



**NSW Rural Fire Service**

# **Canobolas Zone**



# **2009/2010 Annual Report**

**“Where Risk Management is our Passion and Hazard Reduction is our Priority”**

# Contents

1. Executive Overview
2. Completed projects 2009/2010
3. People
  - 3.1. **Membership**
  - 3.2. **Staff**
  - 3.3. **Community Consultation**
  - 3.4. **Canobolas Zone Website**
  - 3.5. **Cadets**
  - 3.6. **Learning & Development**
  - 3.7. **Financial Information**
4. Activities
  - 4.1. **Hazard Reduction results**
  - 4.2. **Hazard Complaints & Permits**
  - 4.3. **Fire and Emergency Incidents**
5. Infrastructure & Assets
  - 5.1. **Tanker Replacement Program**
  - 5.2. **Tanker Maintenance**
  - 5.3. **Station Upgrade Program**
  - 5.4. **Fire Control Centre usage**
6. Planned Projects for 2010 - 2011

## **OUR VISION**

The Canobolas Zone of the NSW Rural Fire Service will be a leader in support and innovation to our volunteers who will provide the highest standard of excellence in the protection of our community from fires and other emergencies.

## **OUR MISSION**

To provide a cohesive, enthusiastic Volunteer Rural Fire Service trained and equipped to meet the needs of the community in an efficient, effective and professional manner. Our leadership and management systems will equip our volunteers and brigades to be a leading and respected resource within the NSW Rural Fire Service.

## ***Executive Overview***

The 2009/2010 fire season proved very busy for Canobolas Zone with a Section 44 declaration in November for fires at Mount Canobolas and then at Winderera north of Orange. Both of these fires had the potential to impact on the urban interface but swift action by our volunteers kept losses to a minimum. No homes or buildings were lost and some fencing and 63 hectares of pine was destroyed.

In early December Canobolas Zone assisted our neighbours, Chifley Zone during their Section 44 declaration for fires north, south and west of Bathurst which occurred over a week of activity. Unfortunately Bernie and Cameron Shultz suffered severe burns at the Vittoria fire and a mid air helicopter incident added to the complexity of these fires.

Welcome rain over Christmas brought a prompt end to the fire season and Canobolas Zone commenced hazard reduction burning around the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010. An increased amount of hazard reduction activity was carried out and after six years Canobolas Zone has achieved 118% of our planned targets with 18,439 hectares completed during the year.

We received a significant budget allocation of some \$6.98M which was an increase on the \$6.7M the previous year and was still the highest in the State.

The enhancement of the Canobolas Zone website has developed this type of media into our primary method of communication and distribution of information to our volunteers and the community. Monthly usage has increased significantly and during the Canobolas and Chifley Section 44's the website played a significant role in keeping the community informed of the progress of the fires and the fire fighting effort.

New Brigade Stations were opened at Mandagery and Tallwood and even though the Minister and Commissioner were unable to attend we had an excellent day with Assistant Commissioner, Dominic Lane and Mick Veitch MLC where we also presented some 50 long service awards to our volunteers.

Work has commenced on the construction of the Larras Lee airstrip and facilities at Orange and Cowra airports to add to our aviation infrastructure.

The Canobolas Zone was proud to receive a NSW award in the Emergency Management Australia Safer Community Awards in September 2009. This was recognition for the development of the Canobolas Project and the impact it has had on increasing hazard reduction and protection to our community.

**“Where Risk Management is our Passion and Hazard Reduction is our Priority”**

## **COMPLETED CANOBOLAS ZONE PROJECTS FOR 2009/2010**

1. The “Canobolas Project” was the winner of the State Government section of the NSW Emergency Management Australia awards.
2. Canobolas Zone website continues to be enhanced to provide the highest standard in modern communications to members and the community.
3. Completion of Mandagery and Tallwood Brigade Stations.
4. Standards of Fire Cover fleet diesel powered.
5. Accept delivery of three new and eleven refurbished Tankers.
6. Acquired a second bus for volunteer transport.
7. Larras Lee airstrip commenced and the continued development of Aerial Fire Fighting Infrastructure.
8. Hazard Reduction target of 9,471 hectares surpassed with 18,439 hectares completed.
9. Continued funding for trails and HR preparation work on private property.
10. “Gum Tree” consultation meetings successfully continued.
11. Received funding of \$6.98M from the Rural Fire Fighting Fund.
12. Rural Fire Service feature of 20,000 circulation in local newspapers during December 2009.
13. Canobolas Zone provided significant support to the Chifley Zone fires.
14. Hosted numerous State and Regional training activities.
15. Canobolas Staff contributions to State and Regional Boards and Committees
16. Group Captain, Barry Carr was awarded with the Australian Fire Service Medal for his service over many years as a volunteer. ..



