



NSW Rural Fire Service

Canobolas Zone



2010/2011 Annual Report

"Where Risk Management is our Passion and Hazard Reduction is our Priority"

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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.

1. Executive Overview

The 2010/2011 year has been filled with challenges and innovation within Canobolas Zone. The traditional fire season was replaced with a very wet summer period in which we saw crews having to adapt from meeting fire related responses to assisting communities and kindred agencies with flood response work.

Due to the wet weather the severity and volatility of fire related incidents attended by the Zone members was significantly reduced. This was a welcome respite from past drought conditions and provided opportunity for communities to reap some of the benefits of a wetter season.

Hazard reduction work was somewhat hampered due to the wetter conditions however during a two week window period significant hazard reduction was completed. This resulted in Canobolas Zone completing 14,202 hectares of hazard reduction. This amounted to 12.1% of the total works within the state of New South Wales and some 150% of our continuing yearly target for hazard reduction within Canobolas Zone.

Work was commenced on reviewing our Bush Fire Risk Management Plan which will allow the Zone to capitalise on the outstanding Canobolas Plan and further provide risk management that meets the needs of our member communities. The review will encompass an improved risk identification and rating process as well as expanding the assessment criteria used to demonstrate the results obtained.

Financially, we received a slightly smaller budget of \$6.84m which was down from the previous \$6.98M in 2009/2010. Whilst a reduction in budget we were able to meet our entire key performance criteria and ensure the future of the Zone.

Work commenced on the first Standard design Brigade Station at Lake Canobolas to accommodate the brigades of Canobolas and Nashdale. This is a first for the NSW RFS and despite some weather impacts the station is due for completion by the end of October 2011. The station will boast some of the highest standards of accommodation and facility enjoyed within Canobolas Zone.

The Canobolas Zone website was enhanced with the introduction of video presentations identifying some of the risks of the potential grass fire season. This demonstrated the innovation and role that the website has delivered to our communities. Of note was the fact that the website has become a foundation for additional websites across Regions West and East. Monthly usage continues to increase and we believe this will further increase as the website continues to remain an important communication medium of the Zone.

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The commitment of our volunteers was recognised with a number of long service award ceremonies being conducted and in excess of sixty awards being presented by both Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and Assistant Commissioner Dominic Lane. A number of new tankers were also handed over to brigades at these ceremonies.

Work continued on the construction of the Larras Lee airstrip and improvements were made to the facilities at Orange and Cowra airports to add to our aviation infrastructure.

The Canobolas Zone continues to provide a significant level of support to our volunteers and communities and is well placed to ensure the standards and achievements to date are continued.

2. COMPLETED CANOBOLAS ZONE PROJECTS FOR 2010/2011

1. Stage 2 works and water tank infrastructure at the Larras Lee Airstrip.
2. Commencement of the 1st Standard Design Brigade Station at Lake Canobolas site.
3. Upgrade to Molong Brigade Station.
4. Accept delivery of 7 new tankers.
5. Accept delivery of 13 second hand tankers.
6. Completion of the Water Tank Project.
7. Increased the Canobolas influence within the RFS through various Boards and Advisory Committees where we have representation.
8. Completed smoke house training facility.
9. Increased website content and interactivity.
10. Continued the highest standard of hazard reduction activity and exceeded our target benchmark.
11. Further enhanced hazard reduction and containment lines on private property.
12. Continue the “Gum Tree Meeting” process.
13. Promote solar electricity options for brigades and members.
14. New Service Agreement in place with our Councils.
15. Develop 2010/2011 milestones for our Strategic Plan.
16. Sale of Surplus Tankers.
17. Completed the Fire Trail Signage Project across the Cowra Shire.
18. Commenced production of Fire Trail Signage for all of Canobolas Zone.

3. People

3.1 Membership

During the 2010/2011 period the total volunteer membership increased by 145 personnel across the four local government areas. Details of the membership numbers and the locations are shown in Table 1.



GC Barry Carr AFSM with DC Ted Millsted discussing preparation of HR works

It is again, pleasing to note that volunteer numbers are increasing at a time where the anecdotal evidence continues to suggest a population decline and age increase across rural communities. There is no doubt that the average age of our membership is increasing and the challenge over the next decade will be the renewing our workforce whilst maintaining the local knowledge and fire behaviour and suppression capability that is interwoven into the skillset of our more senior members.

