The Bushfire

A poem by Patricia Cuiffetelli
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Last summer, our small town near the bush had several hot days,
Fields turned to dust and trees dried up from the sun's burning rays.

Schools were closed and most shops were empty because of the heat,
People stayed inside their homes and no cars were on the street.

Just another hot summer's day, we thought it was going to be,
Until my dad heard on the radio that we had to flee.

A large wildfire had started in the bush and was not far away,
Hot gusts of wind from the north were pushing it our way.

Mum quickly packed water, food and clothing and put them in the car,
While Dad grabbed some family photos and Grandpa's old guitar.

The cows were standing under trees and trying to keep cool,
I hoped we'd see our cows again, and Blackie, our fat bull.

Firefighters worked very hard to control the flames for days,
Bold fire crews from many places helped them fight the blaze.

Helicopters dropped water bombs from way up in the sky,
The pilots had to fly carefully, otherwise they'd die.

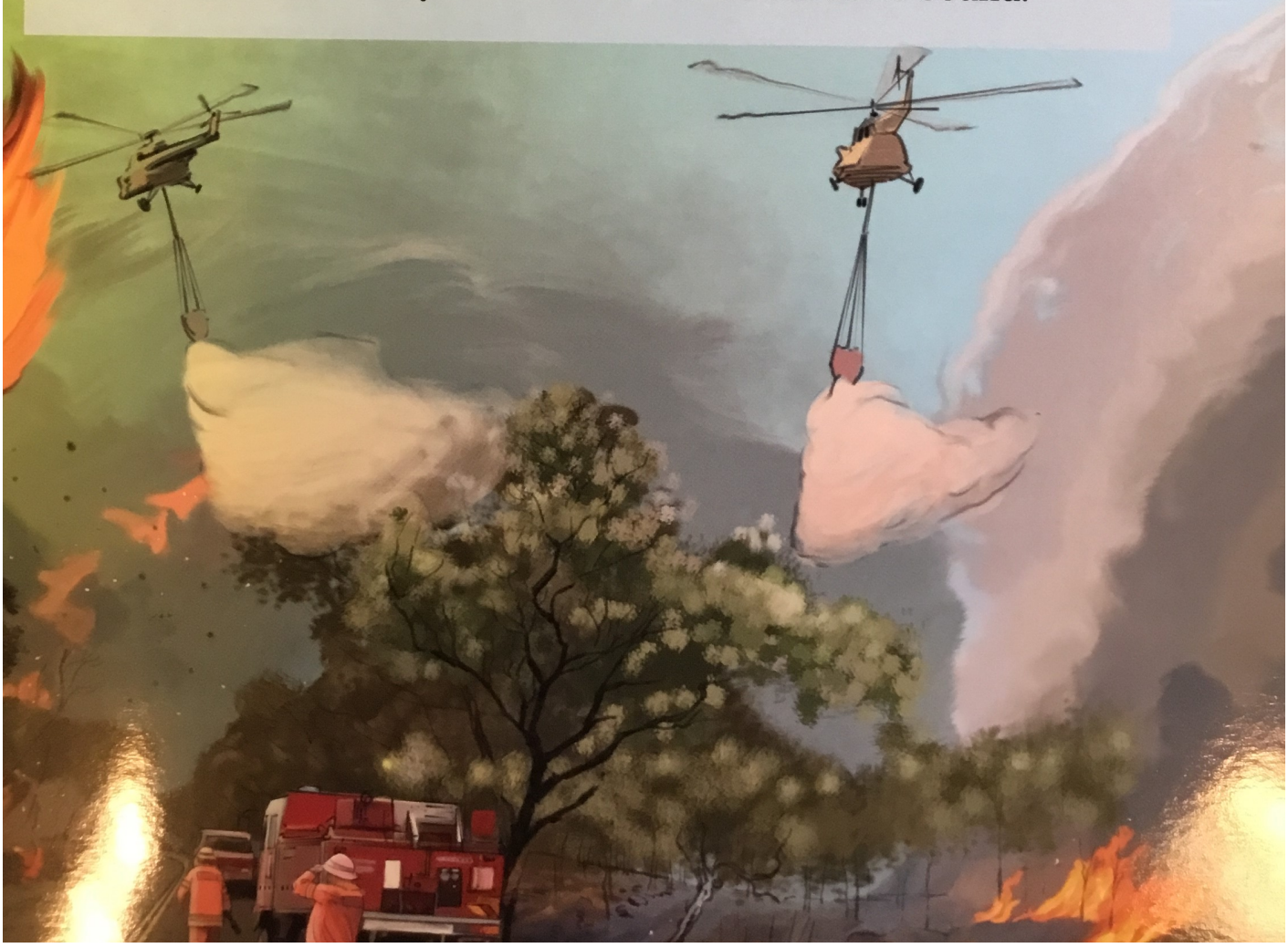
Wildlife tried to get away from their burning habitat,
Possums and koalas climbed to treetops and there they sat.

Wallabies and kangaroos hopped away from the hot flames,
Horses, cows and sheep in fields looked for safer plains.

Many houses and farms in the bush were burnt down to the ground,
Homes and barns made of wood became a big black mound.

A sudden change of weather caused cool winds and heavy rain,
Soon the bright-red glow faded from that wide, flat plain.

After the bushfire many dead native animals were found,
Other wildlife was badly burnt and needed their sores bound.



Dad drove the car down the road towards the safety shelter,
Mum followed us in the truck with farm dogs Tess and Delta.

We passed brave firefighters in their trucks along the way,
They were getting ready for the flames on that scary day.

Thick, dark smoke filled the sky and the wind was hot and strong,
The car ride to the safety house seemed very, very long.

The deadly fire burnt trees and plants and quickly made them black,
Fierce winds blew burning bark and branches further up the track.

Spot fires caused by red-hot embers joined and became one,
The fire became too big to fight under the midday sun.

The fire picked up speed as it moved up the steepest hill,
It destroyed everything in its path, including an old flour mill.

The flames were twice the size of the trees and the heat was very great,
The bushfire crossed over roads and then it travelled straight.

At last, it was safe to go home and see the damage done,
We all knew seeing our farm again was not going to be fun.

The trees around our home were burnt and wet ash lay on the ground,
Wild birds sang before the fire, but now made not one sound.

The huge bushfire of last summer made families very sad,
Because the shocking bushfire burnt all the things they had.

Our farmhouse was damaged by the heat and some stock did not survive,
"I know it's sad," my father said, "but at least we're all alive."

Retell this Poem

Read the poem again.
Record yourself as you retell the poem.
Listen to the recording.
Check! Did you remember most things in the poem?

Questions about *The Bushfire*

1 What made the family decide to leave their home?
2 Why did Dad grab Grandpa's old guitar?
3 What is a safety shelter?
4 What caused the spot fires?
5 Why did the fire pick up speed?
6 How does a bushfire cross over roads?
7 Why didn't koalas and possums run away from the hot flames?
8 What happens to animals that are badly burnt and in need of help?
9 Why didn't wild birds make a sound after the fire?
10 What happened to some of the stock on the family farm?