### **3. People**

#### **Membership**

During the 2009/2010 period the total volunteer membership increased by 260 personnel across the four local government areas. Details of the membership numbers and the locations are shown in Table 1.



**Firefighter Lisa McCann – Conducting HR works adjacent to Goobang NP**

It is very encouraging to be in a position where volunteer numbers are increasing in a time where the anecdotal evidence suggests that the rural population decline and an increase in mean ages across rural communities are generally impacting negatively on the ability for people to be involved in community based activities.

**TABLE 1 - Membership**

	<b>Members 30 June 09</b>	<b>Members 30 June 10</b>	<b>Difference +/-</b>	<b>Difference %</b>
<b>Blayney</b>	338	391	+53	15.68%
<b>Cowra</b>	652	705	+53	8.13%
<b>Orange</b>	150	216	+66	44%
<b>Cabonne</b>	1050	1138	+88	8.38%
<b>Total</b>	2190	2450	+260	11.87%



**Staff.**

Permanent staff levels remained at 8 during the year, with no changes in personnel. Increasing workload and higher outcomes in hazard reduction and hazard management have maintained work pressures on staff. This is illustrated with Canobolas Zone being some 1.5% of the State in terms of responsibility and having completed almost 11% of the State hazard reduction works and some 12.53% of the State hazard complaints (360/2872) and 51% of Region West hazard complaints (360/706).

**Community Consultation.**

The, now entrenched, program of Consultation through our Gum Tree meetings continued across the Zone this year. This concept is proving very successful and the “Gum Tree” meeting brand is being picked up by other districts across the State and has been incorporated into the Region West Business Plan for use across the Region.

The objectives of these meetings are:

- ❖ To improve communication and understanding between our volunteers and staff.
- ❖ To build lasting and long term relationships and alliances with our volunteers and communities.
- ❖ To really engage with our volunteers by listening to their needs or concerns.
- ❖ The promotion of mutually beneficial results.
- ❖ Identify and build upon our common ground within the RFS.



**Gum Tree Meeting – November 2009 at John Williams Park Towac Valley**

**“Where Risk Management is our Passion and Hazard Reduction is our Priority”**

The progress made from this strategy of actively communicating with our volunteers on a regular basis is working to build a strong rapport between our staff and volunteers. The continual message at each meeting from the volunteers is to keep these meeting going as they productive, enjoyable and a great thing.

**TABLE 2 - The 2009/10 meetings consulted with the following communities and Brigades**

• Canobolas	• North Bangaroo	• Eulimore
• Nashdale	• Neville	• Eugowra
• Molong	• Barry	• Trajere
• Boomey	• Hobbys Yards	• Yeoval
• Manildra	• Gamboola	• Obley
• Red Hill	• Orange Molong Road (Belgravia)	• Rivers
• Bocobra	• Wyangala	• Eulimore
• Mullion Creek	• Darbys Falls	• Eugowra
• March	• North Bangaroo	• Trajere
• Mt Pleasant	• Neville	• Yeoval
• Canobolas	• Barry	• Obley

These meetings identified many opportunities for hazard reduction on private land as well as on Forest NSW and NPWS tenure.



**Gum Tree Meeting – November 2009 - Larras Lee Airstrip**

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### Canobolas Zone Website

The Canobolas Zone website has continued to expand and develop to meet the needs of our volunteers and the Service. The site at <http://www.canobolas.rfs.nsw.gov.au> is recommended to our community and volunteers as the latest information on fire management, prevention and related Rural Fire Service and Brigade activities.

During the past year the activity level and scope of information has increased monthly, with the latest project for enhancement being the addition of Brigade related pages that detail specific information on each Brigade area with a downloadable map of the operational area covered by each Brigade.

