very useful for admin decision-making and, very importantly, emotional support. I recruited one new admin who then recruited two others and then the recruitment process evolved from there.
4	post info, add members, moderate discussion
5	Checking many many websites & twitter for updates, sometimes listening to the scanner. Trying to prevent duplicate posts
6	Posting fire updates from RFS main site as well as the individual RFS and brigades. Sharing info from other relief organisations, council etc providing shelter, pet relocation options, school closure info, mediating comments from community members, removing inappropriate/abusive/rude posts (and members....after admin discussions!), referring page members to appropriate info or orgs based on their posted questions or comments, updating files and every now and again updating the pinned post.
8	maintaining real time updates and reassurance
9	posting and sharing up to date information. Keeping posts calm and encouraging. admitting members. Monitoring discussions.
10	Checking facebook posts from RFBs and reposting important information on FWR, checking latest updates from the RFS and reposting, trying to verify information posted by the FWR community, adding new members, deleting duplicate posts or unverified/inflammatory/insulting member postings.

When there was not a fire emergency, the admins did the following tasks.

1	Haven't been involved as much when there are not fires - many other commitments
3	Admitting members, developing a system of information-gathering from Facebook pages from RSS feeds, developing group documents such as the main group policy, recruiting new admins and developing a procedure for that, developing a roster and creating it weekly, developing admin documents such as the guide for new admins, writing to Councillors about engaging with the group, and live blogging a fire preparation meeting in Katoomba and introducing some of the speakers to the group.
4	see previous, but less
5	Sharing information
7	Accepting or rejecting membership requests, monitoring posts and comments within the main group, supporting other admins, posting Fire Danger Ratings while on shift, keeping up-to-date with current and relevant information on Blue Mountains Community Information (BMCI) and Blue Mountains Bushfire Information (BMBI) as well as the RFS and Bureau of Meteorology websites, and posting any relevant and current information accordingly on BMFWR.
9	sharing info posts, checking for spam, admitting members, communicating with other admins, checking threads. Monitoring discussions
10	Posting community information about fire preparation meetings or fire preparation-related community events, posting the Fire Danger Rating in the afternoon, moderating conversations and verifying member postings, checking the RFS website and incidentcall.com for any fire incidents, responding to information queries.

The admins describe how Firewatch and Recovery were used during the October 2013 fire emergency. For those who were not admins at that stage, they described how they had used the group as a member.

1	It was very helpful, but very intense during admin times - as I was monitoring scanners, and twitter, and other Facebook pages, as well as trying to keep information good.
2	Coordinating the supply and collection of goods and services for people that needed help
3	In Firewatch we shared information from official sources and from individuals on the ground whose sources were fire fighters or other emergency services personnel or their own eyes. We directed people to the recovery group for recovery information and assistance, and to the pet group for lost pets. We provided documents with many links to important information such as all the official sources admins were using and to providers of emotional and practical support, not just for people whose homes were lost or damaged, but anyone who felt emotionally affected by the fires. We provided a lot of emotional support to the whole community through encouraging and sympathetic dialogue and strong moderation to remove unkind or unsupportive posts. Admins provided each other with a lot of emotional support in the admin group and helped each other to make well-informed and considered decisions.
4	Firewatch: (Non admin) Find out about information about active fires and other information useful to the recovery group. Fire Recovery: To find out information about everything and anything to do with Fire and Recovery - direct and indirect practical help to RFS, Fire affected and their families and friends other members in the community. To find support from others in the community To find information from relief agencies and get information to orgs like the council.
5	Firewatch was a fantastic source of information during the October 2013 fires. It was very busy & I remember admiring the work the admins were going. I remember tagging people & sharing relevant posts & adding info that I thought would be of assistance to locals
6	An information and reassurance tool basically. It was another way for people to stay connected online during a stressful situation. The page information grew and has grown immensely since I helped out and is a wealth of information for admins and members to refer to each fire season and in the lead up to it.
7	It was a great source of info, although at times due to the intense need for administration, some posts would get through that were inaccurate, which became confusing. I learned about significant information events in my area that I could attend.
8	Real time updates, reassurance, support
9	It was used to share as much up to date information as possible with the community. We also tried to verify information where possible. It was also a way to keep up to date with current fires and RFS info.
10	I wasn't an admin, but as a member, I stayed on the page almost 24/7, as it was a collation of the pages I had been looking at previously (RFS Facebook, RFBs Facebook, the RFS fire map) and had a lot of local information being posted by members. With this wide spread of input, I felt as though I was kept well informed of the fast changing situation.

After the fire emergency (November 2013- March 2014), several admins resigned and new admins came on board. Several of the admins that are not active regularly have made themselves available in subsequent emergencies and intend to continue being available for emergencies.. The group was still updated with the following information.

1	It was gradually used more for recovery.
3	We continued to provide emotional support and information, occasionally engaging directly with RFS members or Councillors to address recovery issues. We merged with the Recovery group. We engaged a graphic designer to create a group banner pro bono.
4	Fire Recovery: Similar to above but less direct help.
5	I became an admin in December 2013, I think we continued doing the excellent work that had already been done. Once the merge with Recovery happened we continued to share supportive & helpful information
6	I stayed on as a member from early 2014 onwards (I think!) and used the page to keep up to date with how the community was coping and the various council rules and regs changes that happened during or just before and to see how everyone was doing getting their lives back to some form of a routine.
7	After the 2013 fires and up until I was invited to be an admin, I guess I just noted the posts that came through but didn't expend a whole lot of energy as the posts weren't relevant to me at the time.
8	I resigned as admin straight after fires
9	An information sharing resource. A greater amount of wider community information. Incorporated the recovery aspect to the group. Create connections and links. Opportunities to educate and share info on fire preparedness. Develop/Create connections with fire services.
10	We used FWR to share and encourage the sharing of experiences during the fires, to help pool the community's knowledge and learned experience so we could all grow in our responses before, during and after the fires. We also encouraged people to share their emotional journeys, to help the community work through the post-event trauma. I used it to help allay my fears and fear-responses as we moved through the rest of the fire season, by learning to reason and plan, rather than just freak out.

In the period from April to October 2014, survey responses showed that similar work being done, but also a higher degree of planning.

1	More recovery
3	We shared a lot of fire prevention and preparation messages using our information feed from relevant Facebook pages and with expert advice from people like Hugh Paterson. We recruited more admins in the lead up to the 2014/15 fire season. When the Cliff Drive and Warrimoo fires occurred (late October / early November?) we continued to provide the same kind of support and information as during the October 2013 fires.
4	FWR -similar to above but much quieter
5	Hmm as above I think :)
6	Same as above. I was away quite a bit during this time due to work and travel commitments.
7	More recovery information started to come through which was brilliant, even as a bystander. I wasn't affected significantly by the fires, but was still impressed with the level of information that started to pour through that would be beneficial to those who really needed the supportive info.
9	Community information re: fire preparedness, forum to ask questions a greater engagement with RFS and other stakeholders such as BMCC etc.
10	This was used to plan behind-the-scenes, to work through the FW&R merge, the new group rules and community expectations, group description, plans for the group, ways to admin that wouldn't take it out of the admin team, ways to expand the admin team to help spread the load.