

Firefighters benefit from Trojan's Trek into Flinders Ranges wilderness



By Stan Gorton

This article was in the Local News in the Islander (Kangaroo Island)



TROJAN'S TREK: The 2020 Trojan's Trek into the Flinders Ranges wilderness benefited the mental health of first responders involved in the summer bushfires on Kangaroo Island. Photo supplied

A five-day trek into the wilderness of the Flinders Ranges benefited the mental health of emergency first responders that dealt with last summer's bushfires.

The Trojan's Trek Foundation delivered its annual SA program to a group in the North Flinders Ranges from September 13 to 18. The trek based itself out of a camp at Moolooloo Station, located northeast of Parachilna in the heart of the Flinders Ranges.

The 2020 trek was the first time the foundation encouraged participants other than military veterans, opening the doors to first responders.

See: [Seeking first responders for a Trojan's Trek wilderness experience](#)

Trojan's Trek founder Moose Dunlop OAM was the operations director for the 2020 trek.

Fellow founder and Vietnam veteran Robert "Dogs" Kearney OAM also coached the participants on this year's trek.



Pictured at the Penneshaw CFS earlier this year are Jane Abdilla, SAFECOM health and well-being consultant, clinical psychologist Jill Scott , Trojan's Trek Foundation operations director Moose Dunlop OAM and peer support officer Mery Colquhoun.

Mr Dunlop is an Army veteran who completed a 13-month tour in Vietnam and is also a 20-year firefighter, who spent time fighting the KI fires last summer.

He said the decision to open the trek to first responders was in response to the dreadful fires that impacted many communities, particularly on Kangaroo Island.

Six firefighters, including KI firefighter Hamish Brown of the CFS Wisanger brigade, and one police officer were in the group.

Mr Brown recommends the Trojan's Trek experience to anyone who has experienced trauma.

"After spending the summer fighting fires and conducting emergency electrical works, I wasn't feeling very optimistic about the year ahead," he said.

"When I heard about Trojan's Trek through the CFS, I thought it could be a good opportunity to get away for a break and meet some new people.

"It turned out to be so much more than that. The guys I met were from very different backgrounds but all of them a massive inspiration.

"The Trek leaders also taught us some critical skills on better managing our mental health, relationships and how to get a lot more out of each day.

"I highly recommend that if anyone thinks they could benefit from this experience to get in touch with Trojan's Trek."

Random selection from Daily Journals 2020

Thank-you all the TT staff. I have learned more from all of you than all the "educated" professionals I have dealt with in the past.

Thanks to all the staff for this amazing experience. I feel I have learnt so much and feel confident I can use what I have learned here in my day to day life. Will definitely recommend this to other police officers struggling with MH.

Exceptional product. Encourage this program to be opened regularly to emergency services personnel.

Every session provided good sound information, some more thought provoking than others.

Thanks moose, you have turned the light on I can see a better way of coping with my problems Trojan's trek was the best thing I have ever done to help me with my problems with people that understand, thanks again.



Mr Dunlop meanwhile reported he was very satisfied with the outcomes of this year's trek.

"Peer-to-peer support provides help and advice to sufferers of stress illness by delivering messages from 'warriors' who have experienced and overcome the same frustrations as those attending," he said.

"The trek which is a journey in the head, is the first step of recovery. It is designed to improve lifestyle and community involvement.

"Did it work? In the words of one trekker, 'I have learned more from you than all of the professionals I have dealt with in the past'."

Mr Dunlop said he felt sure an independent analysis would confirm the group experience was the first step on the path to a better life.

Find out more information and support the program at www.trojanstrek.com

If you need someone to talk to right now, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14.