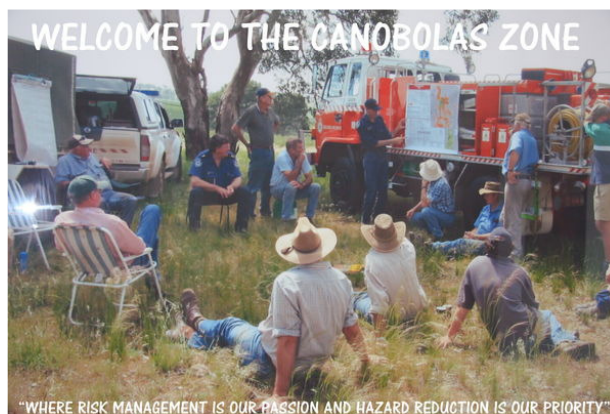
Additional media links have also been added to capture all public news stories that relate to the NSW Rural Fire Service and the Canobolas Zone and its people.

The activity level for the site for the past year is detailed below

**TABLE 3 - Website Hits Monthly Summary**

Month	Hits
July, 2010	19,858
June, 2010	15,231
May, 2010	10,149
April, 2010	11,262
March, 2010	14,205
February, 2010	11,194
January, 2010	12,727
December, 2009	16,175
November, 2009	16,106
October, 2009	13,036
September, 2009	12,852
August, 2009	13,999
July, 2009	13,449

The website is now showing, and recording, a first class history of the achievements over recent years and will assist in serving as a great resource for our communities and Brigades in detailing the events and communications as we move through the future.



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## **Cadets.**

The RFS Secondary Schools Cadet Programme is run over ten weeks and is open to Year 9 and Year 10 students. Schools in the Canobolas Zone who are participating in the 2010 Programme include Cowra High School (13 students), Blayney High School (18 students) and Orange Christian School (18 students).

The students participate in interesting and challenging training that provides practical life skills, develops leadership, teamwork and initiative skills and fosters qualities of community responsibility and service.

Training includes fire awareness, leadership, fire science, personal development and accident prevention in the workplace. Students also gain experience with casualty assistance, motor vehicle fires and accidents, and practical experience with Police, Ambulance, NSW Fire Brigade and other emergency services.

The Programme is overseen by Canobolas Zone staff and the training is provided by several volunteer members for each school.

During 2009/2010, a group of 10 students from Blayney High School participated in the programme with 4 students joining local Blayney brigades. 13 students from Canowindra High School and 22 students from Cowra High School also participated in the programme with 10 students joining local Cowra Brigades.



**Canobolas Cadets visiting Careflight**

## Learning and Development

Another successful year of training was conducted within the Zone, by our staff and volunteers. During 2009 a total of 362 members nominated for courses with 365 persons (BF RPL inclusive) deemed competent in 14 various RFS qualifications.

Canobolas was successful with a \$47,961 grant for the funding of Static and Mobile Training Facilities from the National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund through the Attorney General's Department. This funding has provided the Canobolas Zone with the first State Standard Design Structural Fire Fighting Facility. The grant supplied six shipping containers with five modified to simulate residential structures. Three of the containers are able to be moved around the Zone by our support vehicle to conduct the village training for rural and remote brigades. The other three containers are setup at the FCC for similar training but have added features like two stories and manhole access to allow rescue operations for other emergency services to use.

The Region West Exercise was well attended again this year with two strike teams attending gaining valuable experience and knowledge in the latest fire fighting techniques and procedures.

The Fire Line Tree Felling course was held again this year in which we had 4 volunteers and 1 staff member attend. This course provided the members a recertification, refresher and learning experience with very large and difficult trees to fall. The Region also received funding for 20 personnel to undertake the Training and Assessment Certificate IV course this year and nine volunteers from Canobolas were successful in gaining a position.