TABLE 1 - Membership

	Members 01 July 10	Members 30 June 11	Difference +/-	Difference %
Blayney	322	341	+19	5.9%
Cowra	630	662	+32	5.08%
Orange	166	210	+44	26.5%
Cabonne	1016	1066	+50	4.9%
Total	2134	2279	+145	6.8%

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3.2 Staff.

Permanent staff levels remained at 8, however, there was significant change through secondments and temporary appointments to our staff as they assisted the Service meet its key initiatives. This is the first time since the Zone was formed in 2000 that multiple variations have occurred to incumbent staff. The following outlines the movements for the report period:

Zone Manager	David Hoadley	Seconded to Blue Mountains from September 2010
Acting Z/Manager	David Jones	Appointed to fill the ZM vacancy
L & D Officer	Nils Waite	Temporary EOI appointment to Region L&D Manager
Acting L&D Officer	Liz Lewis	Appointed to fill the L&D vacancy
Acting Admin Officer	Cathy Bowden	Appointed to fill the Admin role vacancy

The staff structure as at 30 June 2011 was:

Acting Zone Manager	David Jones
Operations Officer	Brett Bowden AFSM
Community Safety Officer	Arthur Sharp
Learning and Development Officer	Nils Waite
Operations Officer (Infrastructure)	Steve Smith
Operations Support Officer	Roy Ferguson
Fire Mitigation Officer	Geoff Selwood
Administration Officer	Liz Lewis

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 12.1% of the State hazard reduction works and some 15.98% of the State hazard complaints (526/3292) and 29% of Region West hazard complaints (526/1825).

3.3 Community Consultation.

Unfortunately the, now entrenched, program of consultation through our Gum Tree meetings was impacted slightly by the staff movements during this reporting period with significantly less meetings held. Whilst this concept is still proving very successful there has been an additional challenge in ensuring that the timing and locations meet the needs of individual members and that they can see a benefit in attending through input, action and empowerment.

The “Gum Tree” meeting brand is gradually 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 remain:

- ❖ 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 – Consultation in action



3.4 Canobolas Zone Website.

The Canobolas Zone website continues to expand and improve to meet the needs of our volunteers and the wider community. The site at <http://www.canobolas.rfs.nsw.gov.au> has become the foundation for a number of equivalent sites within the NSW Rural Fire Service.

During the past year the information on the site has been enhanced with the introduction of additional video content aimed at providing our communities with the information to help mitigate the ensuing potential grass fire season. Information on Brigade activities, member opportunities and associated general fire related information and links remains the principal focus.

Media links will continue to be maintained to capture 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 2 - Website Hits Monthly Summary

Month	Hits
July, 2010	19,858
August, 2010	30,515
September, 2010	26,479
October, 2010	25,750
November, 2010	18,837
December, 2010	28,678
January, 2011	31,332
February, 2011	33,928
March, 2011	40,260
April, 2011	36,550
May, 2011	41,212
June, 2011	41,950
Total	375,349

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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3.5 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 participated in the 2011 Programme include Cowra High School (11 students) and Orange Christian School (17 students).

Aims of the cadet training include developing an interest in the RFS and its traditions, provide knowledge of fire safety and preparedness and encouraging the cadets to continue an involvement in the RFS and community services and most importantly to provide a sense of community spirit and responsibility.

Students were given hands-on demonstrations of RFS vehicles and equipment, hand tools, communications and casualty assistance. They also gained an understanding of the roles of other emergency services when they attended at the CHC Helicopter base, Blayney SES and Orange SES.

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



Cowra High School Cadets getting “hands on” experience during a visit to CHC Helicopters



Tanker familiarisation at the Orange Christian School

3.6 Learning and Development

Another successful year of training was conducted within the Zone, by our staff and volunteers. During the year a total of 428 persons (BF RPL inclusive) were deemed competent in 14 various RFS qualifications. A large number of volunteers also attended various local workshops during the year.

Canobolas was successful with grants from the RFS in excess of \$30,000 for the funding of CABA refilling station and 2 Oxy Resuscitation Kits for Advanced Resuscitation Techniques training.

