



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth



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**Congratulate all RFS staff and volunteers
on their efforts over Christmas / New Year period.**

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FIRE REPORTS

09 SUTHERLAND



Sutherland Fire

25 December to 7 January

Area of fire

17120 Hectares

Perimeter of fire

142.6 Kilometres

Tuesday 25 December

Overview

Section 44 Declared 2300hrs.

Property Impacted: Camp Couetts Scout Camp, Woronora Water Treatment Plant electricity supply.

Property under threat: Waterfall village, Heathcote village east & west, Engadine south, Woronora Water Treatment Plant, Air Traffic Control Tower Woronora, Electricity supply network and the Railway signalling & power system.

Environment impacted: Southern ends of Heathcote & Royal National Parks, Army Holsworthy Training Area and Woronora Water Catchment area.

Environment under threat: Balance of Heathcote & Royal National Parks, Army Holsworthy Training Area and Woronora Water Catchment area.

Road & Trail Access: F6 & Prince's Highway closed for civilian traffic south of Waterfall, McKell Drive to Lady Wakehurst Drive and Woronora Dam Road closed due to fire activity.

Strategies employed

Deployed resources for property protection into Waterfall east and west and Heathcote south.

Evacuation of Waterfall completed by 0100hrs 26 December.

Evacuation of Camp Couetts Scout Camp completed by 2359hrs 25 December.

Special Issues

Fire location west towards Appin unknown, defensive strategies employed.

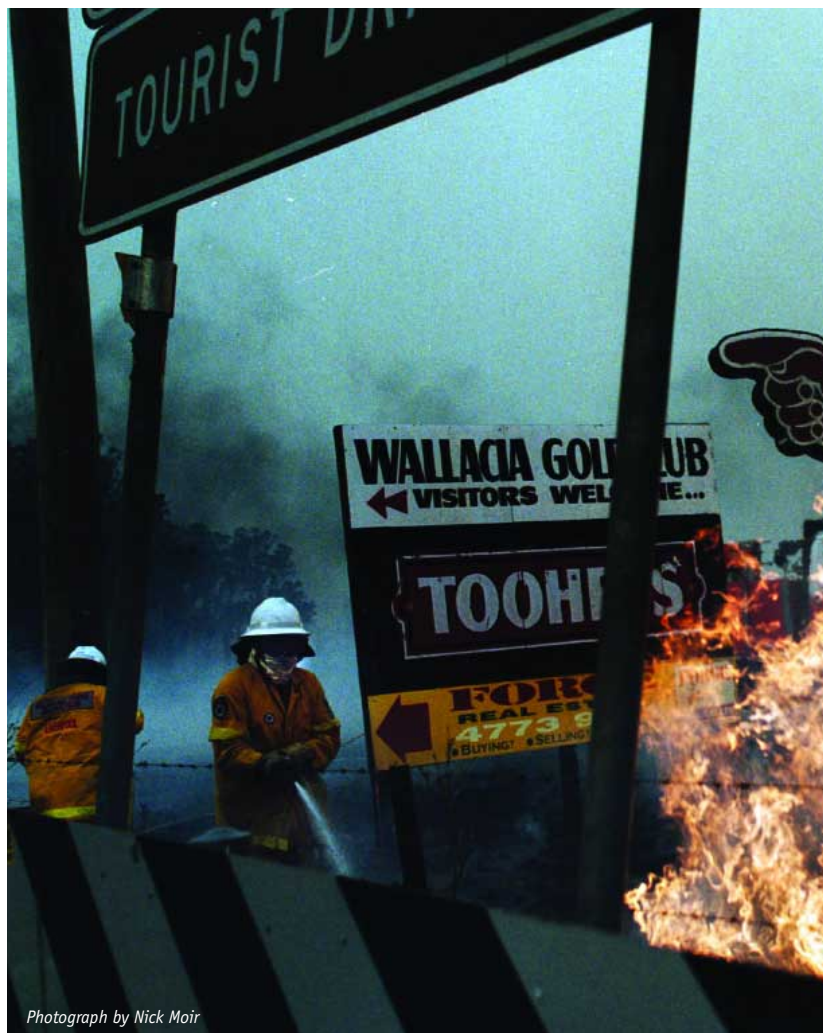
Sutherland RFS units deployed into Garrawarra Hospital to assist in property protection and to support evacuation of the facility.

Sutherland out of area RFS units recalled to Shire.

Wednesday 26 December

Overview

Property Impacted: Waterfall village, Waterfall railyard, Waterfall village electricity supply, Hanrob Kennels, two houses near Ekersley Road, southern part of Heathcote west, Heathcote Oval complex, caravan park Heathcote, southern part of



Photograph by Nick Moir

Heathcote east and Air Traffic Control Tower Woronora.

Property under threat: Heathcote east and west, Woronora Water Treatment Plant, Electricity supply network.

Environment impacted: Additional areas of Heathcote & Royal National Parks, Army Holsworthy Training Area.

Environment under threat: Balance of Heathcote & Royal National Parks, Army Holsworthy Training Area.

Road & Trail Access: F6 & Prince's Highway closed for civilian traffic south of Heathcote, McKell Drive to Lady Wakehurst Drive and Woronora Dam Road closed due to fire activity. Fire Trails closed for firefighting.

Strategies employed

Deployed resources for property protection into Heathcote east and west, Waterfall Village and Heathcote Caravan Park.

Deployed resources for property protection into Bundeena and Maianbar villages.

Deployed resources in Heathcote Oval complex and Emergency Services Centre.

Evacuation of selected perimeter streets in west Heathcote undertaken.

Special Issues

Defensive strategies employed around Heathcote east & west and two houses near Ekersley Road.

Resources maintained in Waterfall for property protection and salvage.

Heathcote Oval staging area temporarily closed due to fire activity cutting access.

CFA Task Force deployed into area.

Thursday 27 December

Overview

Property Impacted: Heathcote east and west and Woronora Water Treatment Plant.

Property under threat: Engadine, Loftus, Yarrowarra, Bundeena, Maianbar, Grays Point, Church Camps RNP, ANSTO facility Lucas Heights, Heritage buildings at Audley, offices, workshops and residences in Royal National Park.



EVACUATION OF SELECTED PERIMETER STREETS IN WEST HEATHCOTE UNDERTAKEN LATE AFTERNOON AND EVENING.

Environment impacted: Heathcote & Royal National Parks, Army Holsworthy Training Area.
Environment under threat: Royal National Park, Army Holsworthy Training Area.

SUTHERLAND RFS UNITS DEPLOYED INTO GARRAWARRA HOSPITAL TO ASSIST IN PROPERTY PROTECTION AND TO SUPPORT EVACUATION OF THE FACILITY.

Road & Trail Access: F6 & Prince's Highway closed for civilian traffic south of Heathcote, McKell Drive to Lady Wakehurst Drive and Woronora Dam Road closed due to fire activity. Sir Bertram Stephens Drive, Bundeena Drive, Maianbar Road, Farnell Avenue and Heathcote Road from Princess Highway to New Illawarra Road closed due to backburning operations. Fire Trails closed for firefighting.

Strategies employed

Deployed resources for property protection into Heathcote east and west, Bundeena and Maianbar villages, Engadine south and Church Camps Royal National Park.

Breakover extinguished near Curra Moors Fire Trail off Sir Bertram Stephens Drive.

Commenced containment lines east Heathcote to Farnell Avenue to Audley to Point Danger along Hacking River.

Commenced containment line along Heathcote Road from Forum Drive to Woronora Bridge.

Commenced containment line Woronora Bridge along Heathcote Road to Melinga Molong Ridge Trail to Gate 9 Trail to Giles Junction in Army Holsworthy Training Area.

Completed containment line along eastern flank, Costons Point Fire Trail to Maianbar Road, Maianbar Road to Bundeena Drive, Bundeena Drive to Sir Bertram Stephens Drive, Sir Bertram Stephens Drive south to breakover near Curra Moors Trail.

Evacuation of selected perimeter streets in west Heathcote undertaken late afternoon/evening.

Evacuation of selected perimeter streets east Heathcote undertaken early am.