The following training has been attended by the Zone's volunteers or staff:

- Aviation Operations
- Rural Fire Driving
- Bush Firefighter
- Village Firefighter
- Advanced Firefighter
- Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus
- Crew Leader
- Senior First Aid
- Incident Management Workshop
- Incident Management Exercise
- Rural Fire Instructor
- Combined Agency Exercises (NSWFB, Cadia Mines Rescue)
- Bush Fire Awareness
- Chainsaw Operations
- Group Leader
- Community Liaison Officer
- Foam Workshop
- Permit Officer Workshop
- Fire Line Leadership
- Advanced Oxygen Resuscitation
- Instructors Workshop
- Safety AF
- Leadership DR
- Communications Centre Assistant
- Wildfire Investigation



**Canobolas Volunteers during training at Springside**

The Zone is working towards meeting Service Standard 6.1.2 which provides details on the required qualifications for all levels of the organisation, volunteer or staff. Over the next year the focus will be on the Bush Firefighter (BF) qualification. One hundred and seventy Blayney Shire volunteer members were recognised through this BF RPL process this year.

Training is still being taken out to the brigades as requested or held close to where the majority of the participants, on a particular course, reside.



**Training our female members at Red Hill**

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During this years hazard reduction season we took the opportunity to assess personnel in Prescribed Burning Supervisor and Group Leader. This was welcomed by the volunteers who took advantage of the opportunity.

For the first time in the Zone an Advanced Oxygen Resuscitation course was held for our volunteer members. We had three volunteers undertake the Wildfire Investigation course, which is a state run course.

This year we had no significant injuries to firefighters during training activities.



**BF Training at Red Hill**

### **Financial**

The Canobolas Zone received a total allocation from the Rural Fire Fighting Fund of \$6,983,646 for the 2009/2010 year. Each Council received the allocation as shown in Table 4:

**TABLE 4 – RFFF Allocation**

<b>Blayney</b>	\$1,752,076
<b>Cabonne</b>	\$2,381,177
<b>Cowra</b>	\$1,540,400
<b>Orange</b>	\$1,309,992
<b>Total</b>	\$6,983,646

Our Councils are responsible for contributing 11.7% to the total budget.

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The final Council contribution for the year was \$464,779 (compared to a budget of \$503,473) and was split between the Councils on the basis outlined in Table 5:

**TABLE 5 – Council Contribution to the RFFF**

Council	Actual Contribution
Blayney	\$123,962
Cabonne	\$155,290
Cowra	\$ 99,196
Orange	\$ 86,331

## 4. Activities

### 4.1 Hazard Reduction results

The Hazard reduction season has again seen a increase in the area treated across our landscape. The benchmark target, as determined by the Canobolas Zone Risk Management Plan, to be treated annually is 9,471ha and during the year a total of 18,439ha was treated by all agencies by a combination of burning and mechanical Hazard Reduction.

**TABLE 6 – HR Results by year 2008 to 2010**

	Canobolas Figures 2008	Canobolas Figures 2009	Canobolas Figures 2010
<b>Dept Lands</b>	19	20	<b>139</b>
<b>Local Government</b>	5,180	9,425	<b>7,934</b>
<b>National Park</b>	822	944	<b>2,210</b>
<b>Other (1)</b>			<b>11</b>
<b>Private</b>	5,040	5,222	<b>6,756</b>
<b>Railcorp</b>		346	<b>175</b>
<b>RTA (2)</b>		451	<b>150</b>
<b>State Forests</b>	347	431	<b>1,065</b>
<b>Total HA's HR Work</b>	11,408	16,838	<b>18,439</b>
<b>% State Works</b>	9.15%	13.65%	<b>10.85%</b> **subject to final Annual Report figures



**Volunteers conducting a 50ha HR Burn at MT Bulga in March 2010**



**Low Intensity 700ha Burn near Mandagery April 2010**

In terms of the 107 HR plans proposed to be actioned by the Bush Fire Management Committee's Agencies, 97 of these were completed successfully with just 10 unable to be completed due to adverse weather impacts