The Region West Exercise was well attended again this year with 2 complete strike teams attending gaining valuable experience and knowledge in the latest fire fighting techniques and procedures.

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The Zone's volunteers and/or staff have been involved in the following training activities:

- Aviation Operations
- Rural Fire Driving
- Bush Firefighter
- Village Firefighter
- Advanced Firefighter
- Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus
- Command, Control, Communication
- TAE Upgrade Cert IV Training and Assessing
- Crew Leader
- Senior First Aid
- Incident Management Workshop
- Incident Management Exercise
- Rural Fire Instructor
- Combined Agency Exercises
- Bush Fire Awareness
- Chainsaw Operations
- Group Leader
- Community Liaison Officer
- Advanced Resuscitation Techniques
- Instructors Workshop
- Communications Centre Assistant
- Wildfire Investigation
- Asbestos Awareness Workshop
- MR Licence Workshop
- AED / CPR Workshop
- Solar Panel Workshop
- MVA Workshop
- Structural Workshop
- BA Technician Workshop



Crew Leader Village Course September 2010

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The Zone is continuing to work towards meeting Service Standard 6.1.2 which provides details on the required qualifications for all levels of the organisation, volunteer or staff. During the past year the focus has been on the Bush Firefighter (BF) qualification with two hundred and fifty five volunteer members from Blayney, Cabonne and Cowra LGA's being recognised through this BF RPL process.

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. The Orange Molong Road Brigade Station has also been utilised for training workshops one Saturday each month during winter with volunteers from all over the Canobolas Zone attending. The workshops have proved to be very popular with the Canobolas Zone volunteers and will recommence at the end of the fire season.



Yeoval, Washpen and Bournewood Brigades putting their training to good use at the 2011 Yeoval Show

During this year's hazard reduction season we again took the opportunity to assess personnel in Prescribed Burning Supervisor. This was welcomed by the volunteers who took advantage of the opportunity.



First Aid training at the Canobolas Zone Fire Control Centre

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3.7 Financial

The Canobolas Zone received a total allocation from the Rural Fire Fighting Fund of \$6,845,400 for the 2010/2011 year. Each Council received the allocation as shown in Table 3:

TABLE 3 – RFFF Allocation

Blayney	\$1,799,230
Cabonne	\$2,141,407
Cowra	\$1,4112,855
Orange	\$1,491,908
Total	\$6,845,400

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

The final Council contribution for the year was \$534,937 which was slightly higher than originally planned but accepted by Councils. The split between the Councils is outlined in Table 4:

TABLE 4 – Council Contribution to the RFFF

Council	Actual Contribution
Blayney	\$149,336
Cabonne	\$157,453
Cowra	\$ 114,769
Orange	\$ 113,379

4. Activities

4.1 Hazard Reduction results

The Hazard reduction season was reduced due to the wet weather which only allowed all land managers to conduct burns for two weeks.

TABLE 5 – HR Results by year 2008 to 2011

Hazard Reduction completed in hectares:

Tenure	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Dept Lands	19	20	139	50
Local Government	5180	9425	7934	7065
National Parks	822	944	2210	1416
Other			11	11
Private	5040	5222	6756	5635
Railcorp		346	175	501
RTA		451	150	250
Forests NSW	347	431	1065	490
Total	11408	16838	18439	14202
% State Works	9.15%	13.65%	10.85%	12.10%

The average number of hectares treated for the four year period is 15,418.

TABLE 6 – HR Proposals 2011-2012

Land Manager	Number of Proposals	Area Hectares
Private	26	5675.83
NPWS Lachlan	8	848
NPWS Macquarie	11	1432.4
Forests NSW	5	1624
Lands	8	15.1
ARTC	Rail Corridors	501
RTA	Roads	250
Councils	Roads	8781.6
Village Protection RFS	Villages	32
HR's transferred from previous years	25	5391.53