Special Issues

Defensive strategies employed around Heathcote west.

Evacuated John Paul Retirement Village north side of east Heathcote.

Friday 28 December

Overview

Property Impacted: Church Camp RNP, Heritage buildings at Audley, offices, workshops and residences in RNP and Heathcote west.

Property under threat: Engadine, Loftus, Yarrawarra, Grays Point, Bundeena, Maianbar and ANSTO at Lucas Heights.

Environment impacted: Heathcote and Royal National Parks, Army Holsworthy Training Area.

Environment under threat: Royal National Parks, Army Holsworthy Training Area, Woronora River valley north of Heathcote Road.

Road and Trail Access: F6 and Prince's Highway closed for civilian traffic south of Waterfall, McKell Drive to Lady Wakehurst Drive and Woronora Dam Road closed due to fire activity. Fire Trails closed for firefighting.

F6 AND PRINCESS HIGHWAY CLOSED FOR CIVILIAN TRAFFIC SOUTH OF WATERFALL, MCKELL DRIVE TO LADY WAKEHURST DRIVE AND WORONORA DAM ROAD CLOSED DUE TO FIRE ACTIVITY.



Photograph by Nick Moir

Strategies employed

Deployed resources for property protection into Heathcote west, Engadine south.

Deployed resources for property protection and backburning into Church Camps Royal National Park.

Extinguished breakover near Curra Moors Fire Trail off Sir Bertram Stephens Drive.

Extinguished breakover at cut trail link Heathcote Road to Melihga Molong Trail.

Patrolled and consolidated containment line north of east Heathcote to Farnell Avenue, Farnell Avenue to Audley, Hacking River from Audley to Point Danger.

Patrolled and consolidated containment lines along eastern flank, Costons Point Fire Trail to Maianbar Road, Maianbar Road to Bundeena Drive, Bundeena Drive to Sir Bertram Stephens Drive, Sir Bertram Stephens Drive south to McKell Drive.

Special Issues

Defensive strategies employed around Heathcote west.

Aerial incendiary seeding of large unburnt pockets undertaken; Sierra and Yankee Sectors in RNP, Foxtrot Sector in Heathcote NP and Whisky Sector in the Army Range.

Saturday 29 December

Overview

Property Impacted: Nil.

Property under threat: Engadine south, Grays Point and Church Camps RNP.

Environment impacted: Royal National Park, Army Holsworthy Training Area.

Environment under threat: Royal National Park, Army Holsworthy Training Area.

Road & Trail Access: F6 & Prince's Highway closed for civilian traffic south of Waterfall, McKell Drive to Lady Wakehurst Drive and Woronora Dam Road closed due to fire activity. Fire Trails closed for firefighting.

Strategies employed

Deployed resources for property protection into Engadine south.

Extinguished breakover at 'Engineers Bridge' in Army Holsworthy Training Area.

Patrolled and consolidated containment lines north of east Heathcote to Farnell Avenue, Farnell Avenue to Audley, Hacking River from Audley to Point Danger.

Patrolled and consolidated containment lines along eastern flank, Costons Point Fire Trail to Maianbar Road, Maianbar Road to Bundeena Drive, Bundeena Drive to Sir Bertram Stephens Drive, Sir Bertram Stephens Drive south to McKell Drive.

Patrolled and mopped up fire line adjacent to trail Giles Junction to Freres Crossing on Georges River.

Special Issues

Provided resources to 'wash' insulators on power poles to restore power to Woronora Water Treatment Plant.

Deployed units to protect Woronora Water Treatment Plant.

Sunday 30 December

Overview

Property Impacted: Nil.

Property under threat: Engadine south, Grays Point and Church Camps Royal National Park.

Environment impacted: Nil.

Environment under threat: Royal National Park, Army Holsworthy Training Area.

Road and Trail Access: F6 and Prince's Highway closed for civilian traffic south of Waterfall, McKell Drive to Lady Wakehurst Drive and Woronora Dam Road closed due to fire activity. Fire Trails closed for firefighting.

Strategies employed

Deployed resources for property protection into Engadine south.

Extinguished breakover at 'Engineers Bridge' in Army Holsworthy Training Area.

Patrolled and consolidated containment lines north of east Heathcote to Farnell Avenue, Farnell Avenue to Audley, Hacking River from Audley to Point Danger.

PATROLLED AND MOPPED UP FIRE LINE ADJACENT TO TRAIL GILES JUNCTION TO FRERES CROSSING ON GEORGES RIVER.



Patrolled and consolidated containment lines along eastern flank, Costons Point Fire Trail to Maianbar Road, Maianbar Road to Bundeena Drive, Bundeena Drive to Sir Bertram Stephens Drive, Sir Bertram Stephens Drive south to McKell Drive.

Patrolled and mopped up fire line adjacent to trail Giles Junction to Freres Crossing on Georges River.

Special Issues

Put in place a pre-emptive control line Garie Road Royal National Park as a backup in the event the southern containment line was breached and the fire progressed to the coast.

Monday 31 December to Monday 7 January

Overview

Section 44 revoked 2000hrs Tuesday 7 January.

Property Impacted: Nil.

Property under threat: Engadine south, Grays Point and Church Camps Royal National Park.

Environment impacted: Nil.

Environment under threat: Royal National Park, Army Holsworth Training Area.

Road and Trail Access: F6 and Prince's Highway closed for civilian traffic south of Waterfall, McKell Drive to Lady Wakehurst Drive and Woronora Dam Road closed due to fire activity and dangerous trees. Fire Trails closed for firefighting.

Strategies employed

Deployed resources for immediate property protection to strategic locations.

Resources utilised

The peak resource commitment, over a 24 hour period, during the fire was:

FIRE SUPPRESSION RESOURCES

AGENCY	PERSONNEL	APPLIANCES
Rural Fire Service (Local)	254	25
(Out of Area)	28	3
Fire Brigades	124	20
National Parks & Wildlife Service	16	3
Airport Fire & Rescue Service	16	3
Country Fire Authority (Victoria)	236	21
Army	7	3

Patrolled and consolidated containment lines north of east Heathcote to Farnell Avenue, Farnell Avenue to Audley, Hacking River from Audley to Point Danger.

Patrolled and consolidated containment lines along eastern flank, Costons Point Fire Trail to Maianbar Road, Maianbar Road to Bundeena Drive, Bundeena Drive to Sir Bertram Stephens Drive, Sir Bertram Stephens Drive south to McKell Drive.

Patrolled & mopped up fire line adjacent to trail Giles Junction to Freres Crossing on Georges River.

Air observation of fire line maintained to monitor potential flare-up and spotover areas.

Special Issues

Provide resources for dangerous tree evaluation on closed roads, Farnell Avenue, Sir Bertram Stephens Drive, McKell Avenue and Heathcote Road.

ROSEHILL CONTROL MAKE CFA TANKERS 80



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

The last time CFA went to Sydney in 1997 we sent 50 tankers.

This time 80 tankers and support crews made the long trek north.

“The terrain is something awesome up there and I’ve never seen fires that big in my 20+ years with CFA.”

That’s how Gerry Hauke, a veteran of the 1994 and 97 Sydney fires, summed up his impression of the 2001 CFA Tour of Duty to NSW. Gerry is the captain of Greenvale brigade and 4th Deputy Group Officer in the Hume Group. In Sydney he served as Strike Team 1421 leader and convoy commander for the trip home. Gerry said that not since Ash Wednesday in 1983 has he seen such vast areas affected by fire,

stretching local resources so thin.

Sunday Herald Sun journalist Shelley Hodgson and photographer Damien Horan made the trip north and it was straight off the plane and into the night shift at Heathcote where we met up with Strike Teams 0701 and 1311 doing some backburning in the Royal National Park. Being an ex-Geelong Advertiser journalist, Shelley felt right at home with crews from her former home turf.

The next day after the morning briefing at Rosehill Rural Fire Service headquarters, I took them north to the Hawkesbury fireground where Strike Teams from Regions 6, 13, 14 and 15 were involved in more backburning in the Wollemi National Park.

