

MEDIA RELEASE



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St John Ambulance upgrades its hub in Blaxland

After the bushfires in Victoria that marked this weekend as one of the most tragic in the country's history, St John Ambulance Australia (NSW) officially opened this Monday 9 February, the first phase of its Blaxland Training Centre upgrade.

According to Major General (Rtd) Warren Glenny, Commissioner of St John (NSW), the training centre is a hub for St John (NSW), and the facilities it offers provide an additional resource that is available to other emergency service organisations such as the RFS and the SES.

"In times where a natural disaster threatens our communities just like it happened this weekend in Victoria, the training centre in Blaxland can be used as a respite for the Rural Fire Service (RFS) and the State Emergency Services (SES) volunteers.

"St John volunteers use the facilities in a number of different ways. We have the local Blue Mountains City Division who meet each week at the site to share experiences and refine their training.

"In addition, it is used as a camp base to bring cadets to develop extensive first aid, teamwork and leadership skills, as well as an opportunity to earn proficiency badges and socialise. Each year, over 1,000 St John cadets and an additional 1,000 adult volunteers come from all over NSW to use the site for camps and training", added Major General Glenny.

The site has been integral for both St John and the Blaxland area over many years. It has also been used to accommodate many of volunteers during major events such as World Youth Day last year, the Sydney Olympics in 2000, as well as the 2003 Rugby World Cup.

It has a dormitory with 36 beds, a kitchen and a communal area.

The first phase of the building upgrade is the refurbishment of the kitchen facilities, into a small-scale commercial kitchen, used to feed the many people who come through its doors and stay over the weekend.

The refurbishment cost around \$50,000 with a significant component raised through the generous support of the NSW State Government, Department of Emergency Services.

Member for the Blue Mountains, Phil Koperberg MP, who attended the opening, said St John plays a vital role within the communities, especially in times of natural disaster like the one in Victoria.

"We all saw on the news how badly Victoria has been hurt with latest bushfires and how important the work of volunteers is in these situations.

"We can't forget that the Blue Mountains is also a very dangerous area in terms of fires, and this centre is vital not only for St John as an organisation but also for the Emergency Services", said Mr Koperberg.

Peter Collins, Chairman of St John (NSW) has indicated that this is the first step in continuing to modernise and develop the site for ongoing future use.

"There are many benefits with the upgrade of the Blaxland Centre for both St John and the local community. Improved facilities add value to the site making it more effective for the adult and cadet volunteers.

“The local community reap the benefits of having many people continuing to come into the area on a regular basis, as well as opening up access to first aid training in the local community”, said Mr Collins.

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