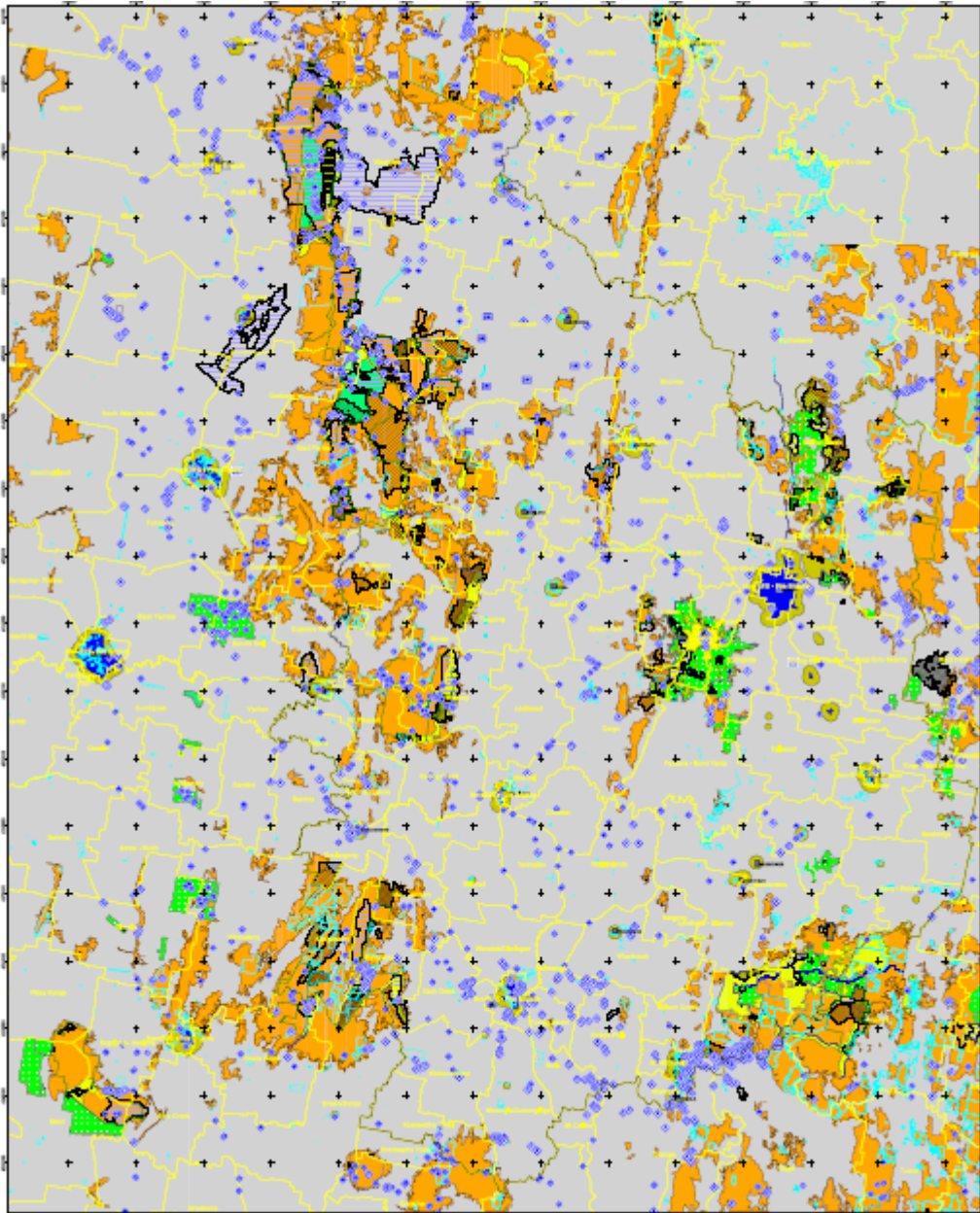


Volunteers/NPWS and Lachlan CMA traditional owners conducting a HR Burn



Low Intensity Burn Wanda Wandong area Goobang National Park
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Canobolas Zone “How We are Going Map” for Hazard Reduction 2005-2011



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 2010 and up to 30 June 2011 the Activities Staff of Canobolas Zone carried out the following works as listed in Table 7.

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TABLE 7 – Community Safety Activities

	Blayney	Cabonne	Cowra	Orange	Total
Development Applications 79BA / 100B	1	10	0	1	12
Permits Section 87 & 88	51	189	158	33	433
Hazard Complaints	48	67	183	228	526
Hazard Reduction Certificates	0	0	0	25	

Fire Trails

During the past 12 months there has been an extensive review of all fire trails within the Canobolas Zone with digitizing and entry into the fire trail register system.