THERE WAS INTENSE MEDIA INTEREST FROM AROUND THE WORLD TO THE FIRES SURROUNDING SYDNEY AND THE RURAL FIRE SERVICE MEDIA TEAM WORKED AROUND THE CLOCK MEETING THE VARIOUS DEADLINES.

There was intense media interest from around the world to the fires surrounding Sydney and the Rural Fire Service media team worked around the clock meeting the various deadlines.

Sydney media was also keen to give coverage to CFA’s efforts and for a day and a half I escorted Channel-7’s Today Tonight reporter Daniel Clarke and his camera crew to the firegrounds where CFA teams were working, filming for the bushfire special and in-studio forum hosted by legendary swimming coach Laurie Lawrence.

One thing that stood out for everyone who took part in the NSW Tour of Duty was the gratitude and affection of the general public. With the devastation of 1994 and 1997 still vivid in their memories, the locals were glad the Victorians were back in force. Strike Teams were clapped and cheered as they drove through suburban streets in the areas to which they had been deployed.

I experienced this personally at a shopping centre in Richmond after coming in from the Hawkesbury fires to email pictures to the Sunday Herald Sun in Melbourne. Several cars stopped alongside us in the carpark and the people said, “Thanks for being here and doing such a great job.”

It was not uncommon for crews to be greeted by grateful residents with drinks and food; we also saw many homemade signs expressing heartfelt appreciation, such as “we love you firies, we’re proud of you” and “God bless the fires” hung from the front fences of houses and power poles in the streets.

“It’s an incredible feeling that what you’re doing is really appreciated and it feels good,” said Andrew Barber, 41, of Larpent brigade. Andrew was part of Strike Team 0601 and works for the Colac Otway Shire. He got the call from his Captain, Ray Gorman, just before midnight on 26 December, Boxing Day and left home about 4am to drive the

tanker to Sydney. At home to cope with the rest of Christmas by themselves were his wife Josie and four children Cameron 10, Katelyn 7, Christopher 5 and Michael 1.

Josie admits to being concerned for Andrew's safety while he was away but was comforted in the knowledge that he's well trained and experienced.

"It might have been different last year because I was still expecting Michael, but I'm proud of him being a part of the interstate effort." Josie Barber said.

Also part of the 0601 Strike Team was Darren Blain from Terang /Dixie brigade.

"The reception we got last night from the non-CFA people in the restaurant of our motel was great; makes you feel really proud to be a part of CFA" said Darren who arrived on Thursday 27 December

and was deployed to the Hawkesbury region to the north of Sydney.

For 30-year CFA veteran John Betts of Warrion brigade, returning to Colo River in the foothills of the Kurrajong Valley was a case of déjà vu.

"My great grandparents had the blacksmith at Kurrajong early last century and relatives owned a lot of the land in the valley." John used to holiday at the farm many times as a youngster. "It was so strange coming over the hill and seeing the valley and all the buildings again after so long" said John.

Fellow CFA veteran and career firefighter at Doveton, Greg Chapman worked on the Nattai National Park fire and said his crews also won praise from the NSW Rural Fire Service teams. "Hilltop captain told me that if you guys weren't here we couldn't

have done this." Chappy said.

"The local guys were amazed at the speed which CFA responded to the call for help...they couldn't believe how we managed to move such a vast number of trucks and crew so quickly and how disciplined we were. It's a real credit to our wildfire training."

Bringing the tankers safely back home was the task of Convoy Leader Gerry Hauke from Greenvale brigade.

This was Gerry's second deployment to NSW on the 2001 Tour of Duty. He worked as Strike Team leader in the Hawkesbury area and saw some fierce action.

"The terrain is something awesome up there; we're used to the running grass fires and the occasional scrub fires but I've never seen fires that big in my 20+ years with CFA. The steep terrain and constant wind

changes made things very unpredictable."

The highlights for Gerry were seeing the different types of firefighting styles and working with Rural Fire Service people whom he said did a magnificent job "because they took the brunt of the action before we got there."

Mark Leishman is 1st DGO of the Creswick group and has been with CFA 16 years. In Sydney he was part of the night shift team which operated the group quickfill at Colo Heights and surrounding areas in the Hawkesbury region.

"Day shift had a lot more action, filling around 100 trucks a day. There was very little action on night shift because the weather wasn't favourable to backburning." Mark said.

Mark is very proud of the group quickfill that saw its first 'work in



Photograph by Sean Davey



Photograph by Sean Davey



anger' this trip and is very pleased with the way it performed.

"We had nothing but praise for the job it did, so the \$22,000 was money well spent. We bought the unit about 18 months ago after a lot of discussion and we worked out that it was the equivalent of having another tanker on the fireground because the turnaround is so quick. It's capable of 2200 litres per minute and weighs only 180kg fully fuelled, so four people can easily pick it up and shift it if you can't get the trailer exactly where you need it."

Hans Van Hammond

Hans has been at Wendouree brigade for 30 years after transferring from Creswick. He arrived in Sydney 27 Dec and operated Wendouree MCV and spent most of the time in the Hunter Valley area. His crew was moved about five different times to help maintain vital fireground communications and worked closely with CFA Communications.

I asked Hans how would he compare the Sydney fires with those in Victoria?

"I've been to a lot of fires in Victoria but this was my first time interstate. They have different type of fires in NSW - ours seem to move a lot faster because of the type of country." he said.

Lindsay Hester.

Colac urban brigade

It was Lindsay's second deployment to Sydney, having spent three days there in the lead up to New Year, then again to drive his brigade's truck home. He saw plenty of action although most of it was backburning.

"There were no complaints from the crew because they knew the importance of the task and everyone got in and put in a lot of hard work. It was very steep and rough terrain but not as heavy fuel loading as we have in the Otways which last had a major fire back in 1983." Lindsay Hester said.

And strange things happen on firegrounds.

During the early hours of the night shift on New Years Day at Wilberforce ICC in the Hawkesbury region, CFA and NSW RFS members were discussing

adequate CFA - RFS radio communications for the fire ground that day.

Brian McKinley (night shift Incident Controller) from Hawkesbury RFS went to his office to get a NSW VHF portable to do some tests with CFA. When he came back he said he'd also found something we may be interested in. It was a CFA portable radio left behind in 1997 at the fires.

He handed over a CFA MTX 838 portable bearing a CFA decal and emblazoned with "Region 15 Portable 1". CFA is pleased to report this completes the return of all CFA equipment missing from the 1997 campaign.

However, NSW members present were then quick to point out that CFA should now reciprocate and return "allegedly" still missing NSW chainsaws "lent" to CFA during the same fires.

Gary McQuade

CFA Public Affairs journalist



Photographs by Adam Hollingworth



Letters to the Editor

Lara Lieutenant Barry Knight agrees their training paid off in Sydney. Following is an excerpt from a letter he wrote on his return home.

I have been a CFA volunteer for some 22 years and have attended many large fires both urban and rural, including Ash Wednesday at Deans Marsh.

I must say the logistics and briefing procedures were top class at all sections from arrival to deployment.

Our wildfire training and the awareness that came from that training along with the more stringent briefing and hand over procedures certainly made us more aware of our duties and responsibilities and the emphasis of safety first built up a good team spirit and professional feel.

The weather patterns are very different in this area with fire behaviours erratically being driven by south westerly, southeasterly and southerly busters being high on our WATCHOUTS.

Wind directions were very tricky with the hilly terrain playing a very big role as to which way the fire will travel, sometimes totally against wind directions as the valleys made their own weather conditions.

But once again our briefings were such that all this information was made available to us and with our new wildfire training and past experiences we were well prepared and able to safely work the strange conditions and terrain.

The CFA Incident Management Teams and the placement of logistics people at all briefing points are certainly making the fire fighters roles more comfortable and the fire fight a more efficient, safe and professional one. We are moving in the right direction.

**Barry Knight
Lieutenant, Lara Fire Brigade.**

I MUST SAY THE LOGISTICS AND BRIEFING PROCEDURES WERE TOP CLASS AT ALL SECTIONS FROM ARRIVAL TO DEPLOYMENT.