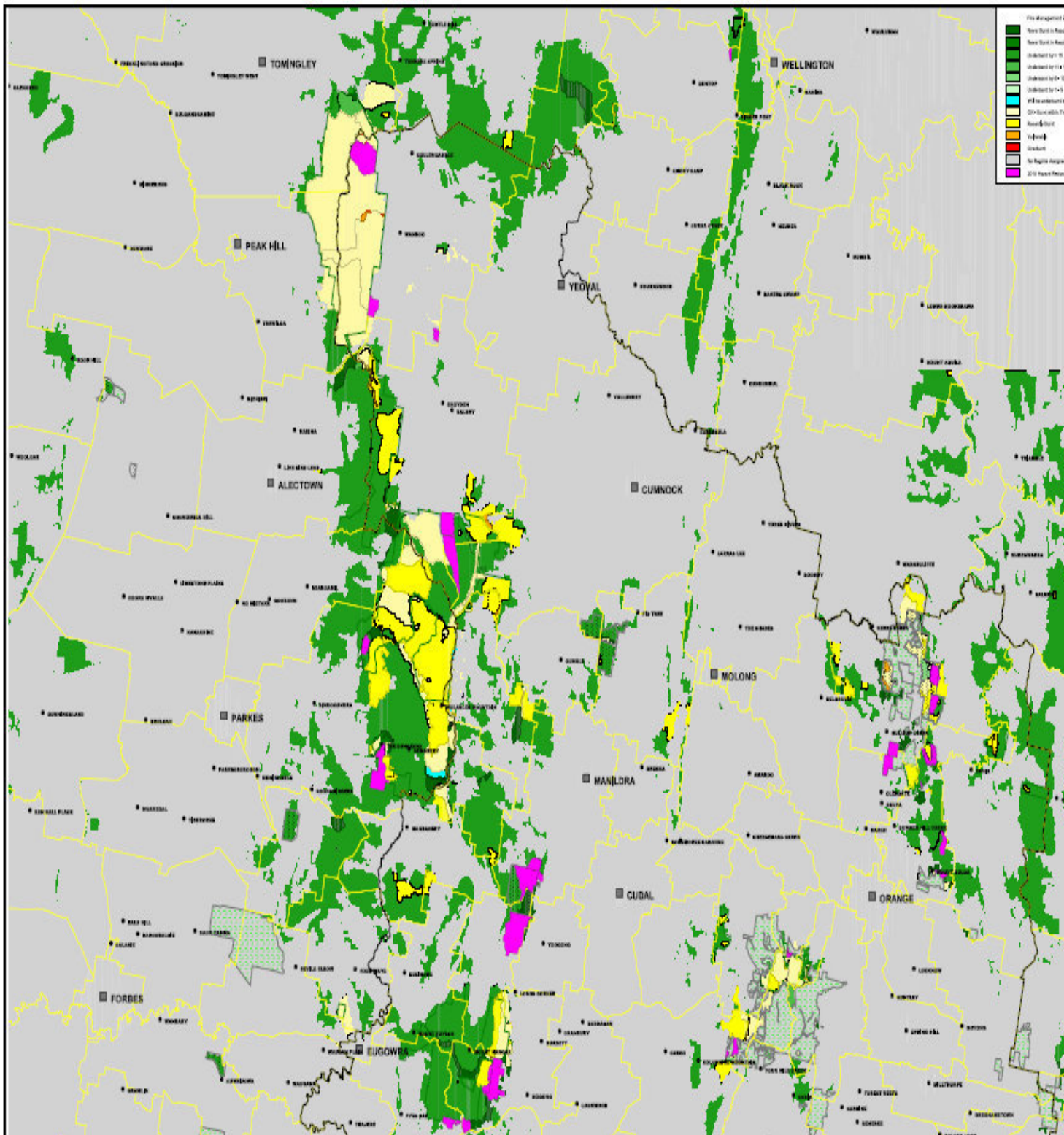
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**TABLE 7 – HR Proposals 2009-2010**

<b>2010 Proposals</b>	
<b>All Agencies</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Completed</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Not Completed due to Weather</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Hectares Not Completed</b>	<b>1,469</b>

# Canobolas Zone “How We are Going Map” for Hazard Reduction 2005-2010



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## 4.2 Hazard Complaints & Permits

The hazard reduction component of Rural Fire Service activities is now undertaken expressly by the Canobolas Zone on behalf of the Councils and entails four separate areas

1. Issue of Fire Permits
2. Issue of Hazard Reduction Certificates
3. Management of Hazard Complaints
4. Advice on Compliance to “Planning for Bushfire Protection” in regard to Development Applications.

