

# It takes a community to protect a community

## Joy and Lyn and Colin and Boof

Joy started out in forestry – both in the timber industry and in firefighting – about 20 years ago. She got started because of her husband Colin.

Colin has worked in the forestry industry for 45 years. He's also a volunteer firefighter, which makes sense for them as Colin and Joy are also farmers. What you might call collective farmers: they just keep adding to what they farm, adjusting to the conditions and the market. Now they have wool merinos, Herefords, olives, vines ... "Whatever we can do, we do," Colin says. And they need to protect their land and the land around them.

Boof (or Wayne as he is known in formally) works for Colin and Joy on the farm and has been working in fire towers for about five years. He spends his time "picking up the slack" as he tells it. And that could be anything from spending a full day weeding grape vines, climbing a fire tower, or fighting fires ... but always sharing a yarn. Whatever his day holds, Boof has a story for you – and he sure knows how to tell it!

Lyn is another local who underplays her own value: she has kids and step kids who are grown but keep her busy. She drives the local school bus and does plenty of other understated things that support the local community. She used to help out her husband at Doody's lookout, so it's not at all unusual that she helps out her friend Joy at Mt Hobbs fire tower – in fact she is about to enter her third season of working with Joy, Colin and Boof on the East Coast towers.

Just a few moments after meeting the people who are responsible for the operation of both Mt Hobbs and Snow Hill fire towers, is the realisation that these salt of the earth, entrepreneurial people are the community that they are protecting. They live in it, they know it and its people like the back of their hand, and they love it. To prove the point, Colin and Joy tell how both their children have been involved in firefighting over the years and now they all work together at the farm, with their daughter taking care of the cellar door of their vineyard (because, of course they have one!)

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“There’s only ever one person in either of the towers,” Joy says, “so if there’s a fire I might be here and Colin’s out on the fireground firefighting, or vice versa. We have a bit of system between Colin and Boof at Snow Hill, and if Boof’s there, I might be at Hobbs, or Colin or Lyn. We are lucky that we’ve Lyn helping as well. We have system that means everyone has some time off to do other things, but importantly we’ve always got the towers covered.”

“A few people ask us what we actually do, and we tell them we’re not just up here for STT (Sustainable Timber Tasmania), we’re up here for TFS (Tasmania Fire Service) and Parks (Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Services), the whole lot. If there’s any smoke the intel goes back to everyone. I guess there’s a lot of public that don’t know what we do, have got no idea that fire towers are for everybody ... we’re up here out watching for everybody,” Boof sums up their role beautifully.



Image: Operator Boof at Snow Hill Tower, East Coast Tasmania



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Image: Operator Colin at Snow Hill Tower, East Coast Tasmania



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Image: Operator Lyn at Mt Hobbs fire tower



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Image: Operator Joy at Mt Hobbs fire tower



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