**Lloyd Huon Donovan Upper Beaconsfield 1983**

At the age of 23, Lloyd Huon Donovan had much to look forward to. He had recently married his teenage sweetheart Sandra, he was loved by family and friends, and his working life was on track. His big plan to drive around Australia with Sandra in an old school bus was nearing fruition, and the future was looking good. But everything, all his hopes and plans, came crashing down on 16th February 1983 – that fateful day that became known as Ash Wednesday. It was the day Lloyd lost his life.

But he had done much in his short life. As a young boy Lloyd had lived overseas - his father Huon worked for the Victorian Racing Club and the family travelled extensively. They were living in Tehran when civil war broke out and the Donovan family-of-four – Huon, mother Joan, Lloyd and younger brother Grant - then returned to Australia. They settled in Endeavour Hills in Victoria where Lloyd went to secondary school before becoming an apprentice refrigeration mechanic. He and Sandra started getting serious in their relationship and were soon to get engaged, and then married.

Sandra recalls the happy times they had together. They both loved the bush and the outdoor life, they had shooters licences, and they would often go camping, together or with friends. At one point during this time, Lloyd located that school bus, up for sale in South Australia. They bought it, drove it across country with the help of friends, and parked it in Lloyd’s parents’ driveway for a year while they did it up. They then moved it to Narre Warren Caravan Park. They needed to get the engine running properly and ever the handyman, Lloyd was about to remodel a trailer so they could tow their little Suzuki 4-wheel drive with them when they set off on their big adventure around Australia. Meanwhile they were both working hard to save enough money for a comfortable trip. They had no intention of remaining in Narre Warren long-term but nonetheless they became involved in local life. And so it was that Lloyd joined the Narre Warren fire brigade.

Ash Wednesday arrived with extreme temperatures and an eerie early morning giving way to savage north winds whipping up across the state. By night fall, fires were raging across the Dandenong’s, including Belgrave Heights, Cockatoo and Upper Beaconsfield.

Lloyd joined the Narre Warren crew and headed to Upper Beaconsfield to fend off a large fire burning around the Barnes Drive / High Street area. But luck was not on their side. Shortly before 9pm, there was a catastrophic wind change, the fire gathered in intensity and headed towards them. No-one survived to tell the tale but according to the official CFA report, it’s assumed that they attempted to outrun the fire to reach the relative safety of St George’s Road. The truck didn’t make it and the crew of six all died.

Lloyd Donovan left behind a devastated family and the CFA in shock by the loss of life that day. His wife Sandra looks back to few short years that she spent with Lloyd. She was engaged to him when she was 19 years old, they married when she was 20, and at 21, she was a widow. Despite the years that have past since then, she will always remember Lloyd as a fun-loving but entirely genuine young man, with clear values around family and mates and loved by all who knew him. The CFA too remembers Lloyd as one of their own who, against all odds, faced an inferno that day and paid the ultimate price helping protect the lives and property of others.