Since 1 July 2009 and up to 30 June 2010 the Activities Staff of Canobolas Zone carried out the following works.

**TABLE 8 – Community Safety Activities**

	Blayney	Cabonne	Cowra	Orange	Total
Development Applications 79BA / 100B	0	13	0	0	13
Permits Section 87 & 88	13	30	25	11	71
Hazard Reduction Complaints	34	23	80	223	360
Total	47	66	102	234	441



### 4.3 Fire and Emergency Incidents

Fire Season 2009/2010 saw another very dry start to spring and summer impacted with hot, windy and dry conditions. Whilst the Bush Fire Danger Period was introduced at the standard variation date of November 1, the introduction of Fire Permit requirements at this time was very welcome.

November 15 saw the first major ignition of the season, the “Old Sawmill” fire in the Canobolas State Forest south of Mt Canobolas, this fire was declared as a Section 44 Emergency and kept the firefighters of the RFS, Forest NSW and National Parks and Wildlife Service busy for 8 days. Fortunately, with support from our Councils, contractors and the Aviation Support the pine plantation fire was contained to just under 63ha and no losses were suffered on private lands.



**The “Old Sawmill” S44 Fire viewed from the South East - 2 days after ignition**

Seven days after the ignition of the “Old Sawmill” fire, during extreme weather conditions a fire broke out north of the Winderra estate off the Mitchell Highway Orange and ran, under strong NW winds toward Burrendong way and North Orange with some 25 rural properties directly in the path of the fire. Fortunately the RFS was able to redeploy plant resources from the “Old Sawmill” fire to the “Winderra” fire and allocate aircraft support along with more than 24 fire tankers.

A property protection strike team was deployed from within the Zone and again no property was lost however there was stock loss with 12 cattle being destroyed and a significant amount fence damaged. This fire was contained to 135ha shortly after nightfall and resources remained onsite patrolling for a further two days.



**Winderera Fire - showing the impact of fire close to property**

Canobolas Zone staff and volunteers responded on Friday 4th December to assist our neighbours in the Chifley Zone with several fires. A Section 44 emergency was declared at 6pm on Friday with David Hoadley appointed as Incident Controller along with Gavin Jeffries FNSW and Arthur Sharp as Deputy Incident Controllers.

This fire threatened numerous properties close to Bathurst and entered some yards and some sheds. Great work was done by our volunteers and the losses were confined to 3 sheds and fencing and 260 hectares of farming country. A second fire occurred at Rockley Mountain, 15 kilometres south of Bathurst. Properties were threatened but again good work by our volunteers has averted any losses other than burning 280 hectares of country.

Canobolas Zone placed some 20 tankers into the Vittoria fire on the first day and night and then a fresh strike team every day for the next week, a great effort by the Zone volunteers to assist their neighbouring District Brigades.

In the period from 15 November to 25 December 2009 the Canobolas Zone experienced 86 separate incidents and this proved a significant test of response, endurance and capability of our Brigades and Volunteers.

Significant rainfall occurred on Christmas Day 2009 and consistent follow up rain over the next two months through to March put an end to the fire danger across all of the Canobolas Zone. The benefit from this weather was an early start to the Zone Hazard Reduction Program.

## Incidents

Across the Zone our Brigades responded to a total of 340 Incidents during the 2009/10 reporting period. The table below details the responses by Council area and the historic totals since 2005/06.

**TABLE 9 – Incidents Totals 2009-10**

	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2005/06</b>
<b>Blayney</b>	62	47	46	78	56
<b>Cabonne</b>	152	155	139	230	196
<b>Cowra</b>	57	78	99	98	101
<b>Orange</b>	69	71	58	122	88
<b>Totals</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>441</b>

Total decreased by 11 on the previous year, however, this year had up to 3 months of benign bush fire conditions due to wet weather. The first two months of the season was significantly busy.



## 5. Infrastructure and Assets

### 5.1 Tanker Replacement Plan

Funding of \$1,457,963 was allocated to tankers during 2009-2010 and the Zone was able to place 14 new and refurbished tankers into the brigades listed in Table 9.

This year saw the retirement of the last petrol powered tanker in service with our Brigades and the realisation that from this year forward, all tankers made redundant will be diesel powered vehicles.

