

Keeping our communities safe - Ray Ben's story

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Last summer marked a crisis point for Australia, experiencing the worst bushfire season on record. Participating in our communities has always been a deeply held value at DuluxGroup and one that is of the upmost importance to Ray Ben, National Sales Manager:

“Many years ago when I was looking for ways to give back to my community I decided to volunteer at my local CFA branch and 19 years later in the leadership role of 1st Lieutenant for my brigade I am still as committed as ever. I have been involved in some of the worst fires Victoria has ever seen, firstly with Black Saturday and more recently at Mallacoota.

New Years Eve (last year) saw myself and my crew of 5 deployed to Mallacoota. I had cancelled my own family holiday plans to make sure I was available for call up as I knew catastrophic weather conditions meant it was highly likely I would be needed. What that deployment was like was far more challenging than I could have foreseen.

It was tough going, firstly we couldn't even reach the fire grounds because the road was inaccessible, so we had to be shipped in. Then after fighting the intense blaze for three days our deployment quickly turned to seven.



It was like being on an island, we were totally isolated with no power, no water, blanketed in smoke. Our next challenge was trying to go home again. By this stage Mallacoata was inaccessible by land and sea. The only way we were eventually able to leave was through the aid of a Black Hawk military helicopter, flying us out of the area.

In the midst of all of this I was also meant to return to work. Reaching out to my line manager I was overwhelmed by how accommodating DuluxGroup was. My own manager was incredibly supportive, I was told to put all thoughts of work out of my head, to just do what I had to do and do it safely. Part of the support I received was an assurance that DuluxGroup offers uncapped emergency services leave. Not only that but my manager

also arranged for my annual leave to be reinstated to me and instead changed the leave to be recognised as emergency services leave including a day home, after my deployment, to recover and spend precious time with my family.

I am proud to serve my community and this year sees me receiving my 20-year service award from the CFA. I am also a proud DuluxGroup employee most especially for the way they enable their employees to truly participate in their communities.”



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