TABLE 8 – Fire Trails by land tenure

Tenure	Number of Fire Trails	Distance
Councils	6	13.5km
Crown Land	4	9.70km
NPWS	109	330km
Forests NSW	131	383.5km
Private	112	420.6km
Wyangala State Waters	18	23.8km

Fire Trail Signs

Signs for 90% of all fire trails within the Canobolas Zone have been produced and are currently being installed by our volunteers.



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4.3 Fire and Emergency Incidents

Fire Season 2010/2011 saw a wetter spring and summer period that minimised the risk of severe fire activity during the Bush Fire Danger Period.

Whilst there were no fires of significance during the reporting period, the statistics as displayed in TABLE 9 show that the year's activity level of 396 incidents was comparable to the previous three years. This is critically important to the viability of the volunteer brigade's operational capability, as a general lack of activity can often have a detrimental impact on the responsiveness and readiness of its members.

Incidents

Across the Zone our Brigades responded to a total of 3496 Incidents during the 2010/11 reporting period. The table below details the responses by Council area and the historic totals since 2005/06.

TABLE 9 – Incidents Totals 2010/11

	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07	2005/06
Blayney	58	62	47	46	78	56
Cabonne	151	152	155	139	230	196
Cowra	102	57	78	99	98	101
Orange	85	69	71	58	122	88
Totals	396	340	351	342	528	441

The total incidents increased by 56 on the previous year, but is significantly down on what would be termed "average" as represented in the 2006/07 year, where total incidents are in excess of 500 for the reporting year.

Non Bush/Grass Fire Incidents

Of those incidents listed in Table 9 the below listed Table 10 identifies those incidents that are not fire related but rather Motor vehicle accidents (MVA's), false alarms and good intent calls.

TABLE 10 – Non Fire Incidents 2010/11

	MVA's	False alarm	Good intent
Blayney	20	3	12
Cabonne	34	16	29
Cowra	16	13	13
Orange	24	4	14

There is another measure of Brigade activity that counts total *actual* responses which is a true measure of total Brigade activity. It has been a Canobolas Zone practice for some time, particularly during the summer months, to respond multiple brigades to reported incidents to ensure rapid containment and sufficient personnel resources. By capturing the primary AND supporting brigades who are responded to each reported incident, a true picture of the activity level can be appreciated. Table 11 highlights this activity.

TABLE 11 - Total Responses 2010/11

	Incidents	Total Responses
Blayney	58	87
Cabonne	151	182
Cowra	102	136
Orange	85	109
Totals	396	514

Out of Area Assistance

Canobolas Zone has an Out of Area Assistance Plan that establishes the protocols and resources available to immediately assist our neighbouring Districts following any request.

During the reporting period resources were dispatched to Dubbo during the flood crisis that impacted upon that town during December 2010. This deployment consisted of two group support vehicles and 6 personnel for one only 12 hour shift.

Two additional personnel had also been deployed to assist with aviation communications based at Dubbo SES HQ assisting with the airlift and helicopter operations west of Nyngan and Coonamble. These deployments were for a 72 hour duration each and provided a valuable opportunity for our aviation communications operators to exercise their skills in a multi agency response.

Other Assistance

During December 2010 Canobolas Zone RFS crews also provided valuable assistance to the SES and Police during the Flood Emergencies across our own area through the provision of manpower, pumping capability and use of high clearance vehicles to alleviate the impact of rising water as a result of significant rainfall events.

The most significant operations were those at

- Molong
- Eugowra
- Clifton Grove
- West Cowra
- Manildra
- Cudal

5. Infrastructure and Assets

5.1 Tanker Replacement Plan

Funding of \$1,117,212 was allocated for replacement of new and refurbished fire fighting vehicles during 2010/11 and the Zone was able to place 14 new and refurbished tankers into the Cabolas Zone Brigades, the detail of which is listed Table 12.

This year saw the introduction of 6 new Cat 9 strikers that have been principally allocated into Blayney Brigades, allowing a number of existing diesel Cat 9's to be transferred internally to other Districts across the Zone, eventually retiring much older strikers from the fleet.