SPOT FIRE HILLSIDE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Like many other RFS Brigades around the State, Hillside spent Christmas Day 2001 out fighting fires. Hillside was very fortunate, as we didn't get any fires in our area during the Christmas / New Year period, but we were required to help our neighbouring brigades with fires in their area. Hillside was mainly used at Maroota, Lower Portland and Wisemans Ferry where the Spencer fire threatened to cross the Hawkesbury River. One of the photos is of Hillside taking a lunch break under a gum tree during a patrol at Lower Portland.

The other photo is of "ELVIS" and the Hillside Crew that was going to spend New Year's Eve back burning at Gosford. Fortunately it rained and we were stood down. On the way back to our Fire Shed we detoured and checked out what ELVIS was close up. For those who didn't see it close up ... it is huge! The width of the suction hose comes up to your knees.

Hillside Fire Brigade celebrates its 62nd Birthday this year.

Article by Braden Hamilton
(Hillside Education Co-ordinator)



Photographs by Braden Hamilton



Photograph by Terry Roberts

THE FIRE IS
HUNGRY FOR
EVERYTHING
AND ANYTHING,
PLAYING A GAME
OF CAT AND
MOUSE.

“FIRE CALL”

The call goes out – Beep, Buzz, Fire, Fire.

The trucks are all in their stalls, just waiting to be let loose, like horses waiting for their jockeys in the race of a lifetime.

Firefighters on board and ready to go.

Call in, Call in, we have so many on board, where do we go, we are hungry for some action.

Firefighters arrive like hungry lions looking for prey.

It starts off at medium pitch with everyone surveying the fireground and waiting for those words, “saddle up people, let’s go get em.”

People, trucks, fire going everywhere, water on.

The fire is hungry for everything and anything, playing a game of cat and mouse.

Radio’s coming alive with directions for all.

The crescendo rises, people work harder, voices get louder, shakier, nervous, worried, slightly but oh so slightly, panicked.

The fire is eating and is merry, quick give it something to drink.

The horses are on the track and the race is on.

Everything is fast, fast, fast, just watch your’s and everyone’s ass.

Everything’s go, go, go, bulldozers, helibombers, sheep on the move, save property, people, HELP!

Things are getting slow, fire is giving in, radios start to become quiet, firefighters need drink, quick we need a change of guard.

Old shift leaves, new shift begins, mopping up, spotting spots.

Another fire over, goodbye and good riddance to the beast with flames for eyes.

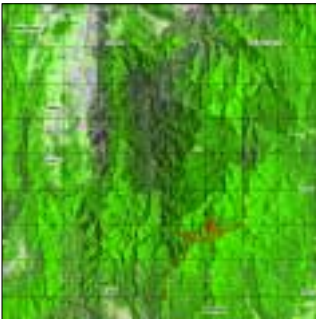
Till we meet and dance again, we lie in wait.

Susan Gerigk



FIRE REPORTS

10 EUROBODALLA



Eurobodalla Fire

24 December to 21 January

Area of fire

27,170 Hectares

Perimeter of fire

139 Kilometres

Friday 28 December

A Section 44 for Eurobodalla Shire was declared at 0700 hours to cover fires burning in the Oulla Creek area of the Deua National Park, and the Merricumbene Fire. Awaiting the report of the Oulla Creek Fire, believed to have been caused by a lightning strike, preparation was undertaken to backburn containment lines on the Merricumbene Fire. Fixed winged aircraft monitored the fires and determined that the fire path included properties along the Deua River Valley and under adverse weather conditions the fires had capacity to spread east to the valley. The Oulla Creek Fire became the priority at this time given weather conditions and proximity to freehold land.

Three dozers supported work along the Minuma Range, Mongamula and Merricumbene Fire Trails as part of Merricumbene Fire operational strategy.

At 1800 hours the Oulla fire was about 42 ha in size, west of Oulla Creek. Operational strategies for this fire included establishing control lines and backburning

from the control line in the north to the active fire edge. Observation of the Merricumbene Fire continued.

Saturday 29 December

Back-burnt areas were checked for spotovers east of Oulla Creek Trail. Crews were familiarised with sector boundaries which were also checked. Weather was being reported hourly and backburning continued north and south along Oulla Creek Fire Trail. Backburning ceased at 1200 hours due to potential threat of fire spreading to the east with increasing unfavourable westerly winds. Crews patrolled the containment lines and active fire edge with aerial support and extensions of the dozer lines continued. Mopping up began at the southern end of the Oulla Creek Fire Trail and a helicopter was used to implement aerial ignition to gain depth on the backburn. Merricumbene Fire at this stage was 16 kms to the west and control work was needed to reduce the danger to life and property. Due to resources and approaching



strong winds this could not be implemented. Regular aerial observations of the fire were made and the safety of all fire crews and the protection of life and property were the priority.

Sunday 30 December

The Oulla Creek Fire was about 75 ha in size, west of Oulla Creek and grew to 150 ha in 24 hours.

Crews patrolled the containment line along Oulla Creek Fire Trail, holding the fire west of the trail and watching for spotovers. The backburn along northern sectors of Oulla Creek Fire Trail continued as the mop-up to the south continued. Dozers were used to prepare Coondella fire trail to the south.

Property protection to Deua River Valley was undertaken and a helicopter was used to implement aerial ignition to gain depth on the backburn.

Merricumbene Fire was under surveillance and mapping was undertaken.

Monday 31 December

The Merricumbene Fire had the



Photograph by Nick Moir

potential to spread to the Oulla Creek Fire and the threat to private property to the west in the Braidwood area and the east in the Moruya area was acknowledged. Retardant drops were made on the Merricumbene Fire to slow the rate of spread east. Monitoring and mapping continued. Fire trails and Bendethera camping area were closed to the public and resources were committed to the containment of the Oulla Creek Fire. The Merricumbene Fire had grown to 1400 ha.

The backburning to the north of Oulla Creek was completed and continued for the Coondella division. Dozers assisted with backburning and trail upgrade/construction, and aerial water bombing assistance was sought for the Oulla Creek Fire. Crews patrolled the northern divisions of the Oulla Creek Fire Trail. The Oulla Creek fire was now greater than 160 ha and winds were strengthening. Backburning was stopped when westerlies were experienced. Preparation of fire containment strategy and the use

of dozers to prepare containment lines were implemented.

Tuesday 1 January

The Merricumbene Fire had spread rapidly under strong north-westerly winds and was larger than 2700 ha. In the afternoon the fire had grown to 5000 ha. Regular aerial inspection to monitor spread of fire and the construction of a dozer line from Minuma Fire Trail to Deua River was undertaken. Units were stationed as back-up for dozer operations and property protection. The fire was expected to spread more slowly to the west, which necessitated the backburning from Minuma Range Fire Trail. Favourable winds made it possible to commence a backburn along Minuma Range Fire Trail. At this stage the fire had reached the summit of Flash Jack Mountain and had burnt down the northern and western faces. Property protection was carried out at "Alpine" and continued, together with work along the road between there and "Canoolie".



Photograph by Dean Sewell

CREWS PATROLLED THE CONTAINMENT LINES AND ACTIVE FIRE EDGE WITH AERIAL SUPPORT AND EXTENSIONS OF THE DOZER LINES CONTINUED.



Photograph by Nick Moir

The Merricumbene Fire had burnt east, reached Parsons Creek and was expected to burn north and south relatively slowly but more rapidly to the east into the back of the Oulla Creek Fire.

The Oulla Fire had a large fire break to the east, but forecast weather conditions put considerable pressure on the control line. Minimal crews were deployed to continue mopping up backburns allowing other crews to be available for the protection of life and property in the Moruya area. Unfavourable weather conditions made it unsuitable to backburn the Coondella sector.

Wednesday 2 January

There was direct threat to life and property if the Oulla Fire crossed containment lines and spread east towards Moruya. Strategies were put in place to contain the Oulla Fire to the west of Oulla Creek Fire Trail, and continuing preparation of control lines to stop eastern and southern spread was undertaken. Overnight weather conditions were suitable for backburning along the Coondella Division although this

AN OLD FIRE, BOYNE FIRE, BURNING IN BOYNE STATE FOREST, WAS REIGNITED AND HAD GROWN TO 100 HA.