**TABLE 9 – Tanker Receivals 2009-2010**

<b>COUNCIL</b>	<b>BRIGADE</b>	<b>TANKER</b>
<b>Cabonne</b>	Baldry	Cat 1
	Canobolas	Cat 7
	Lidster	Cat 7
	Lockwood	Cat 7
	Mullion Creek	Cat 7
	Washpen	Cat 1
	Yeoval	Cat 1
<b>Blayney</b>	Barry	New Cat 1
	Panuara	Cat 1
	Newbridge	Cat 1
	Tallwood	Cat 2
<b>Cowra</b>	Neila	Cat 1
	Wattamondara	Cat 1
<b>Orange</b>	Orange	New Cat 1
	Springside	New Cat 1
	TBA	Cat 9



**Yeoval Captain Phil Hunter receiving the Brigades new Cat 1 Tanker**

## 5.2 Maintenance

All fire fighting vehicles were treated to either a Minor or Major service simultaneous with a roadworthy inspection and an inspection of the fire fighting apparatus. These works commenced from July 2009 and concluded during December 2009.

The Service centres for these works are decentralised to limit the amount of travelling required by volunteers, as well as constrain the fuel expenditure. These centres have all been selected for their capability and expertise in providing the required maintenance for heavy vehicles and have all gained the certification required to perform the RTA HVIS (Heavy Vehicle Inspection Scheme).

The approved service centres are:

- Orange City Council Depot
- Blayney Council Depot
- Tracserv Trucks – Orange
- Tracserv Trucks – Cowra (Waugoola Station)
- Cowra Truck Wreckers

In addition to the standard servicing program, all fire fighting vehicles that were deployed on any of the major fire events during section 44 activities were afforded an additional service due to the arduous conditions these vehicles operated in on the various fireground's. The cost of these works was borne by the Section 44.

## 5.3 Station Upgrade Program

Funding is available for the construction of new Standard Design Stations at Lake Canobolas (Nashdale and Canobolas Brigades), Darby's Falls, March and Byng Emu/Swamp during 2010/2011.

These new plans have been released by the RFS in August 2010 and will set the theme for future brigade stations. Canobolas Zone with the assistance from our Councils will be calling for tenders during August and September 2010.

Funding is also anticipated for Station upgrades at Molong and Nargong with transportable buildings being sought for Eulimore and Mogong brigades.

## 5.4 Fire Control Centre Usage

The Canobolas Zone continues to be used on a regular basis for State, Regional and Zone meetings and training events. Several Government Departments and private businesses also hire our rooms for activities and training sessions.

Highlights this year have been the:

- NSWRFSS Advanced Diploma Course.
- NSWRFSS Spokeswoman Program.
- RFS media Courses
- 2009 Region West All Staff Conference.
- NSWRFSS Training and Assessing Course
- Canobolas Zone Long Service Award presentations.
- Firezone Training
- Firezone Train Training.
- GIS Training.
- Country Energy
- Transgrid
- Rescue and Response Training

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- RTA
- Cadia Valley

## **6. Planned Projects for 2010 - 2011**

1. Completion of the Larras Lee Airstrip.
2. Construction of 4 Standard Design Brigade Stations.
3. Upgrades to Molong and Nargong Brigade Stations.
4. Transportable Stations for Eulimore and Mogong.
5. Accept delivery of 7 new tankers.
6. Accept delivery of 13 second hand tankers.
7. Completion of the Water Tank Project.
8. Expand the Canobolas influence within the RFS through various Boards and Advisory Committees where we have representation.
9. Develop a new holistic whole of business next generation risk management plan.
10. Complete our new hot fire training facility.
11. Increase website content and interactivity.
12. Continue the highest standard of hazard reduction activity and plan to exceed our targets.
13. Further enhance hazard reduction and containment lines on private property.
14. Development of village protection plans.
15. Continue the "Gum Tree Meeting" process.
16. Convert our stores program to the new SAP system.
17. Promote solar electricity options for brigades and members.
18. New Service Agreement in place with our Councils.
19. Develop 2010/2011 milestones for our Strategic Plan.
20. Sale of Surplus Tankers.
21. Complete the Fire Trail Signage Project.