

Mission Beach community groups nominated for achievement awards

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The Mission Beach community groups that volunteered their time and resources during the Marysville holiday for the Victorian February bushfire victims have had their nomination acknowledged for a community award.

Cherelle Skelly, instigator of the Marysville visitors' rest and relaxation holiday, decided to nominate the groups that supported the project when she saw the community awards advertisement on television.

"After I found out more information, I told my husband I was going to do this," Ms Skelly said.

"For a community that has definitely made a difference, I immediately decided to put forward the 11 Mission Beach community associations that went above and beyond any expectation.

"I nominated the combined community groups that all took part.

"They have been nominated in the Community of the Year category for the 2009 Regional Achievement and Community Awards for Queensland.

"The judging will be held on September 11 when the finalists will be announced, and the winners will be revealed on Saturday, October 24 at the Gala Awards Presentation Ceremony in Maroochydore.

"If the Mission Beach community groups win, the award will be on display at the Visitors Information Centre to show everyone what the community has done and what they can do."

It has been one month since the visitors from the fire rav-

aged town of Marysville arrived on the Cassowary Coast and Ms Skelly has finally taken advantage of some spare time to recover from the hectic lead-up and busy schedule of the Victorians' retreat.

"I have heard from so many of them and I even received a six-page letter of thanks from one of the gentlemen who visited, which means so much to me," Ms Skelly said.

"It has been really strange though because since the residents have left, so many of the organisers felt a little flat.

"It is the anticlimax of two and a half months leading up to their trip, where we were all eating, drinking and breathing Marysville.

"The group of us had a debriefing session after they left to talk about the week, and we all discovered how much we were touched by the Marysville residents.

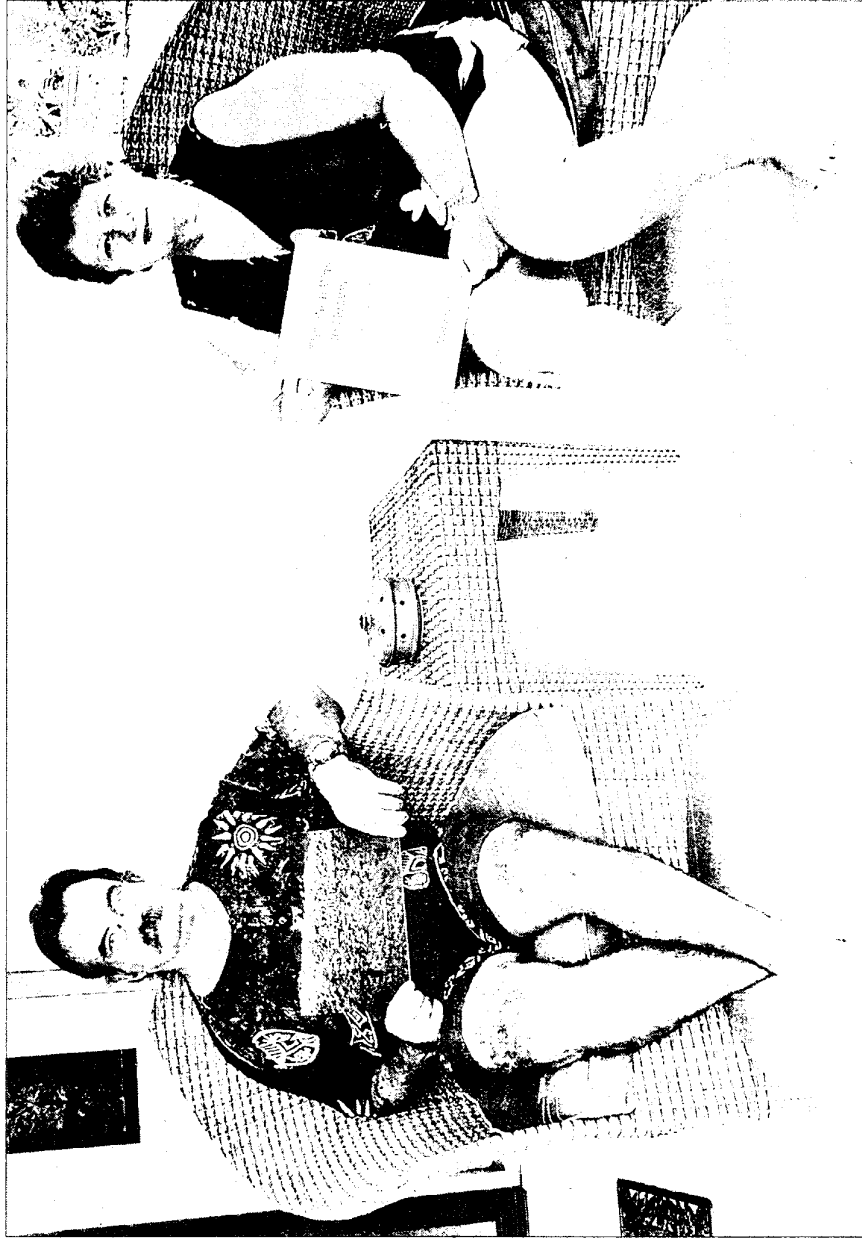
"We have received emails from them telling us how their families have commented on how relaxed, refreshed and positive they are all now.

"It was so important for the families who visited, to have this holiday together, which some of them only realised after they returned to Victoria.

"You wonder if it is going to make a difference, but it has made a difference and it is a wonderful thing they came as a community.

"They have gone back and have now formed the Marysville and Triangle Community Alliance which will help them move forward.

The Marysville Visitor Information Centre donga arrived while they were up here and they have displayed the 'Mar-



PRECIOUS MEMORIES: Roger and Cherelle Skelly cherish the signed books the Marysville visitors presented to them on their week-long sojourn from the fire ravaged town.

rysville residents - welcome to the tropics' painting that the Cassowary Coast community gave them as a memento.

"It's a talking point to the people who walk into the centre because now the residents can tell the story of their tropical holiday after the bushfires."

During "Operation Marysville" Ms Skelly was so preoccupied with organising every detail of the visitors' stay, her own business came second to the enormous project she undertook.

Skelly underwent a total knee replacement before the visitors arrived.

With a comparatively long rehabilitation period, she was limited with her activities after the operation but her spirits didn't waiver.

Ms Skelly's army of co-organisers helped her with the final details of the trip and her energetic and effervescent Ms

mobility has improved markedly since their visit.

"I feel great now. I'm getting better and better every day," she said.

"And if it wasn't for my wonderful husband Roger who fed me, clothed me and ran all my errands, the project would have been very difficult to achieve."