

## Otago Branch NZART Annual AREC Report 2011

2011 has been a busy year for BR 30 AREC with plenty of opportunities for us to demonstrate our communication skills during this eventful year.

After the Christchurch earthquake on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February I went to Christchurch along with over 500 Land Search and Rescue volunteers who were deployed nationally for the first time in New Zealand

The deployment, called Operation West, was in support of the people of Christchurch following the tragic earthquake.

Our role was one of welfare going door to door in the western suburbs checking that people were ok and knew where to find any support they needed.

Once this was completed our new role was to visit each house in Banks Peninsula.

This was the first opportunity for me to work along side our Canterbury AREC Sections and I was deployed to Akaroa with John ZL2HD to install a portable VHF repeater on the ESB 58 SAR channel .

We then setup base at the Akaroa community hall where we monitored ESB 58, the Department of Conservation VHF repeater which was our link back to Christchurch base, SAR Simplex channel and 5680 khz SAR Day HF channel.

After 6 days we were stood down and returned to Dunedin for a well deserved rest.

There was an increase in local Search and Rescue operations this year with 7 Land Searches and 1 Marine search recorded.

We were busy with training as well, taking part in 2 Marine SAR exercises on the Taieri River and at Heywards Point.

We provided communications for 2 Land SAR exercises and provided a lecture for the new intake of Land SAR members.

Managed 1 or 2 4WD trips up the Dunstan Trail as well.

Meetings are an important way of keeping touch with the organisations we work with. We are regular attendees of the Land and Marine SAR quarterly meetings and attended the Civil Defence Communications Group annual meeting.

We assisted Civil Defence late last year by delivering the Emergency Communications Unit to a Rural Fire at Mount Allen, setting it up for the management team to use.

We helped the Otago Sports Car Club with the Otago and Lawrence Rallies.

After the Otago Rally we had a worth while debrief at the club rooms.

This is something we need to do more of.

We assisted BR 08 with the Catlins Rally also

At the end of July we provided a repeater channel at our Karetai Rd repeater site for the Otago recreational 4WD group who were responsible for transporting Southern District Health Board staff to work during the snowstorm.

It was on the SAR ESB 58 channel and provided excellent communications over the Dunedin Hill suburbs out to Mosgiel and back to the base in the Dunedin Public Hospital.

We assisted the Dunedin Police during the Rugby World Cup by providing an alternate radio channel for the Community Patrols and Maori Wardens to use during the games in Dunedin of which there was 4.

With the extra staff used at this time the police radio channels were under extra pressure so with the help of Dunedin City Civil Defence we were able to use the CDA repeater and install portable Civil Defence radios into the various cars.

The ESB 58 SAR repeater channel was on stand by at Karetai Rd just in case we needed to move off CDA.

AREC operators were stationed in the Special Operations Room at Dunedin Central Police Station to handle the messages.

Early this year with the support of Icom NZ and Navcom I was able to offer a commercial mobile Icom IC-F5023 radio to active AREC members which could be used during car rallies and be equipped with channels for any emergency we might be involved with.

The \$500 price included a \$160 subsidy from the AREC bank account which brought the price more inline with amateur equipment.

I was very pleased with the uptake of this offer with 15 radios being purchased and they have already been pressed into service during the Otago and Lawrence Rallies.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Alan ZL4FM for your companies support with the Icom mobile radio purchase and Terry ZL4TAE for the use of your commercial repeaters notably EE 108 on Swampy Summit which has good coverage in the Silverpeaks and EE 228 on the Blue Mountains which we used for the Lawrence Rally.

In August an opportunity for us to purchase a kit of Tait hand held radios as part of the Land Search and Rescue annual purchase came about.

These radios are the same as the ones that the organisations we work with use , are robust and water proof with plenty of channels.

They come in a pelican case with spare batteries and a smart charger which keep the radios charged and ready to go.

After raising almost half the purchase price with a grant from the Bendigo Valley Foundation, the committee agreed for me to make the purchase and I am expecting the kit any day now.

We never know when our services are next required so it is important that we strive to be prepared for whatever event we may be needed for in the future.

I look forward to the day our Karetai Rd repeater site upgrade is completed as this is the only repeater site we own and has been used during the year to provide services to the community.

Next year I would like to do some projects around assisting members to become HF portable...possibly building some portable dipoles and baluns.

Training is some thing we need to do more of as between Civil Defence, Search and Rescue and ourselves there is a lot of equipment out there that we need to be familiar with and know how to use a moments notice.

Perhaps AREC need to train once a month?

I have been advised by the organisers of the Otago Rally that the rally will take place towards the end of May next year, so hopefully it falls on a date which doesn't coincide with Duck Shooting or the Roar.

I would like to thank you all for your continued support

Lindsey Ross

ZL4KS/ZK4EA

BR 30 AREC Section Leader