Photograph by Matt Black

was suspended as weather conditions became unfavourable. Spot-fires along the eastern containment line were contained. Crews were deployed to continue extending and mopping up backburns and aircraft undertook air reconnaissance missions. Oulla Creek Fire had grown greater than 1500 ha while the Merricumbene Fire was greater than 10000 ha. Planning was under way for containment of the westerly spread of the Merricumbene Fire. The dozer line constructed into the Deua River from Minuma Range Fire Trail had been completed and some backburning began.

Property protection was completed at "Alpine" in the north west of the containment area. The Merricumbene Fire extended beyond the Merricumbene Fire Trail to the southeast, crossed the Dampier Mountain Fire Trail, southwest, and it also crossed the Flash Jack containment line in the north west. In the evening backburning took place north from Flash Jack Trail to Four Ways and from Four Ways to "Alpine", this contained the fire where it had crossed the Flash Jack Trail. The backburn then extended from Minuma Range Division to the Dampier Mountain Division. The fire crossed the Bendethra Fire Trail and was moving towards the top of Georges Creek Catchment. New divisions were established and dozers prepared for night backburning.

An old fire, Boyne Fire, burning in Boyne State Forest, was reignited and had grown to 100 ha. Crews constructed tracks and conducted direct attack.

Thursday 3 January

The Merricumbene Fire was burning within very broad containment lines which also include the Oulla Creek Fire. A western and an eastern operation zone was defined with the Merricumbene Fire burning in the west and the

MAJORITY OF BACKBURNING WAS COMPLETED SO PATROLLING, MOP-UP AND BLACK OUT WERE PRIORITY. BURNT EDGES WERE BY NO MEANS SAFE.

Oulla Creek Fire burning in the east. These fires were now called the Deua Fire and were being managed through Eurobodalla Fire Control (Moruya). Here the IMT team managed the Eastern Operations Zone. Tallaganda Fire Control in Braidwood was managing fire suppression operations for the Western Operations Zone. Logistics and resources were coordinated by Moruya Fire Control.

Considerable pressure was applied to the control lines along the Dampier Mountain Division, Coondella, Burra and Sugarloaf Divisions, all part of the southeastern containment line. Spotovers along Coondella and Burra Divisions had been contained and patrol and mop-up with aerial support during the day continued. The Deua River Fire Trail was upgraded and reconnaissance, strategic planning and resource planning for the Dampier Mountain Division along the southwest containment line continued.

Air observation at "Alpine" found it impossible to ascertain the situation while ground crews indicated that there were spotovers and that the fire was spreading on the flat land. The situation was confused due to poor visibility however private property was protected. It was confirmed that the fire had crossed Foxtrot sector, Mongamula West Division and extensions of control lines were required. New divisions were located and mapped and trails

were brushed up and developed. Local knowledge was essential for the preparation of these fire trails in the north of the containment area. Plans were also developed for private property protection and backburning.

Along the Minuma Range Division the backburn from the control line was holding where there was pressure from the main firefront.

Backburning to stop eastern and southern spread along Coondella, Sugarloaf, Dampier Mountain and Deua River Fire Trail was completed overnight and patrols and mop-up with air and dozer support continued during the day.

Completion of firebreaks, patrolling and mopping up occurred in the Boyne Division. The containment and blackout of spotfires east of Donovan's Creek and the development of eastern and northern firebreaks continued. Dozers created a control line along Joe's Nose Road to the east and a northern fire trail to the west of Old Store Road. By 1400 hours the Boyne fire was contained to the east of Joe's Nose Road, controlled to the south as it linked to burnt area of 25/12. It was being controlled to the north but spotfires were occurring. The fire to the west was running in the direction of the wind, north east, and crossed Old Store Creek. Pressure was now on the Garden Seat Road control line.

Friday 4 January

Containing the fires within the control lines and continuing the preparation of control lines supported by backburning to stop eastern, northern, and southern spread of fire were the main objectives. As the weather reports came in, consolidating the control lines and deepening backburns ahead of expected bad fire weather on Monday was the priority. Containment lines had grown and significant heritage assets and private property



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

implications (rural subdivision in Wyanbene Valley and isolated properties, "Cudgee" and "Woola") were now included in the expanded control situation. New divisions included Gundillion, Bettowind and Northern.

The Bettowind Fire Trail from "Emu Flat" to "Neringal" was reopened parallel of Mulweyla Creek as to avoid the Casuarina nana and plans were developed to backburn this area along with Wyanbene Division.

The fire also crossed the Dampier Mountain Fire Trail in the south west of the containment area, into Deua Wilderness Area. Minuma Range Division continued to be patrolled and mopping up was undertaken as required where backburns had been completed.

The Boyne fire was controlled to the east on Joe's Nose Road and to the south however to the west it ran across Garden Seat Road and headed towards Cockwhy Creek. Tracking the fire edge with dozers and backburning to safer the control lines in the evening was undertaken. A pine plantation

was protected. Fire then spotted over Cockwhy Creek and threatened properties. Other boundaries were being controlled and contained but significant work was required to black-out and mop-up edges. Majority of backburning was completed so patrolling, mop-up and black out were priority. Burnt edges were by no means safe.

Saturday 5 January

Oulla Creek fire now 2041 ha. Backburning was completed from Alpha Sector at the top of Donovan Division to Quebec Sector of Sugarloaf Division. This protected the eastern containment line and patrols and mop-up continued along all the backburned sectors.

Mericumbene fire was now greater than 15,186 ha. Fire had crossed into the top of Jillaga Creek catchment and was pushing southwest into Woila-Deua wilderness. This is extremely rugged country and planned control lines included broad containment areas. Fire had crossed the Mongamulla west division and was running north towards Wyanbene. New control

lines were identified and dozers continued to clean up the fire perimeter in readiness for backburning.

Police were briefed and discussions and planning involved possible evacuation in Wyanbene Valley. The Mayor and the General Manager Tallanganda Shire Council were also briefed.

Boyne fire was now 850 ha, and was being contained. Crews completed backburning and conducting direct attack on the fire.

Air observations were undertaken to ascertain the depth of the Minuma Range Division backburns.

Dozers continued to brush up new control lines in the north west areas. Aerial incendiaries were used inside control lines along high points. The fire area increased through aerial incendiary work, consolidating the eastern control line and minimising the threat of spotting under adverse weather conditions. The fire perimeter in the north and south had increased, placing a



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

further strain on resources, especially under bad fire conditions.

Prevailing weather conditions had enabled consolidation of existing fire lines. Continued pressure applied to control lines along the entire Eastern fire perimeter. South and northeast fire lines had ongoing backburning.

The Merricumbene and Oulla Fires now included on the same SITREP, Boyne separate.

Sunday 6 January

Fallen trees had blocked the access to "Alpine" but were cleared early in the morning

Minuma Range division, part of the western containment line was patrolled and mopping up continued as required where backburns had been completed. Along Bettowind and Wyanbene Divisions, the northern containment line, trails were brushed up and new trails developed. A plan for private property protection and backburning these areas was underway.

Again the prevailing weather conditions had enabled consolidation of the existing fire lines, however continuing pressure still applied to control lines along the entire eastern fire perimeter.

Crews were patrolling the Minuma Range Division and the continued extension of backburning to the south was carried out.

By 1800 hours the operation zone of the Deua Creek fire (including both the Oulla Creek fire at 2041 ha and the Merricumbene fire at 15186 ha included some 83100 ha. backburning had been completed in most divisions and patrol and mop-up continued along the backburned sectors. Aerial ignition was being used to deepen backburning from fire trails. The fire zone was in extremely rugged country and planned control line included broad containment areas. An attempt to construct a dozer trail around the fire to Deua River was abandoned due to impassable terrain and therefore planning for alternatives began to be developed.

Boyne fire: Continuation of mopping up edges with the use of water-bombing windrows was exercised during the day but by late afternoon windrows were still burning, constant monitoring was carried out.

