

# SES volunteer assistance in MH370 search



SES volunteer observers assisting with the Australian Government led search for missing Malaysian Airlines flight MH370, on 27 March 2014 (l to r): John Preece Belmont SES, Lynette Bryant Canning SES, Michael Wood Northshore SES and David Brennen Wanneroo Joondalup SES.

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More than 75 State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers completed over 1,900 hours in the air searching for missing Malaysian Airlines flight MH370.  
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The volunteers completed 176 shifts over two weeks, scouring the waters of the southern Indian Ocean from civil aircraft for any signs of debris.

SES volunteer Lyn Bryant said the SES volunteers were well versed in searching for missing persons, but the MH370 search operation was beyond the norm in scale and difficulty.

“The search area was vast, weather conditions at times difficult and spotting items in the swell can be extremely challenging,” she said.

“The focus required to search the seas for hours on end can be draining, but we were willing and able to contribute to the international response to this tragedy.

“The volunteers searched with all their focus on finding any piece of the puzzle that might assist. We have families too and feel for those that had loved ones on the missing flight.”

Volunteers provided specialist expertise as air observers from Saturday 22 March 2014, assisting the Australian Government led operation.

The SES volunteers assisting with the operation came from units across the Perth metropolitan area, the Goldfields/Midlands and Pilbara regions, with DFES co-ordinating.

Operations Deputy Commissioner Lloyd Bailey congratulated those involved for their efforts.

“The SES commitment to the search operation has been outstanding, with volunteers from across the service putting up their hand to perform shifts.

“They have spent time away from family, friends and their workplace to put in hours searching as part of this international effort.

“On behalf of the WA community, we are proud to have such committed emergency services volunteers serving our state,” Lloyd said.

Cockburn SES volunteers May Bowser and Paul Neville contributed approximately 72 hours between them.

May said volunteers were completing long shifts, which included the flight to reach the search area, an intense period of searching the ocean from the plane and then the flight home.

“Whilst the search techniques can be quite demanding, it is rewarding to be able to help and really make a contribution,” said May.

SES air search observers regularly assist the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and WA Police in searches for missing aircraft, vessels or people on land or at sea.

SES volunteers have to be qualified air search observers to assist as air searches require special techniques, which differ from land search. Training for SES air observers is undertaken by AMSA.