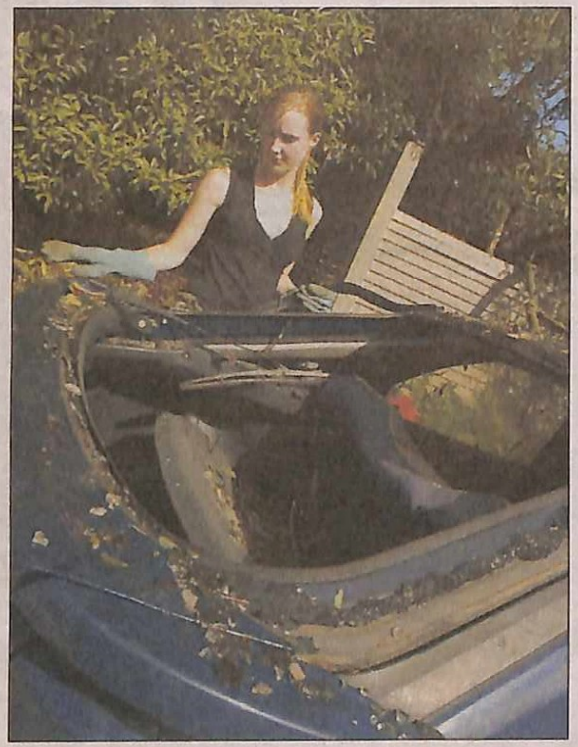
Whitehorse Leader 4 Feb '06

ND5420 D93





ABOVE: A tree fell on this car in Limar St, Blackburn. Car owner Anna Duthie is pictured. RIGHT: Trees fell on this roof in The Avenue, Blackburn. *Pictures: KRIS REICHL.* N31WH114, N31WH115

Blackburn bears a savage brunt

AUSTRALIA Day was a public holiday Whitehorse residents will never forget.

State Emergency Service volunteers responded to 515 storm-related call-outs between Thursday night and Saturday evening.

The savage storm at 5.45pm on Thursday lasted just minutes and swept through the area. Many homes were left without power, while Australia Day celebrations at the local Civic Centre were disrupted and the concert was cancelled when the venue was plunged into darkness.

At Aqualink Nunawading, two cars belonging to patrons seeking relief from the heat were damaged by a falling tree branch.

The storm's wrath with rain and winds of up to 72km/h was felt most intensely in Blackburn between Middleborough and Springvale roads, but also in Box Hill, Forest Hill and Nunawading.

State Emergency Service and Metropolitan Fire Brigade crews scrambled to help after calls began pouring in immediately after the storm. Council staff helped emergency crews remove fallen and damaged trees.

Nunawading SES unit controller Alan Barnard said local SES volunteers and six other units worked through the night. MFB operations commander Rob Dean said in four instances fire crews had to keep people away from downed power lines for hours, while local utility companies were busy restoring services.

Among the worst-affected areas was Main St, Blackburn, where many trees were downed and a car owned by Anna Duthie, 22, was crushed. Another damage hotspot was The Avenue, where two homes and a car were partially destroyed.