Monday 7 January

Weather allowed the existing containment line to be consolidated. There was continued pressure on the eastern control lines. Some risk existed if the fire moved towards Moruya breaching containment lines. Overnight showers eased pressure on control lines however forecast weather promised considerable pressure on containment lines to the east and south.

Two helicopters and three fixed wing aircraft were resourced for the western division of the Deua Fire. Aerial reconnaissance was required for Foxtrot sector, Burra Division in the eastern division, to assess construction of a retardant line. Aerial incendiary work consolidated eastern control line and minimised the threat of spotting under adverse weather conditions. Dozers and graders


continued to brush up new control lines along Comerang (SE), Gundillion and Bettowind (NW) Divisions. Preparation of containment lines for property protection in Moodong Valley took place and progressive backburning of prepared control lines Bettowind and Gundillion Divisions was intended. However strong northwesterly winds placed enormous pressure on containment lines in the south east and in some sections the fire had jumped. The fire perimeter in the north and south had increased which placed further strain on resources. Aerial incendiary work continued inside control lines.

At 1800 hours an imminent southerly change was expected which will ease the threat.

The Boyne fire was considered contained as crews continued to patrol and mop-up.

Tuesday 8 January

Overnight the fire breached sectors in the Sugarloaf Division. A fall back line was established along German Creek Division.



OVERNIGHT
SHOWERS
EASED PRESSURE
ON CONTROL
LINES HOWEVER
FORECASTED
WEATHER
PROPOSED
CONSIDERABLE
PRESSURE ON
CONTAINMENT
LINES TO THE
EAST AND SOUTH.



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

CONTROL LINES DEEPENED WITH BACKBURNING COMPLETED IN DRY CREEK, BURRA AND COONDELLA DIVISIONS.

Runs of fire also occurred in the Wyanbene area pressuring the north west control lines. Continued pressure applied to control lines along the entire eastern fire perimeter with prevailing west to southwest winds. Backburning ceased and crews patrolled fire lines.

Operational strategies consolidated the Gundillion and Bettowind Divisions in the north/northwest and the German Creek Division in the southeast. The increased fire perimeter in the north and south placed a further strain on resources.

At 1400 hours air reconnaissance indicated the proposed German Creek Division control line had been breached by spotfires and therefore another fallback line was established along the new Comerang Division.

Patrols and mop-up of control lines along Dry Creek, Donovan and Coondella Divisions in the east took place along with Minuma Range Division in the west. Crews at Comerang progressively backburned the new

control line. Aircraft and dozers supported all operations and aerial incendiary work continued inside the control lines as appropriate. Aerial bombing aided the Gundillion Division while dozers and graders continued to brush up the new control lines along Coomerong and Bryces Division in the south east and Gundillion and Bettowind Divisions in the North west.

General patrols for the Boyne fire were maintained daily in case of re-ignitions with a higher level of patrols maintained during periods of higher fire danger. The fire was deemed out!

Wednesday 9 January

Crews were deployed to complete backburn off constructed control lines off German Creek and Gundillion Divisions overnight. During the day work consolidated Gundillion, Bettowind and Northern Division along the northern control line and German Creek Division in the south east for broad scale protection of communities. The weather conditions were suitable for deepening backburns and along

the German Creek Division. Control lines were also being constructed around private property assets were within the broader control lines.

Continued reconnaissance, mapping and planning for future suppression strategies and logistics to ensure that a high level of response can be initiated if required was sustained. Patrols and mop-up continued for Dry Creek, Donovan, Burra and Coondella Division control lines. Mop-up and patrol for the Minuma Range Division in the western operation zone also continued. Work to continue trail upgrade and consolidation of Bryces, Badja and Upper Shoalhaven Divisions in the southwest was undertaken.

Crews were still patrolling and mopping up the Boyne fire.

Thursday 10 January

More favourable weather conditions; moderate south east to northeast winds, enabled consolidation of some key control lines and increasing depth of backburns. Patrols were maintained on all divisions.

Eastern Operational Zone: Control lines deepened with backburning completed in most divisions (with exception of Bryces divisions and approximately 400m of Dry Creek Division). Backburning was completed at German Creek Division.

Western Operational Zone: Control lines deepened with backburning continuing for parts of Minuma Range Division, Con Creek sector. Control lines were still being constructed around private property assets, Wyanbene area. New control lines defined in Wyanbene area south of private property and south of previously defined containment lines. Hand tool lines constructed east of Wyanbene Caves Mountain.

Friday 11 January

All fires contained within the operational perimeter.

Eastern Operational Zone: Control lines deepened with backburning completed in Dry Creek, Burra and Coondella Divisions. No backburning had occurred on Northern Division or Divisions on the south west corner. Deepening



HELI-BUCKETING
WAS EXERCISED
WITH AND
WITHOUT CREW
SUPPORT.

of control lines in German Creek Division had generally been effective. Reconnaissance showed that backburning in Coondella division had been patchy so Buckyjumba Road, Belimbla Fire Trail and Running Creek were investigated for suitability to use as control lines. Operational strategies were to mop-up and patrol German Creek Division, monitor progress of fire approaching Bryces Division and make general patrols of Coondella, Burra, Donovan and Dry Creek Divisions.

Western Operational Zone: Helicopter air attack, patrol and mop-up backburn along limestone sector occurred. Reconnaissance along Turks Head Road and planning of backburning options for property protection in Gundillion and Dampier Mountain Divisions. Operational strategies were to mop-up and patrol Con Creek Sector along Minuma Range Division, Dampier and Gundillion Divisions.

Saturday 12 January

The mild conditions allowed backburning operations to occur

on the Northern Division and Gundillion Division.

Eastern Operational Zone:

No additional work was required on Dry Creek, Donovan, Burra and Coondella Divisions. Work was undertaken to establish burnt edge on Tango Sector, German Creek Sector. Patrols and mopping up was undertaken along all divisions and aerial reconnaissance was carried out to plot burnt area and positions of the active fire.

Western Operational Zone:

Air attacks were made on the Con Creek and Oscar sectors and ground crews patrolled and mopped up in coordination with the air attack. The spread of fire south of Con Creek and Oscar was to be limited and the northerly spread of the fire east of Limestone sector also had to be limited. Patrols were made on the Minuma Range Division. Dozer operations took place to consolidate and construct containment lines and property protection was carried out as required. Air ignition of Limestone, Wyanbene, Griggs and Turks Head Sectors was

implemented and aimed at consolidating the burnt edges.

Sunday 13 January

Eastern Operational Zone:

Continued to monitor patrol and backburn along High Ridge and Tango Sectors. The consolidation of burnt edges on Short Cut sector, Northern Division with hand ignition was undertaken and the burnt edges of Wolla sector, Northern Division were established.

Western Operational Zone:

Continued to contain fire to Limestone, Wyanibene, Turks Head, Giggs, Mondong Creek, Mudmelong, Woolla Creek and Short Cut sectors by aerial ignition of ridges, hand ignition of control lines, deepening by aerial ignition as required and mop-up and patrol. Con Creek and Oscar sectors were patrolled and aerial reconnaissance of Oscar Sector and Minuma Ridge Division took place.

Monday 14 January

Backburning operations occurred on the Northern Division along Woolla Sector, Bettowynd Division and Bryce Division, Tango Sector. The fireline conditions were variable throughout the day with the major threat being spot over from the backburning operations. Operational plans were made for the next 3 to 5 days to consider resources required and to review fire objectives.

Western Operational Zone: Consolidation of burnt edges on Limestone, Wyanbene, Griggs and Turks Head Sectors was carried out by hand with further aerial ignition when required. Patrols were made on the Con Creek and Oscar Sectors together with air reconnaissance along the Minuma Range Division. The burning operations continued along the Bettowyn Division to establish and consolidate control lines.

Eastern Operational Zone: Mop-up and patrol occurred along Short Cut sector, Northern division and construction of a burnt edge along Woolla Creek linking Short Cut Sector and Mudmalong Sector was created. Patrols were made

along High Ridge sector, Bryces Division and the establishment of a burnt edge along Tango Sector linking High Ridge to Buckyjumba Road was created.

