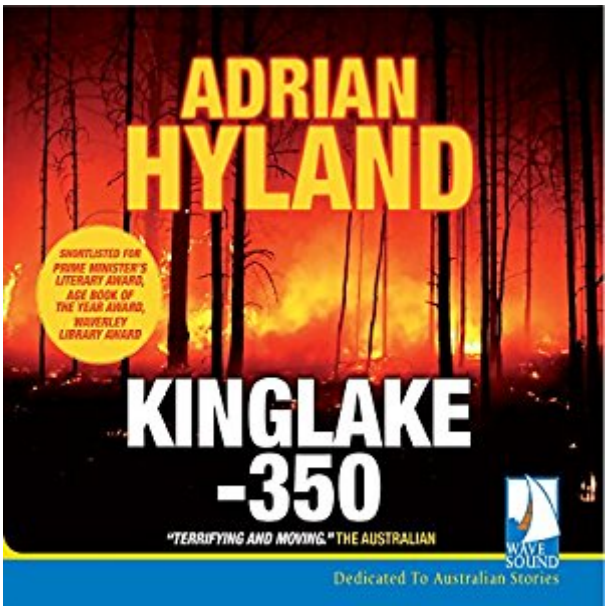
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Kinglake 350



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Synopsis

On 7 February 2009, Roger Wood was the police officer in charge of Kinglake, at the epicentre of the worst ever bushfire disaster in Australia’s history, Black Saturday. As the firestorm engulfed the community, he risked his life again and again to try to save people. When he phoned home to warn his wife what was coming, she screamed that the fire had already hit their property. Then the line went dead. This is a book about the monster - and the fear, grief, desolation and heroism of those who confronted it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is very compelling reading. The author describes the events of Black Saturday, February 7th 2009, that resulted in Australia’s highest loss of life from bushfire. The bushfire of Black Saturday wasn’t like any bushfire ever experienced before. Twelve years of drought and a three day heat wave of temperatures the week before had left the country in southern Victoria dry and ready to burn. On 7th February extreme conditions were predicted and with a total fire ban in place, everyone in fire prone areas was told to have their fire plans ready. A combination of a tropical low over WA and a monsoon trough in the NT pushing hot air south and a high pressure system sitting in the Tasman sea to the south of Victoria made for a lethal combination with hot air trapped over the south of the continent. The temperature in Melbourne that day reached 46.4C, the highest ever recorded and hot, dry NW winds gusted at over 100kph. When a fire started by fallen powerlines in Kilmore East it quickly spread and later combined with a second fire started at Murrindindi, to become the deadliest firestorm ever seen in post-European Australian history, killing 173 people

and destroying 2000 homes.The author, Adrian Hyland, lives in St Andrews, one of the towns affected by the bushfires and has carried out meticulous research on the events leading up this bushfire and the reasons so many lives and properties were lost. Even reading the horrific accounts of those who lived through and survived the day it's hard to imagine what it was really like. Rather than trying to encompass all the events of that day the author has centred the story around Roger Wood, an experienced Senior Constable at Kinglake police station and describes the events of his horrific day trying to save lives and properties. At one stage when the fire is at it's worst, he receives a call from his wife who manages to say to say that fire has arrived at their property just before the line drops out. Somehow despite worrying about whether his wife and kids have survived he manages to carry on doing his job. He and many others made a real difference that day, making heroic journeys through the fire zone to rescue people, saving many lives. The CFA volunteers were also true heroes. The fire moved to rapidly and ferociously there was little a few fire trucks could do to contain the blaze but they worked tirelessly saving homes and lives where they could.There has been a Royal Commission into why so many people died that day and much criticism of the lack of information on the status of the fire and the breakdown of communications. However, a chilling finding is the fact that the majority of people did not have a fire plan and that many of them went against the advice 'leave early or stay and fight' and tried to do both, dying at their property or trying to flee down the mountain and into the fire. Due to the ferocity of the fire even the best prepared were caught out, even some with water pumps and roof sprinklers and well cleared land. As the author points out, if you decide to live in a fire prone zone, the only person you can rely on during an inferno, like the one that occurred on Black Saturday, is yourself as there can never be enough fire trucks to save everyone.The author also talks about the aftermath of the fire, the huge economic impact on the area as well as the social consequences, the survivor guilt, the fear and loss of confidence felt by the children, the increase in suicides and domestic violence. He also warns us of the future impact of climate change and the expected increase in catastrophic fires not only affecting rural areas but also the outer suburbs of cities. A very thoughtful and well researched account that I would encourage all Australians to read.

An amazing piece of writing that moves across those caught by the worst fire in Australian history, those fighting it, those effected by it and the fire itself. Hyland manages to give Fire a personality - menacing, unpredictable, waiting to flare at any time. Heroism, tragedy, human error, lack of knowledge and even total lack of awareness of the magnitude of this fire recreates the horror that was Kinglake.. Death is handled respectfully and with care.Kinglake 350 was the call sign of police

officer Rodger Wood in charge on Black Saturday.The underlying message of Hyland's writing is our lack of understanding of our environment and what fire means in our society. Essential reading.

I challenge anyone to read the poem that prefaces the novel, and not be moved.This book is a powerful account of a dreadful, and perhaps avoidable, tragedy. If you are an Aussie the book is a must read as it provides insight into an event we are all familiar with. If you are not an Aussie, you will be staggered by the events in this novel, you will wonder how it is that you didn't know more about them.The novel is at its best, and is most confronting when it focuses on specific events and individuals. Without becoming melodramatic or maudiline, the author sensitively describes chilling and harrowing ordeals. As a reader you simply have to put the book down to catch breath from time to time. But transfused through the sadness are remarkable tales of heroism, resilience and community strength. This book deserves a wide audience - it helps ensure we don't forget Black Saturday, that we don't succumb to the media cycle and simply turn our attention to the latest headline.I have given five stars to this book as it is a story and needs to be told a retold. There were a few aspects about the book that perhaps almost dropped it down to four star - some of the contextual explanation eg Austraian history. The views on Climate Change. But, the importance of the subject matter - means a five star rating is really the only option.Buy it. You'll be struggling to find a more meaninful read than this one.

Kinglake-350 is one of those books I was dying to read but was also afraid to read. I've written about fire myself, but only in fiction. I've also had to evacuate ahead of a wildfire. Fortunately I didn't lose my home. I'm drawn to reading how real people come together or apart to survive what appears to be almost impossible odds. The author did an amazing job of melding the facts and with the terrifying human experience.

This book is not a novel, but a compelling recounting of the events that made up Australia's most deadly bushfire. The narrative skillfully intertwines the multiple, parallel time lines of people caught up in the disaster, told mostly from the perspective of one policeman who survives the inferno. All these events happened. Hyland should be commended for his sensitve and thoughtfull approach to telling this story.

impressive and even awesome - the level of danger, death and destruction and how numerous courageous individuals fought extreme odds to save other lives and homes.

I really enjoyed this book. It gave me a whole new perspective on fire and gumtrees. I just didn't realise the scale and horror of this bushfire and the chance of it happening again.I really liked the way the plot followed real people just doing their best and what happened to them.

The finest writing yet on the catastrophic events of Black Saturday. February 7, 2009.None of us will forget that day or the weeks of being ringed by fires that followed, but this well written and informative account reminds us not only of the terror and loss of those days, but also the courage and humanity of so many who were caught up in the devastation.Thank you Adrian.

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