The seven refurbished vehicles received through the RFS 2nd hand tanker program have been systematically received and delivered to the various brigades allowing for a number of category changes where some Cat 7 tankers have been upgraded to Cat 2 tankers and therefore boosting the water capacity.

TABLE 12 – Tanker Receivals 2010/11

COUNCIL	BRIGADE	TANKER
Cabonne	Baldry	Cat 1
	The Ponds	Cat 2
	Cheesemans Creek	Cat 2
	Lidster	Cat 7
	Nashdale	Cat 2
Blayney	Carcoar	New Cat 9
	Blayney	New Cat 9
	Panuara	New Cat 9
	Lyndhurst	New Cat 9
	Blayney Group	New Cat 9
Cowra	Chaucer	Cat 1
	Koorawatha	Cat 2
Orange	North West	New Cat 1
	North West	New Cat 9
	Clifton Grove Ophir	Cat 7



Six new Cat 9 Tankers as received by Canobolas Zone 2011

The receipt of new tankers into the fleet always promotes opportunities to effect a number of internal transfers between Brigades and Districts within the Zone. The primary purpose of these transfers is to ensure that the oldest vehicles are made redundant whilst ensuring the appropriate level and type of resource is being installed to match the operational need of each Brigade area.

During the period 2010/11 the following vehicles were transferred between Canobolas Zone Brigades

Mt McDonald	Cowra	Upgraded Cat 9
Back Creek	Cowra	Upgraded Cat 9
Byng Emu Swamp	Cabonne	Upgraded Cat 9
The Ponds	Cabonne	Upgraded Cat 9
Cargo	Cabonne	Upgraded Cat 1
Baldry	Cabonne	Upgraded Cat 1
Support	Orange	Upgrade Cat 16

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 2010 and concluded during December 2010.

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:

- PGR Truck Repairs
- Cowra Truck Wreckers
- Molong Tyre & Mechanical
- BK & BS Burn Canowindra

5.3 Station Upgrade Program

The NSW Rural Fire Fighting Fund allocated \$466,855 for brigade Station funding for the 2010/11 financial year. This will allow for the erection of a shared brigade facility at Lake Canobolas for the Nashdale and Canobolas Brigades along with the building of a new 2 bay standard design station at Darby's Falls.

Remnant funds will see contribution towards finalising the planning for a standard design station at March (Clergate).

It is anticipated that Canobolas Zone will build these new facilities through a project management framework rather than tender for design and construct in an effort to maximise the use of the available funds.

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:

- RFS Media Courses
- 2011 Region West All Staff Conference.
- Canobolas Zone Long Service Award presentations.
- RFS ID Card training
- GIS Training.
- Region West Incident Management Workshop
- NSWRFSS Command Control and Communications
- NSWRFSS State Mitigation Crews Training and Induction
- Greater Western Area Health Service
- Rescue and Response Training
- District Emergency Management Training
- RTA
- Cadia Valley
- Pybar Inductions

6. Planned Projects for 2011 - 2012

1. Completion of the Larras Lee Airstrip.
2. Completion of Standard Design Canoblas/Nashdale Brigades Station at Lake Canobolas.
3. Construction of 2 Standard Design Brigade Stations (Darbys Falls & March).
4. Transportable Station for Eulimore.
5. Accept delivery of 3 new tankers.
6. Oversee internal transfer of 4 tankers.
7. Develop a new holistic whole of business next generation risk management plan.
8. Enhance smoke house training facilities at Orange & Cowra
9. Increase website content and interactivity.
10. Continue the highest standard of hazard reduction activity.
11. Further enhance hazard reduction and containment lines on private property.
12. Development of village protection plans.
13. Continue the "Gum Tree Meeting" process.
14. Convert our stores program to the new SAP system.
15. Develop 2011/2012 milestones for our Strategic Plan.
16. Sale of redundant Tankers.
17. Complete the rollout of the Fire Trail Signage Project.
18. Expand the Canobolas influence within the RFS through various Boards and Advisory Committees where we have representation.
19. Facilitate a Zone "Exercise" to test the operational capability of our Brigades.
20. Convert Ops room functionality at FCC to incorporate a "Knowledge Wall" in line with CCC Training framework.