

MOVING SERVICE REMEMBERS VOLUNTEERS LOST AT GRAYS POINT

Improvements to equipment and technology resulted from the deaths of three RFS volunteers at Grays Point 20 years ago, attendees at a memorial service heard on 11 January.

Heathcote Rural Fire Brigade Captain Keith Campbell, Deputy Captain Tom Bielecke and firefighter Greg Moon died on 9 January 1983 when a bushfire trapped their tanker as it swept up Anana Hill in the Royal National Park.

“They didn’t die in vain,” said former Sutherland Rural Fire District Fire Control Officer (FCO), Superintendent Brian Parry, in a eulogy remembering the lost firefighters and their six injured colleagues.

“As a consequence of their deaths dual cabin fire tankers had been developed which provide refuge,” said Supt Parry, who is currently Shoalhaven FCO.

Personal protective clothing and communications equipment had been improved and satellite vehicle tracking is now used.

A Heathcote Rural Fire Brigade tanker provided the backdrop to the moving service held outside Grays Point School.

About 200 people, many wearing RFS yellows, attended the service conducted by Sutherland acting FCO Superintendent John Wood, RFS chaplain Captain Ron Anderson and Sutherland Shire Mayor Phil Blight.

Key wreath layers were Keith Campbell’s daughter, Senior Deputy Captain Sharon Campbell, and Deputy Captain Jim Fowler who both survived the fire.

One minute’s silence was followed by a lone piper’s rendition of Amazing Grace.

Visitors were then invited to travel by four-wheel-drive to Anana Hill to place a wreath flower on a brass plaque marking the place the firefighters died.

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The deaths of the firefighters were subject to a 255 day long coroner’s inquest, which produced 113 recommendations. Actions resulting from these recommendations have improved the safety standards of firefighters in NSW.



Senior Deputy Captain Sharon Campbell lays a wreath in remembrance of her father and his two companions who lost their lives 20 years ago.