



26 AUG, 2020

## Ringshaw honoured

Bay Post

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## Bay man protected bodies of loved ones

**A** MAN has been recognised for his courage in protecting deceased bodies at the Batemans Bay Funerals home when a bushfire was at its doorstep.

Batemans Bay Funerals operations manager and RFS volunteer Wayne Ringshaw was awarded the company's CARE award, after he was nominated by Batemans Bay regional manager Joelle Janik for his efforts during the New Year's Eve blaze.

Ms Janik said the 64-year old had gone above and beyond to protect the funeral home.

"Given the danger and evacuation of other team members, Wayne was effectively our last man standing," Ms Janik said. "He arranged to loan a generator from the Rural Fire Service to ensure we could keep supplying power to the fridge. As more deceased were taken into our care over coming days, and Wayne realised he no longer had space, he went ahead and arranged a refrigerated truck. Wayne also reached out to the families of loved ones in our care to update them on the situation and postpone funeral services. Without his dedication, we might have lost the home. We are incredibly grateful for

everything he did over those harrowing few days."

Mr Ringshaw said his concern on New Year's Eve was for the 16 deceased in the home's care, the staff and premises.

"At 4.45am, thick smoke was covering the area and by 9.15am I told all staff to go home and prepare their homes," Mr Ringshaw said. "I immediately thought this is not going to end well. I didn't have time to worry about myself. My concern was for my staff, the premises and the 16 deceased that were in our care. I had a heart condition and was due for surgery on January 31, but I just had to put that out of my mind."

The father-of-two and grandfather-of-four lives next door to the funeral home on the Old Princes Highway with his wife, Deborah.

The blaze, which was burning south-east towards the coast, came within 500 metres of the funeral home.

"The fire was on our doorstep in no time at all with the wind carrying embers far ahead of the firefront," Mr Ringshaw said. "There were a lot of small spot fires to contend with and a lot of ash covering our hearses and the building inside and out. Ex-

plosions were continuing for most of the morning as the nearby wrecking yard went up. There were fire trucks and police vehicles going all over the place. Aircraft above us was dropping retardant just a few hundred metres away, and helicopters with swing buckets full of water were discharging around the area as well. This went on for days."

Mr Ringshaw and his right-hand man, mortuary

manager Kenny Thomas, defended the funeral home from several ember attacks over the following 48 hours, with little rest.

"Kenny was evacuated from his home three times, so I had him stay with me for a day or so," Mr Ringshaw said.

"While I had Kenny with me, we were doing transfers from nursing homes, public residences and hospitals. We also went into dangerous areas under police escort to retrieve deceased persons who had succumbed to the fires."

Mr Ringshaw's efforts in successfully defending the funeral home were recognised by his employer InvoCare. "It's very humbling but I'm happy to receive the award on behalf of my team, as this was very much a team effort," Mr Ringshaw said.



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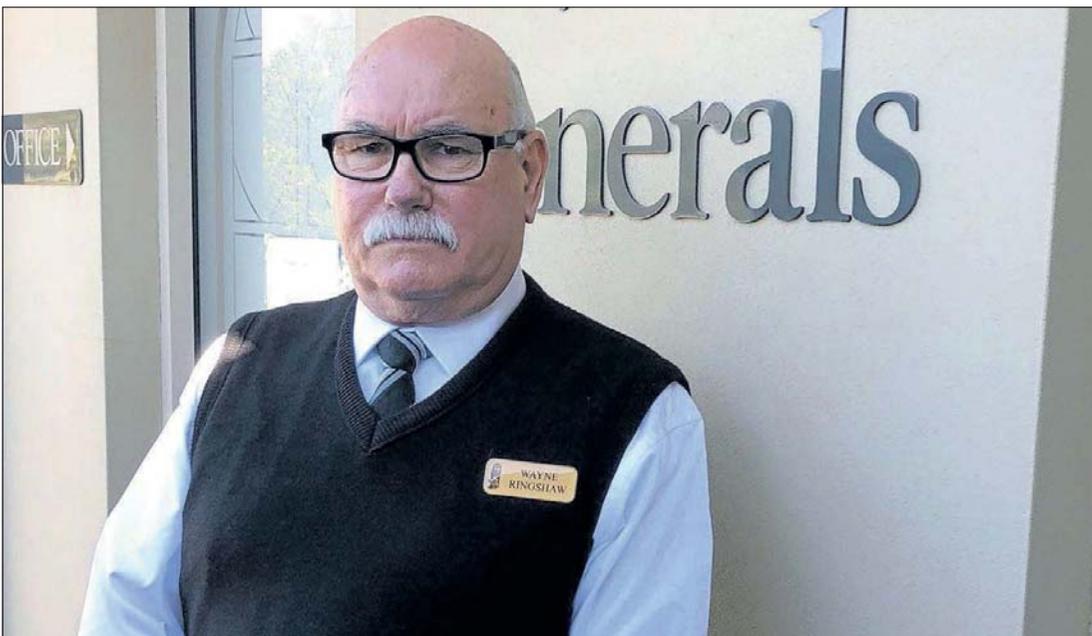


I didn't have time to worry about myself. My concern was for my staff, the premises and the 16 deceased that were in our care.

**Wayne Ringshaw**



**RED SKY:** Ash covered hearses inside and outside the building, and spot fires ignited as the firefront came within 500 metres of the funeral home.



**HEROES:** Batemans Bay & Moruya District Funerals operations manager Wayne Ringshaw says he and mortuary manager Kenny Thomas stayed to protect the premises and the 16 deceased people under their care during the fires.