

Christmas
lights comp
opens
PAGE 14



Fire engulfs tourist park

From page 1

Works at the 18-hole outdoor course at the front of the property were not damaged, but a visibly upset Mr Johnston said the project's future was unclear.

"We don't even know with the insurance how far it's going to cover us," he said.

Mt Warrenheip CFA responded almost immediately as members in the area noticed a large plume of black smoke that was seen across Ballarat.

More than 50 fire fighters from Mt Warrenheip, Ballarat City, Ballarat, Glen Park, Bungaree and Mt Bunyong fought the blaze for about an hour.

CFA incident controller Peter Gold said little could be done to save the building.

Among course props lost in the fire was a 4m high King Kong statue.



FROM ABOVE: A ladder platform is used to douse the flames at the new park.

The 6m high Big Miner, which was to stand outside the building, had not been installed yet and was undamaged on the ground behind the shed.

The park was originally scheduled to open in time for the Eureka 150 celebrations in 2004, but controversy surrounding the project back more than two years.

GONE: Flames lick the walls of the Gold Rush Golf shed at Warrenheip as black smoke fills the sky.



ABLAZE: Fire engulfs the Gold Rush Golf shed only a month before its opening date at Warrenheip. Pictures: Narelle White

Heartbreak

By Billy Crossland

JUST a month before it was due to open, part of Ballarat's newest tourist attraction has been destroyed by fire.

Flames engulfed the Gold Rush Golf shed on the Western Hwy in Warrenheip, which contained two nine-hole courses, about 11am yesterday.

The Country Fire Authority is still investigating the cause of the blaze,

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but it is not being treated as suspicious.

A 40-year-old man was taken to Ballarat Health Services Base Hospital with smoke inhalation and minor burns.

Project director of the \$1.7 million mini-golf theme park Wayne

Johnston said the loss was "devastating". "We've been working our guts out, four weeks away from opening it up and there's thousands and thousands of man hours gone into it and it's burnt to the ground," he said.

"It took three-and-a-half years to get to this point and it just goes in two hours."



BATTLE: Fire crew members try to save the Gold Rush Golf shed at Warrenheip.

Continued page 2

water re-rt today — with Oct's rainfall just 5mm compared with a 69.3mm average.

The water restrictions mean, from today, Ballarat residents can no longer water their gardens, wash their cars, fill new pools and must cross off water toys from Christmas wish lists.

Penalties for flouting the new laws include fines of up to \$4200 or three months imprisonment for a first offence.

Water-wasters can be doxed in by calling Central Highlands Water's Water Restrictions InfoLine on 1800 044 636.

Meanwhile, those on the land continue to do it tough with the City of Ballarat working to fast-track an application to declare the region under "Exceptional Circumstances".

The declaration would allow drought-affected farmers to receive interest rate subsidies, ensuring they would not be forced to leave their land.

And with statistics of one farmer suiciding throughout Australia every four days, doctors, local hospitals and even school principals are being asked to keep a look-out for signs of depression.

Continued page 4

The Big Dry pages 4, 5

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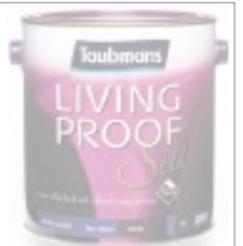
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