

# ACT Rural Fire Service Museum Proposal

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Mr Corbell, Mr Smyth and Mr Rattenbury,

I am writing to you as the respective Minister/Shadow minister/Spokesman on Emergency Services. I have also included the ESA Commissioner, RFS Chief Officer and the President of the ACT Volunteers Association for their information.

## **Background**

With the centenary of Canberra and the 10 year anniversary of the 2003 ACT bushfires, it is an opportune time for a dedicated museum for our bushfire (rural) firefighters. The Canberra Fire Museum at Forrest has evolved into an Fire Museum focused solely on urban firefighting and considering its location very appropriate, however this leaves the ACT Rural Fire Service with no 'home' to display and promote its proud history serving the ACT community.

There is a significant amount of history of our Service currently located in people's homes and garages, yet we have no central location to display this history and therefore educate the ACT Community about the past.

## **Concept**

I have discussed with various individuals in our Service the idea of a museum and they all support this concept.

The first priority is a suitable facility in an appropriate location and obviously a small amount of ongoing funding.

After a number of discussions it has been suggested that the old Nolan Gallery at Lanyon would be an ideal location, particularly with respect to the 2003 bushfires as well as its view over the Brindabella, where most of our severe fire have and will originate from. I understand that the old Nolan Gallery is currently not in use. Whilst the old Nolan Gallery is a good option we would be open to other suggestions/proposals.

In terms of what we would like to initially display, we are looking at 2 stage approach.

The first stage would include photographic/video type displays both digital and hard copy, historical documents e.g. early Bush Fire Council Annual Reports, and some old equipment e.g. helmet's and patches.

The second stage would look at displaying large equipment including vehicles. There are still a number of vehicles sitting in sheds that could be donated or loaned. It may be necessary to construct a purpose built building; the aim would be to have the second stage completed by 27

October 2015 (the centenary of formation of Federal Territory Bush Fire Association) however, this would be in the future and would depend on funding/support and resources.

As with the current ACT Fire Museum, our Museum would be run not for profit and managed by volunteers.

### **Collections**

The following provides an indication of what we have at present ready to display –

- Jeff Cutting (Jerrabomberra Brigade) bushfire photos and historical documents both hard copy and digital going back to the early 1970's in the ACT
- Gary Hooker (Guises Creek Brigade) digital photos collection from 2003 onwards including the 2009 Victorian taskforces.
- Rob Flint and Viv Thomson (former Tidbinbilla Brigade) historical records and a history of the Tidbinbilla Brigade
- Pat Barling (Rivers Brigade) over 1500 photos from the 2003 Bushfires that were submitted towards the Book "What you wouldn't believe" as well of a number of historical documents going back to the early 1940's.
- In addition Pat Barling has offered his FIREBREAK website which contains a lot of historical information back to the early 1900's to be used/developed to provide a web site for the Museum.
- Peter & Jenny Ipkendanz (Jerrabomberra & Woden Brigade) Photos, Memorabilia & equipment
- Drew McLean (Ex ACT Fire Museum), has a number of contacts that could assist with displays.
- Matt Dutkiewicz (Rivers Bushfire Brigade) Audio visual presentation on the history of the Rivers Brigade and 2003 memorabilia
- Further to this there are a many members of our Service who have photos, items and documents who would happily donate/loan items to this Project.

### **Costs**

We would appreciate if the ACT Government would support this through the provision of the facility, including ancillary costs such as insurance, power and maintenance.

Volunteers would provide the people to manage, maintain and update the Museum.

We would also actively look at ACT Heritage grants to update displays and if necessary, purchase equipment. We would rely on people donating/loaning documents, photos, equipment etc to the museum.

Before I proceed engaging with the ESA Commissioner and RFS Chief Officer, I would appreciate whether this initiative is supported by each of you. Knowing that we have your support for an important historical project will ensure its success.

### **Timeframe**

Should this be supported, we would aim to have the launch of the museum on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2013, 10 years to the day the lightning strikes started the fires that will be remembered well into Canberra's future.

Whilst an ambitious timeframe, I am confident that with your support, this will be achievable.

Regards

Pat Barling

27 June 2012