

THROUGH THE SMOKE AND ASHES, BABY SPENCER BROUGHT JOY AND MAGIC TO ONE AUSSIE FAMILY



OUR BUSHFIRE CHRISTMAS BLESSING

As Cassie Randall's due date fast approached, she anxiously watched the news with her partner, Beau.

It was almost Christmas, and Australia was burning. Bushfires ripped through the country with increasing ferocity, leaving nothing but ash and desperation in their wake.

And while Cassie and Beau had been looking forward to the birth of their first child, they now had to face the fact that Beau might not be around to see it.

With the fires in NSW and Victoria becoming more intense, Beau, a volunteer firefighter, was called on to help out in Batemans Bay, NSW.

"When I was called to action, Cassie took it hard," Beau, 33, tells New Idea. "But firefighting isn't just a hobby, it's about saving lives, so we both knew I had to go."

Cassie called her mum and a friend to support her through labour in case Beau couldn't make it back in time.

Over the next three days, Beau battled the blistering heat and devastation of the bushfires, returning home to Tangambalanga, Victoria, exhausted but relieved to find Cassie still pregnant.

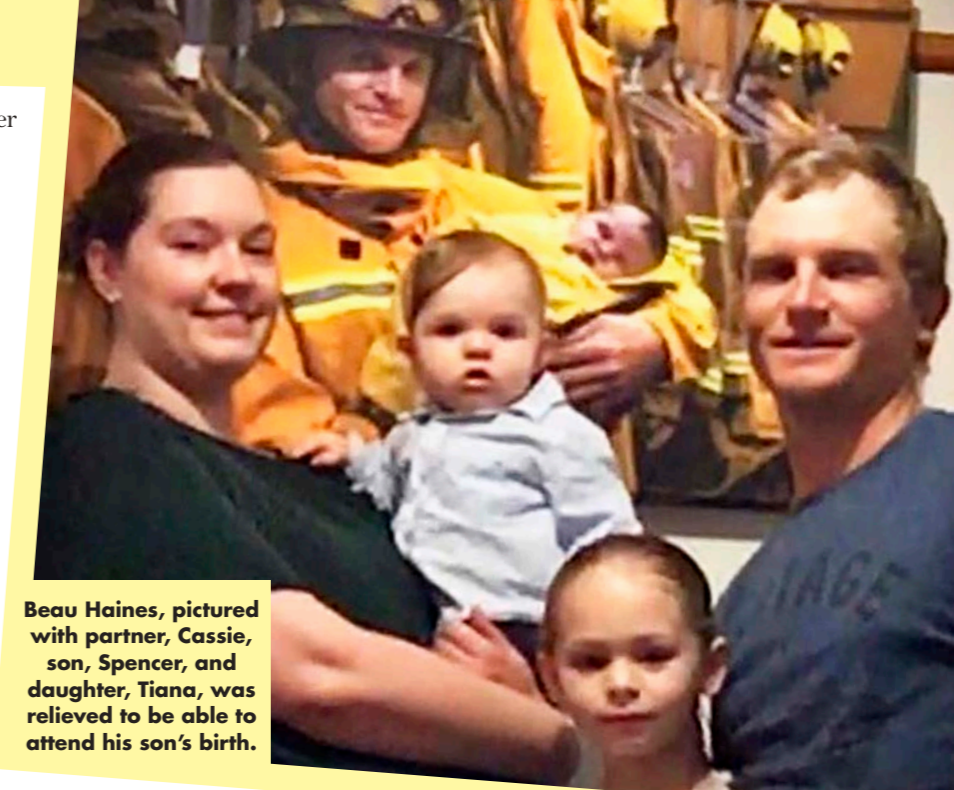
However, Australia's brutal bushfires continued to make international headlines as they destroyed millions of hectares of land, killed 24 people and more than a billion animals.

It was a summer scorched with sorrow, and the country wept.

Then, on Christmas Eve of 2019, nine days late, little Spencer Haines was born. Cassie and Beau were overjoyed with their Christmas bub – a little ray of positivity in an otherwise sombre time. They couldn't wait to introduce him to his big sister, Tiana – Beau's 4-year-old daughter from a previous relationship.

Cassie even booked a photographer, fellow firefighter and Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteer Kurt Hickling to do a family photo shoot.

However, with Beau still on



Beau Haines, pictured with partner, Cassie, son, Spencer, and daughter, Tiana, was relieved to be able to attend his son's birth.

newborn son safely in his arms, Kurt took a series of heart-melting photos of the pair.

The pictures were beautiful, but never in their wildest dreams had Cassie and Beau imagined their newborn sleeping son would become an internet sensation overnight.

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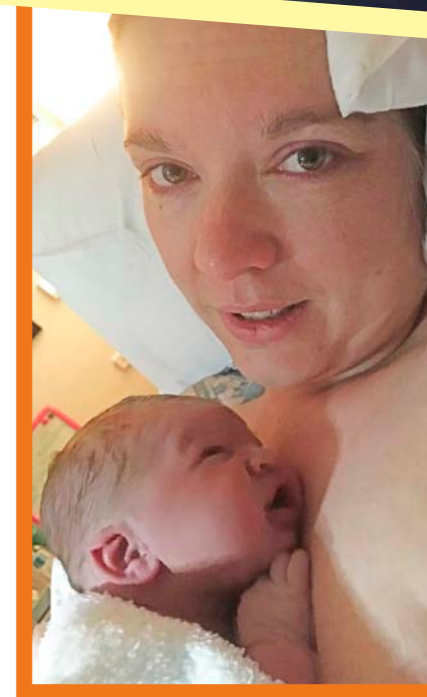
call, they struggled to find time for the shoot. So, thinking outside the box, Cassie took 12-day-old Spencer to where Beau was, at the engine room of the Kiewa fire station, and arranged to meet Kurt there.

With Beau dressed in his turnout gear, holding his

"Kurt posted the pictures on his social media and we thought it would get some local media attention, but the next day he told us he had been contacted by media from as far as Italy and Washington," reveals Cassie.

The photo of Beau cradling Spencer has now been viewed by more than three million people around the world and received over 500,000 likes.

It became an uplifting bushfire image, a symbol of hope, of something positive amid



the horrifying fires that ravaged our nation. And it showed the world what firefighters truly risk each time they bravely step out to save the lives of others.

"It brought tears to our eyes," says Beau of the photo that made him and his son Insta-famous. "I'm not a hero, but firefighters do what we can to preserve and protect property and lives. We leave our families so another family can be saved."



Beau was sent to battle blazes in NSW and Victoria just days before his child was born.