



## NEWS RELEASE

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### MEDIA RELEASE – Mintaro Pioneers Alerted

*30 November, 2006:* The historic Mintaro community set up a Bushfire Alert system on Friday and then used in a live fire on Saturday!

Mintaro, on the edge of the Clare Valley in the mid North of South Australia is renown for it's mid 1800's pioneer settlement and Martindale Hall. This historic community is once again leading the way – this time through being the first to form a Bushfire Alert community for their region.

“The most important thing is to know about bushfires as quickly as possible” said Andrew Mitchell. “If we all know about a fire at the early stage then we have a better chance of doing something about it”.

Andrew and David Mitchell run a dryland farming operation near Mintaro. They were busy harvesting an oat seed crop when Skunkworks Australia, the company behind the Bushfire Alert system caught up with them and Rod Cunningham from the local Horrocks Group Country Fire Service.

“We had been trying to find a way for more people to be alerted to bushfires in the area when he heard about the Bushfire Alert service from the local council”, said Rod. “Many people here don't wear pagers, and this system sends alerts by telephone, which is ideal for us as practically everyone around here has a mobile”.

“We had the Mintaro Bushfire Alert service activated last Friday and it was used the very next day” said Rod. “Two alerts went out; the first one provided an alert to people about a fire in the area, and the second one provided more details about the fire and where it was heading”.

Within a few seconds of leaving the message all the phones in that community started ringing, and on answer the recipients heard the message that the caller had left about the bushfire, and they also received an SMS text message. The system also sends the voice message as an email attachment.

David Mitchell made the inaugural test call for the Mintaro Bushfire Alert community on the Friday but was pleasantly surprised to receive his alert on his mobile for a real bushfire the very next day.



David and Andrew Mitchell Receiving Bushfire Alerts on their mobile phones.

Rod said. "It is not just an alerting system, it gives people information about the fire, such as where the fire is at present and where it is heading toward" he said. "Now that we have the system running, we expect more locals to join in so that they will also be alerted in the early stages of a bushfire".

"Mintaro is the first to lead the way in the Mid North region", said Kym Fidock, Skunkworks' Business Development Manager. "We received the Mintaro Bushfire Alert application, activated it, and ran their first test call with them all on the same day".

Bushfire Alert is a community based system that enables people to send and receive early warning alerts when a fire occurs in their area. Voice alerts are sent to your home, work, and mobile phones and attached to email, and text to SMS. Using the multiple methods simultaneously gives people the best chance of receiving information about the fire regardless of where they are or what they are doing at the time.

The system has true national coverage and new communities are continually expanding across the country.

The system is available for both communities and emergency services.

Anyone wishing to join existing Bushfire Alert communities or to create their own community can do so on line at [www.bushfirealert.com.au](http://www.bushfirealert.com.au) or phone 08 8125 5690 to request a form by mail or fax.

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