

Getting together after the fire



Current parent,
Mr Brett Unwin at
Mazenod College



It has been seven weeks since the concrete was poured for Brett Unwin's new home.

AS THE six-month anniversary draws near for the Parkerville-Stoneville-Mount Helena bushfire, some residents have begun the rebuilding process and to mark the milestone the Shire of Mundaring is hosting an event for the community to get together this weekend.

For Brett Unwin the decision to rebuild was an easy one, in fact he was at the Shire of Mundaring office within a couple of days after the fire to discuss the next step.

One of the first residents to start rebuilding, he expects to be in his new home by October.

Mr Unwin recalls he was at home watching cricket on January 12 when a "big eclipse" darkened his lounge room at around 11.30am.

He knew given the extreme conditions, if there was a fire that weekend it would be bad.

"I went outside and thought 'this is not good' - there was a lot of smoke but it looked a fair distance away at that stage," he said.

"I went inside to grab a couple of things.

"When I came back out I knew it was time to leave.

"I had already decided prior to the day that if there was a fire I would leave.

"I drove to a property I had done some work at along Richardson Rd and sat with the owners and watched the fire, waiting for it to stop; of course it didn't for some time."

Mr Unwin said when he got back to his place he found nothing left.

"My shed caught

alight and the fuel from equipment exploded.

"It blew out to the house, destroying everything and lifting all of the concrete."

Since January, he has stayed with friends and he is now in a rental property.

He was looking forward to getting back into his own home, and so were his three children.

"They also lost items and have been grieving in different ways," Mr Unwin said.

"I also have gone through different stages of feeling really sad, and then frustrated, but overall I have just tried to focus on rebuilding our home."

Reflecting on the aftermath, he said the silver lining had been the overwhelming offers of support that have rolled in.

He said his mobile did not stop ringing for three days after the fire.

"I was surprised by how much support I received, although it was really hard to accept at first.

"I have really appreciated all the phone calls, donations and assistance."

To mark the anniversary, the shire will host an event for the community on Saturday, July 12.

The free event will be held from 11am to 1pm at Parkerville Pavilion in Seaborne St.

There will be a free sausage sizzle and fun activities, including urban art activities, face painting, badge making and circus skills.

There will also be information for adults on environmental activities and the recovery process.