



For immediate release
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IT'S SAFETY FIRST FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY WITH FIRE EDUCATION BUS

Local retired firefighter Chris Wallace is utilising his 40 years of firefighting experience to educate the Central Coast community about the importance of fire safety through *Operation Be Fire Safe*, a hands-on, not for profit community education program.

Operation Be Fire Safe operates out of a donated Red Bus Services bus and includes an interactive fire hazard simulation to give participants an idea of how a house looks when a fire starts. The simulation enables participants to practice fire safety methods and learn the 'dos and don'ts' of how to act in the case of a fire.

Wallarrah 2 Community Foundation is supporting the program by funding important first aid equipment for the bus, including a defibrillator.

As the brains behind the program, Chris Wallace says that *Operation Be Fire Safe* seeks to benefit all members of the Wyong community and beyond.

"We provide fire education with a difference and are proud to say there is no other program like ours in Australia," said Mr Wallace.

"Our interactive learning space includes faulty power boards, a home evacuation plan and smoke alarms and provides participants with an opportunity to experience firsthand what to do when a fire occurs and how to identify common household fire hazards.

"Not only are we eager to take the bus around to local preschools and primary schools to teach young children about the importance of fire safety, we are also excited to roll out the program at community events around the Wyong and wider Central Coast region," he added.

Chris has been teaching fire safety for many years on the Coast, previously running his program out of a plastic cubby house and homemade trailer simulator.

"Since we have been offering this type of education and training using our previous model of the cubby house, we have seen an improvement in fire safety knowledge amongst our younger community members," added Mr Wallace.

"It has been a passion of mine since retiring to try and educate the community on fire safety to help prevent the loss of lives and our new and improved bus simulator will provide the perfect platform for reaching an even larger audience," he concluded.

Peter Allonby, General Manager of the Wallarah 2 Coal Project said, "*Operation Be Fire Safe* is all about prevention and preparedness and Wallarah 2 is proud to support this important community initiative.

"Every community member who visits the bus will be taking away invaluable knowledge about fire safety around the home. There's no measuring just how many fires will be prevented from early identification of everyday hazards alone," explained Mr Allonby.

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“Chris and his team of volunteers are providing a fantastic community service to the residents of the Central Coast and we are glad that we can support them in their endeavours.

“The funding of a defibrillator is a precautionary measure, but with Chris being involved in many local community events and attending local schools, we could see how valuable it would be to have such a device available if the situation arises.

“These days a defibrillator can be the difference between life and death,” he concluded.

A total of nine grants were awarded to community initiatives that benefit the Wyong region as part of the Wallarah 2 Community Foundation 2016 grant process. For further information, please visit www.wallarrah.com.au.



L-R: Chris Wallace, Wallarah 2 General Manager, Peter Allonby & Project Manager, Kenny Barry.

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For more information, interviews and photo opportunities:

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