

**BRAD CROUCH**

THE last Australian Defence Force personnel left Kangaroo Island yesterday after a huge bushfire relief effort – and soldiers stand ready to assist again if needed.

The Commander of Joint Task Force III, Brigadier Damian Cantwell, said his troops felt it was an honour to serve the KI and Adelaide Hills communities in a time of dire need.

“In 37 years with the ADF and two years part-time, I found this to be one of the most personally rewarding and uplifting operations I have been involved with,” Brigadier Cantwell said.

The task force formed on January 4 and was on KI the following day, immediately commencing what ended up being 506 support tasks.

It also completed 576 tasks in the Hills, where its work also wrapped up this week.

In that time, the mix of 1400 full-time and part-time soldiers, from across Australia and supported by New Zealand and Japanese colleagues, met goals on Kangaroo Island including:

**PURIFYING** almost 4 million litres of water for drinking and stock, as the island faced running out due to fire-fighting effort;



**CLEARING** 159km of fire containment lines with the CFS;

**DISTRIBUTING** fodder for stock, including from Chinook helicopters;

**CLEARING** 730km of fence lines of debris and damage;

**COLLECTING** and burying untold dead stock and wildlife, which loomed as a bio-hazard, and caring for injured animals;

**HELPING** police with traffic control and CFS with aerial surveillance of fires;

**PUTTING** on a free morale-boosting concert for 2500 people in Parndana, and;

**BUILDING** 500 pine crates for potato farmers to dispose of damaged crops and get good crops to market.

They also provided mental

health workers to a shocked community, flew emergency teams to fire-affected areas, and cooked for CFS and SES volunteers.

Brigadier Cantwell said task force members saw the work as a privilege.

“There was no question about their dedication and commitment, and the local community made us very welcome,” he said.

“The emergency services, NGOs and communities in both locations showed tremendous spirit.

“It was an enormous undertaking, but it is not over. We recognise there is a long and difficult road to recovery ahead, and the ADF stands ready to return if requested.”

# A privilege and honour to help on KI

**SUPPORT:** Joint Task Force Commander Brigadier Damian Cantwell, above left, with Kangaroo Island potato farmer Peter Lock. A Chinook helicopter, centre, loads hay bales to deliver to farms on KI.

Pictures: SUPPLIED

KI Mayor Michael Pengilly said ADF troops had been “phenomenal”.

“They have turned their hand to anything and have formed a link with the island that won’t go away,” he said.

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**COMMUNITY:** Australian Army officer Lieutenant-Colonel Phillip Cox meets students from Parndana School.