

MEDIA RELEASE



Step By Step Partner with Habitat For Humanity Australia

It's seared into their minds. Unforgettable. The day fire ripped through Michael and Senga Green's property in the Blue Mountains devouring everything except a 50-year-old caravan, used for storage.

"The 21st of December," says Senga. "And that was a Saturday."

Michael and Senga are sitting with close friend and neighbour David Wilpour beside the resilient old caravan, watching Habitat for Humanity Australia volunteers build a small amenities block. It's a tangible step towards moving back onto their property and starting to rebuild.

Senga, Michael and David watched for more than six weeks as the fire made its march towards Dargan. They'd made the decision to stay and fight. Like they'd done in other bushfires.

They were well prepared: "All the back burning had been done," says Michael. "Dave had been around a few times in the days before with his tractor and did a nice big clear around the house. And all the gutters were clean. It was beautiful. All good to go..."

"... And it didn't make one blind bit of difference," says Senga.

Eventually Senga and Dave retreated to David's house along with their two rescue greyhounds and ragdoll cat. Michael, who'd been out with the Rural Fire Service, returned shortly after. "Dave was our escape plan," says Michael, reaching out to tap David gently on the shoulder, his voice breaking with emotion.

"In about 15-20 minutes the house, everything, was just gone," says Senga.

It's been a tough six months for the couple who had been in their house for 23 years. "You go through this period of being very emotional, depressed, and gutted," says Michael. "It seems sometimes it's never-ending. But the help has been amazing. Everyone has been wonderful."

Habitat for Humanity Australia are partnering with Step By Step Bushfire Recovery Service, with teams of volunteers helping clear and repair properties across the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Lithgow and Mid Western Region.

For more information on the work of Habitat for Humanity, or for any support with the impacts of the fires across the region, call Step By Step on 0417 298 832.

Funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice

