

Announcement: Appointment of BlazeAid Operations Manager

BlazeAid is pleased to announce the appointment of Melissa Jones as the Operations Manager at BlazeAid - the organisation's first paid position. Following the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, BlazeAid was started by Kevin and Rhonda Butler, with one camp on their Kilmore farm. Since then, it has opened 131 camps across Australia with more than 30,000 volunteers constructing 14,000 kilometres of fence.

Due to the increase in the size of the organisation and the increase in donated income, the Board felt it was important to employ an Operations Manager to oversee the operations and reduce workload on our Volunteer workers.

Melissa Jones was an excellent candidate who scored highly in all selection criteria (see below) and impressed the Selection Panel with her depth of knowledge and passion for BlazeAid. Melissa started as a BlazeAid volunteer in 2009 and has been actively involved since then. She has been deeply involved with BlazeAid since its inception and has volunteered at camps and in administration roles continuously for eleven years.

Melissa was appointed after a lengthy selection process that included:

- Appointment of a selection panel, comprising three Board members and an independent member. BlazeAid's Founders and President were not involved in any way in the selection process.
- The Selection Panel nominated and agreed by the BlazeAid Annual General meeting.
- The approval of the selection criteria and position description by the Board.
- The position advertised via Facebook.
- A review of nine applicants' resumes resulted in a shortlist of six candidates.
- Six first round interviews during which all candidates were asked the same questions and assessed against the same criteria.
- An analysis of the final scores for each candidate.
- Board approval of the Selection Panel's recommended candidate.

Melissa will start in the new position in March 2021.

In 2021, Melissa will be responsible for overseeing all BlazeAid operations including current camps and establishing new camps in South Australia and Western Australia after their recent fires.

Selection Panel

David Caple AM – Sub Committee Chair

David is an Adjunct Professor at Latrobe University and Director of his consulting firm specializing on Occupational Health and Safety strategy and systems. He provides independent services to governments and private companies across Australia and internationally. He was the independent member of the ministerial appointed WorkSafe OHS Advisory Committee in Victoria for 15 years and an adviser to Safe Work Australia. David was also the President of the International Ergonomics Association with members covering 43 countries.

In 2020, David volunteered with a Blazeaid camp and has provided support in a range of projects to support the President and committee. He was appointed to the Board in late 2020.

Andrew Gibson OAM

Andrew had a successful career at Lysaght Steel, BHP Steel and BlueScope Steel for more than 40 years. He held management positions in Operations, OH&S, Recruitment, Training and Logistics. He is a Life Member of the Point Leo Lifesaving Club, serving as Patrol Captain (25 years), Secretary (10 Years) and Committee person (20 years) and Life Member and Past President of Frankston Masters Swim Club. He was a Member of the Westernport Secondary College Council for 23 years, twelve as President.

In 2009, he joined BlazeAid as a volunteer and has since worked at numerous camps. He currently volunteers as Asset Coordinator and was appointed to the BlazeAid Board in 2020.

Jeanette Fenwick

Jeanette grew up on the land and has been involved with community organizations for many years. Cub leader 1978- 89, Venturer leader 1989-91. Senior Instructor of Coonabarabran Pony Club 1984-94. Secretary for 1992-2000, and became a Life Member of the Pony Club in 1979. Committee member of Coonabarabran Show Society since 1978, President from 2005-2009, Secretary 2009-current (2021), awarded Life Membership in 2008. Treasurer of Castlereagh Shows Group 12, 3 years, Secretary 2 years- current, Delegate for this group and on the Board of Directors of the Agricultural Societies Council of NSW 4yrs, (the governing body of Agricultural Shows in NSW) Active member of the Timor Volunteer Fire Brigade 1986-2020 Has been involved with Blazeaid since 2009 becoming more involved since 2013, attending 3 camps and invited onto the Board in 2017.

Philip Clancy

Philip is a Horticulturalist and Arborist who has had a career as a VET based Technical Teacher who played a large part in the development of Horticultural Trade training in Victoria. This led onto Planning Manager of Primary Industry training within the Victorian TAFE Office. Philip was seconded to the team to setup the Australian National Training Authority in Brisbane. He then worked for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research where he setup and managed an Audit Team to verify Student delivery and outcomes in the Vet sector across Australia.

Philip has been a Rotarian for over 25 years and served as a District Governor. He was instrumental in having Rotary support the early establishment of BlazeAid in Kilmore with volunteers and funds. He assisted with procurement of tools and equipment and undertook stocktaking of equipment for the first two years.

Philip served Scouting as a leader for 27 years, is a member of the CFA, was involved in the establishment of Men's Shed in Kilmore, he also organised a Suicide Prevention Network in the Mitchell Shire following the fires of 2009, served a Chair for 6 years and is still a member.

Selection criteria for the position

- Demonstrated ability to develop systems for asset and financial management.
- Demonstrated ability to develop systems to monitor and improve OHS.
- Demonstrated ability to monitor and control budgets.
- Demonstrated ability to engage and influence three levels of government to further BlazeAid aims.
- Demonstrated ability to engage with camps and volunteers
- Personality to relate to farmers, volunteers and local communities.
- Ability to engage media and donors
- Knowledge of BlazeAid operations and systems
- Understanding of and empathy with BlazeAid culture, philosophy and values.

Q&A

Why does BlazeAid need an Operations Manager?

BlazeAid started in 2009, following the Black Saturday Bushfires in Victoria, with one camp in Kilmore East. Since then, it has grown hugely. There have been 131 camps across Australia with more than 30,000 volunteers constructing 14,000 kilometres of fence.

Due to the increase in the size of the organisation, it became clear to the Board that entirely Volunteer management and administration was no longer sufficient and a full-time, professional Operations Manager was needed to oversee the operations.

BlazeAid has said 100 per cent of donations go to meet the needs of farmers - does the appointment change this?

Due to the increase in the size of the organisation, the Board felt it was important to employ an Operations Manager to oversee the operations. It is still intended that 100% of donated funds will be directed to farmers.

Was Melissa Jones working at BlazeAid previously?

Melissa has devoted most of her holidays and spare time for the last 11 years, working pro bono for BlazeAid in many roles.

Melissa is the founders' daughter. Did this influence the selection process?

The process was independent. No-one outside the Selection Panel had any involvement or input to the process. The founders scrupulously distanced themselves from any involvement. All candidates were asked the same questions and assessed on the same criteria. Melissa's history with BlazeAid gave her an advantage over the other candidates in two of the nine criteria. Measured across all criteria she was clearly the superior candidate from a field of excellent applicants.