Tuesday 15 January

Fireline conditions were variable throughout the day with the major threat being spot over from the backburning operations. Strategic aerial retardant runs were flown to slow the spread of the active fire in the south west.

Eastern operational Zone: Mop-up and patrol was carried out Short Cut sector along the Northern Division and the burnt edges along Woolla Creek and Mudmalong Sectors were strengthened linking Short Cut and Moodong sectors. Linking High Ridge to Buckyjumba Road by strengthening the Tango sectors along the Bryce's division was also completed. High Ridge Sector was patrolled and aerial retardant was dropped on strategic ridgelines to contain runs of fire on Bryces, Badja and Upper Shoalhaven Division control lines.

Western Operational Zone: Consolidating burnt edges along

the Bettowynd and Gundillion Divisions was carried out by hand ignition. Patrols were made on the Con Creek and Oscar sections of the Minuma Range Division.

(Aerial ignition and hand burning operations are not included in the total fire area which was now recorded at being 47 748 ha. Of this area 2196 ha was private land, 4920 ha State forests and 40632 ha was in National Park).

Wednesday 16 January

Aerial reconnaissance of Bryces and German Creek Divisions indicated a number of smouldering logs up to 10m from the fire edge and averaging three smokers per kilometre. Wet weather conditions meant all crews could be stood down. Aerial reconnaissance of operations east, and operations west of the firegrounds continued.

Eastern operational zone: flights to detect and map hot spots along fire edge.

Mopped up and patrolled Short Cut sector.

Continued to strengthen burnt edges along Woolla Creek and

OPERATIONAL PLANS WERE MADE FOR THE NEXT 3 TO 5 DAYS TO CONSIDER RESOURCES REQUIRED AND TO REVIEW FIRE OBJECTIVES.



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

Mudmalong Sector to consolidate the link up of the Short Cut and Moodong Sectors.

Patrolled High Ridge Sector and work continued on linking High Ridge Sector to Buckyjumba Road Sector.

Western Operational Zone: flights to detect and map hot spots along fire edge Works along the Bettowynd and Gundillion Divisions continued to consolidate burnt edges. RAFT teams were deployed to Dampier Mountain Division to mop-up and patrol hot spots along the fire edge.

Thursday 17 January

FLIR flights and general aerial reconnaissance of operations east and operations west of the fire ground were carried out and detected a number of hot spots in the Northern, German Creek and Bryce's Divisions. NPWS crews were deployed to Dampier Mountain Division to patrol and mop-up, while State Forests crews were deployed to Bryces Division for patrol and mopping up operations. A helicopter supported these ground crews.

In the Western Operational Zone, continued work to consolidate control lines along Moodong and Mudmalong Sectors was undertaken as well as consolidating the burnt edges of the Limestone, Wyanbene, Griggs and Turk's Head Sectors of the Bettowynd and Gundillion Divisions.

Strengthening burnt edges long the Northern, Bryces and German's Creek Divisions continued along with mopping up and patrolling operations in the Eastern Operational Zone.

Friday 18 January

FLIR flights and general air reconnaissance of operations continued with crews walking in and winched out in several locations in German Creek and Bryces Divisions. Some backburning was done around Woola homestead within containment lines to protect the homestead if weather conditions deteriorated. Crews patrolled into the night.



Photograph by Dean Sewell

Operational strategies for the Western Operational Zone were to patrol and mop-up along Bettowind and Northern Divisions and consolidate burnt edges on Limestone, Wyanbene, Griggs and Turks Head Sectors. For the Eastern Operational Zone works included mopping up and patrolling German Creek and Bryces Divisions and to strengthen burnt edges along Woolla Creek and Mudmalong sectors linking Short Cut and Moodong Sectors, as well as

Tango sector linking High Ridge and Buckyjumba Road.

Saturday 19 January

Yesterday's general aerial reconnaissance indicated multiple hot spots near the burnt country. Crews walked to their locations where they could but were hampered by lack of approved winching helicopter. Heli-bucketing was exercised with and without crew support. The backburning was completed around Woolla homestead; crews remained to patrol.

Sunday 20 January

Aerial reconnaissance of operation continued. Crews withdrawn from remote area. The fire is active in the Northern Division where it is backing down control lines. Ground crews and heli-bucketing continued in this area until dark. The weather was warm and areas of active fire appeared within containment lines especially in the northern area as mentioned above. Smokers and small areas of running fire in the High Ridge sector were evident and were

mostly related to failed air incendiary work immediately prior to rain. The major threat was re-ignition and breaching of fire control lines under severe fire weather.

Monday 21 January

Western Operational Strategies involved completing the backburn along the Bettowind Division and the backburnt area was deepened with aerial incendiary work. Patrolling and mopping up along Bettowind Division was carried out in the afternoon. Consolidating



backburnt areas to contain fire to the west of Deua River in the Cooranbene Mountain area to protect private property was put into effect, and more aerial incendiary work along Woolla Creek sector was done to strengthen and deepen backburning. In the Eastern Operational Zone continued monitoring of hot spots occurred along with the mopping up and patrolling of German Creek and Bryces Divisions. Fire approaching Woolla homestead and open paddocks along the Deua River was monitored and backburning was required for the protection of these areas.

At 1700 aerial reconnaissance was suspended due to severe thunderstorm activity. All crews left the fireground as heavy showers were reported across the fireground with intense lightning activity.

Tuesday 22 January

Aerial reconnaissance was undertaken to collect fireground intelligence to assist planning following scattered overnight rain. Active fire edge still in northern part of the fireground and hot spots in German Creek Division required on-going monitoring.

Operational strategies for the Deua Fire, Eastern and Western Operational Zones included general aerial reconnaissance for the Northern, Dry Creek, Donovan, Burra and Coondella Divisions, eastern containment line. FLIR flights and general aerial reconnaissance along German Creek and Bryces Divisions with NPWS and RAFT teams deployed to hot spots along these sectors was carried out.

Patrols and mopping up operations took place along German Creek, Woolla Creek sector and the Deua River trail south of the Woolla homestead.

Wednesday 23 January to Monday 28 January

Continued aerial monitoring to determine if further backburning was necessary and patrols and mopping up continued.

Continued aerial monitoring of hot spots in Eastern Operational Zone.



Photograph by Sean Davey



JOINT SERVICES GIS UNIT CHRISTMAS 2001 BUSHFIRES



THE UNIT WAS TO PRODUCE AND DELIVER IN A TIMELY MANNER, DEFINED COLOUR-MAPPING OUTPUTS CONSISTENT WITH THE NEEDS OF STATE OPERATIONS STAFF AND OTHER CLIENT GROUPS.

Overview

On 27 December, the Planning and Environment Services Unit of Rural Fire Service (RFS) was requested to provide Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping support to the State Operations centre and two officers commenced the mapping of individual fires

By Friday morning (28 December), it became evident that additional GIS staff would be needed to maintain a

mapping output in line with the developing fire emergency. Skilled GIS operators at RFS Districts were called to the RFS Head Office at Rosehill to establish a more broadly based support unit for the presentation of operational intelligence via a computer mapping system.

