

Nine Network put together a super-team of life-stylers to help a fire-struck family, and pull off an amazing...

BUSH CHRISTMAS rescue

Vickii and Danny Letts and daughter Shari (in front) were thrilled with the work of the experts from Nine Network's popular lifestyle shows.



The guys from *Backyard Blitz* (above) and interior designers Tara Dennis and *Location, Location's* Peter Everett (opposite) are now firm favourites with the Letts family.

It was a black Christmas for Sydney's Letts family. Helplessly, they watched their home burn to the ground as bushfires fanned by hot, dry summer winds raced through the bush suburb of Kurrajong on Christmas Day.

More important than the property loss to **Vickii and Danny Letts** was the welfare of their menagerie, locked in the house while they visited relatives for a traditional lunch.

Inside were the couple's miniature schnauzer and

Pomeranian and their son Damian's Dalmation and catterdog. There was a flying fox in the bedroom, a cockatoo in the backyard, two wombats and their daughter **Shari's** horse in a neighbouring paddock. "When we arrived home everything was black and I don't think we missed the fire by more than 20 minutes," recounts Vickii, a NSW National Parks and Wildlife officer and WIRES (Wildlife and Information Rescue Service) volunteer.

"We started searching for the animals and found the Pomeranian dead outside but the good luck was finding the rest of the animals alive. Our horse Meg only had a few small burns," Vickii says.

In daylight with the house still smouldering the family returned to gather what they could of their possessions. They salvaged some clothing, two paintings, papers in a filing cabinet, photographs and their bed, saved when a wet Gyprock wall caved in on it! But mostly, gone were the material memories of 17 happy years on the 10-hectare bush property that teemed with wildlife. The Letts's insurance money ran out when they'd completed the shell of their new rendered brick home, so enter the Nine Network's



Renovation Rescue team for its biggest project yet.

For three days, teams from *Animal Hospital*, *Backyard Blitz*, *Burke's Backyard*, *Changing Rooms*, *Location Location*, *Getaway*, *Fresh* and *A Current Affair* toiled inside and out to make this year's

a Merry Christmas. The truly amazing results will be revealed to viewers in *Renovation Rescue* 3, screening on Tuesday, November 26, at 7.30pm.

"It all goes to restoring your faith in humanity. We've been overwhelmed by human kindness," Vickii says.

Marina's A ZOO FRIEND

"Creepy crawlies" are not everyone's favourite animals, but **Marina Prior** swallowed her doubts to let this jade stick insect have the run of her arm at Melbourne Zoo. It was the first visit to the zoo for *The Witches of Eastwick* star's son **Campbell**, who's two this month. The special occasion was the expansion of the butterfly house to include an exhibition of rare bugs next door.

"I actually sang at the opening of the butterfly house [in 1985], so it's great to be back," Marina says. "However, bugs are not really my thing. OK, I'll hold the stick insect but not the spider."

Campbell was surprisingly gentle with the insects. "I'm surprised - I thought he might just squash them," Marina confesses.

From the tiny to the gigantic... Marina and Campbell were also treated to a special behind-the-scenes tour of the elephant enclosure. The two Asiatic elephants which have been there for about 25 years will move in March to a new 2.5 hectare walk-through home where they will roam free with three or four others.