

# Amateur Radio Operators help out at Kellevie

By WICEN Co-ordinator Tasmania (South), Roger VK7ARN

Recently TFS Finance Clerk Scott Thomson was involved in a volunteer capacity at the Kellevie fire working with friends and associates from a volunteer organisation called WICEN, undertaking radio communications. Unlike CB, Amateur Radio involves a program of study and examination to obtain a licence to operate. There are three levels of licence - Foundation, Standard and Advanced. Each covers theory, regulations and operation. The Foundation licence can be obtained through some basic study, a day of instruction, an exam and a practical assessment. The Advanced licence involves about a year of part-time study. In southern Tasmania most "Amateurs" are members of the Radio and Electronics Association of Southern Tasmania. Some of its members make up the WICEN group, originally formed to assist in emergency situations. The gradual improvement in government radio networks has reduced this need to rare occasions.

The present day focus is on event communications such as Targa Tasmania and the Subaru Safari. Some of the group are familiar with the Wielangta forests through the provision of a safety checkpoint radio network for horse endurance rides in the area. TFS Communications Manager Garry Sullivan has had contact with WICEN through his involvement with the Subaru Safari, so when it became desirable to put more resources into the Kellevie fires he gave WICEN a call to see if they could help out.

The control centre radio room was manned by WICEN from Thursday 14 December through Friday 22 December; initially from 0700 to 2200, reduced to 0800 to 2000 for the last six days. Two or three



Peter VK7TPE & Steve VK7FAME



Scott VK7FREK (aka Scott Thomson - TFS Finance Clerk)



Danny VK7HDM

operators covered each shift. A long day shift took advantage of the relatively few people available during normal working hours with a shorter afternoon shift starting at 1700. A total of 235 operator hours were worked. After the first day, the roster was organised to provide at least one operator per crew who had worked a previous shift. This minimised the briefing required from the TFS personnel (and the initial trauma suffered by first timers!)

A few lessons have been learned from the activation which will be incorporated into the WICEN program. Maybe it will be easier to get across the need for some of the more formal aspects of radio network operation - not a popular training topic! Fortunately, the WICEN group includes a strong core with emergency communications experience; and immersion in the deep end brings about rapid learning from attentive learners! There's a big difference between bouncing signals off the moon, making international contacts on HF radio, electronics experimentation and a busy fire network.

## A job very well done by VK7s:

Allan FAAE; Denise FDKM; Damien VK7FDNA; "Essie" FMEL; Samantha FSAM; Thomas FTAA; Ben HAH; Danny HDM; Bruce MBD; "Jamie" KEG; Rod TRF; Clayton ZCR; Murray ZMS; Dale DG; Martin GN; Ian IR and Charles PP.

Special recognition is due to Peter VK7TPE; Steve VK7FAME; Scott VK7FREK and Danny VK7HDM who, between them, covered almost half of the total hours worked.