A decision was made that the GIS activities should take the form of a joint facility staffed by GIS users from a range of government agencies. Subsequently, over the following 24 hours representatives from a range of organisations, were brought together at the Rosehill facility to get the Joint Services GIS Unit operating. Organisations approached and supplying representatives included the RFS itself, NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB), National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), NSW State Forests (SF) as well as a number of private sector contractors with specialised expertise in remotely sensed

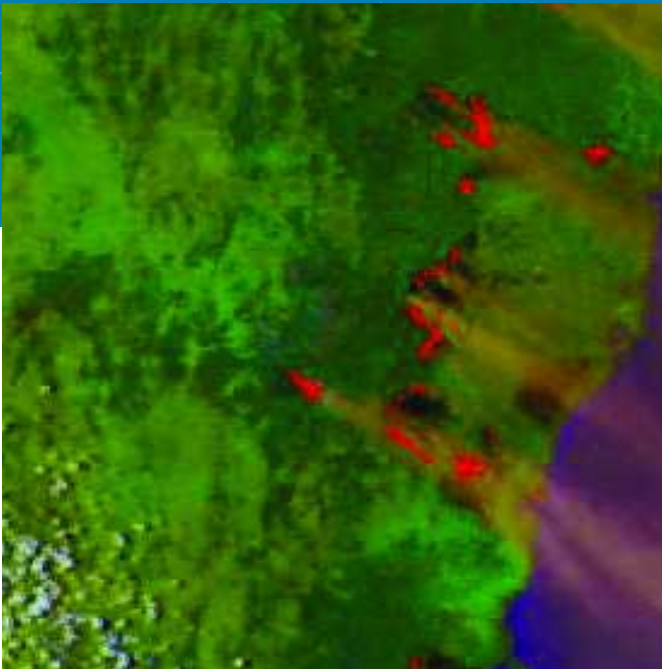
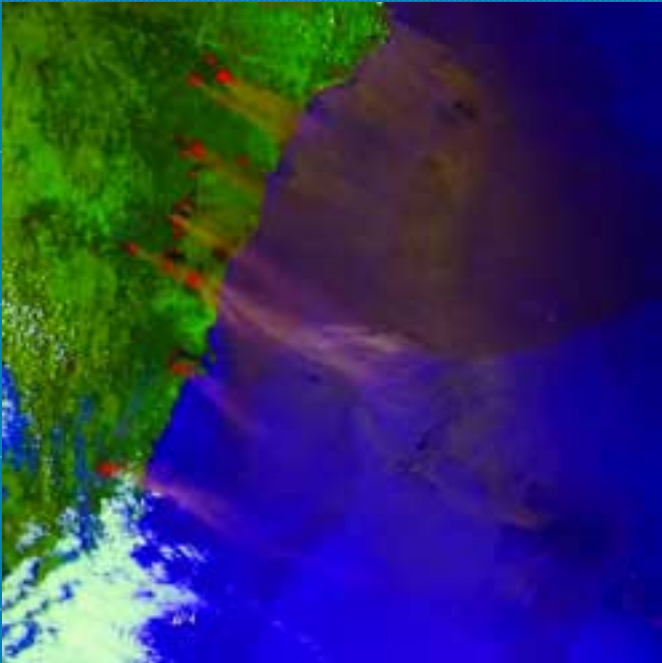
data acquisition and processing techniques. In these initial stages, it was important to assemble GIS people whose organisations had experience or a specific role in firefighting operations. Over the next few days, the NSW State Emergency Service (SES) and Victorian Country Fire Authority (CFA) also contributed staff to the Unit. Other organisations such as the Victorian Dept. of Natural Resource & Environment (DNRE), the Tasmania Fire Service and the Fire and Emergency Service Authority (FESA) of Western Australia were contributing the outputs of their field staff to the intelligence gathering process so necessary for the Unit to provide operational information.

Additionally, the NSW Police, NSW Ambulance Service and Dept. of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC) offered the use of their GIS staff and infrastructure, if the need arose.

Purpose of the Unit

The Joint Services GIS Unit's role was to gather information from all available sources and to collate it into a computer mapping system so as to provide a strategic view to emergency managers at the State Operations Centre (Rosehill) for the support of fire fighting operations in the field. It was also envisaged that this information, providing that it was sufficiently accurate, detailed and timely, could also be fed back to Incident Management Teams (IMT's), located at the various Control Centres, which were managing Section 44 Declarations throughout the State.

Through a consultative process, the Unit was to produce and deliver in a timely manner, defined colour-mapping outputs consistent with the needs of State Operations staff and other client groups.



**A REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT
GIVEN THAT THE USUAL TWO MONTH
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD FOR SUCH A
WEBSITE WAS ACHIEVED BY UNIT
STAFF IN FOUR DAYS**

Activities of the Unit

A total of 7 GIS operators were rostered at any time of the day, with each being given the responsibility for one or more Section 44 Declaration areas. Their task was to create map layers reflecting the area burnt out by fires, the location of containment lines and the location of fire fronts. These layers were compiled from a range of information sources including:

- Hard copy Situation Report maps provided through State Operations from IMT's.
- Overnight outputs from the NOAA satellite.
- Day and night 2 and 12 band infra red and thermal outputs from DNRE and contract aircraft.
- Input from State Operations staff and field Intelligence staff.
- Intelligence from IMT planning staff.
- Daytime aerial plots from reconnaissance helicopters.

Multiple fires within up to 21 S44 Declarations (at any one time) were updated as new information became available.

These datasets were then used to produce a number of mapping outputs including:

- Wall maps for the replacement of topographic maps used in State Operations for manually plotting fire intelligence,
- Maps with some basic information for aircraft operations,
- The nightly production of individual fire maps for briefing agency representatives,
- Maps 3 times a day covering the Sydney region and a state-wide perspective, for agency, ministerial and media briefing sessions,
- The creation of map images available to the RFS intranet and distributed to various agencies on a daily basis, and
- Maps to meet numerous ad hoc enquires for operational support.

Maps produced were in both an A0 and A3 format with the peak output in excess of 1000 hard copy maps per day and numerous electronic images.

Website Development

More organisations were requesting the latest mapping data and images of the Sydney Region and State overview for integration within their own GIS systems. A decision was made to seek the assistance of MapInfo Australia to develop a web site through their 'Encounter' software to display mapping products on the RFS intranet, with direct links to this site being provided by IP (Internet Protocol) link for a limited number of other organisations. The work began on Day 7. (3 January) and the website was ready to be launched on Day 11. (7 January), although some administrative issues delayed the website being available until the following day. This was not only innovative, within the NSW emergency management context, but was also a remarkable achievement given that the usual two month development period for such a website was achieved by Unit staff in four days.

The Statistics

- Formed on 28 December
- 18 days from 0200hrs to 2200hrs
- Staff of 55 GIS professionals – 8500 man hrs
 - RFS, NSWFB, NPWS, SES, SF
 - CFA, DNRE
 - 7 GIS Consultants
 - 2 Remote Sensing Consultants
 - 3 Remote Sensing Aircraft Operators
- Produced 8000 A3 and 120 A0 maps
- 6 Standard Products
- Data Captured 35.15 Gb
- Base Data 28 Gb
- Web Deployed Data 4.56 Gb
- Deployed data to 31 external sites via frame relay network
- Deployed web based GIS
- Flight Planning Section including 5 Aircraft

Kelvin Wise



FIRE REPORTS

11 WOLLONDILLY



Wollondilly Fire

3 December to 14 January

Area of fire

15,570 Hectares

Perimeter of fire

83.6 Kilometres



Photograph by Nick Moir

3 December

The initial report was received 1352 on 3 December of a smoke sighting on Mountain Ridge Trail, Nattai, and followed a severe thunderstorm with multiple lightning strikes which crossed the Wollondilly Shire from south-west to north-east.

By mid afternoon, following aircraft reports and ground observations, 16 separate fires were confirmed as "Going".

The fires at this stage were not impacting on private property to the east. Two fires, Nattai and Blue Gum had the greatest potential to threaten residential and rural residential communities of Nattai, Oakdale, and Lakesland. All available local resources were positioned in the Nattai/Oakdale and Lakesland areas to afford property protection if necessary. Access during the remainder of 3 December made direct attack impossible.

The Executive Committee of the Wollondilly District Bush fire Committee met at 2030 to recommend the a declaration be made pursuant to Section 44 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*.

Declaration was approved from 2200 hours on Dec 3 for the Wollondilly Rural fire District.

4 December

Aerial and ground recons to accurately plot fire perimeters on all fires and determine current and potential threats to property, assets and catchment values. Priority at this stage was:

1. Nattai fire
2. Blue Gum fire
3. West and East Martins Creek fires
4. All the rest

SCA Seasonal Fire Team winched into Martins Creek fireire due to its potential to rapidly travel east and impact on Buxton and northern villages of Wingecaribee Shire. All fires were still classified as "going" with the exception of Martins Creek fire which was "being contained".

5 December

Containment lines established for Nattai and Blue Gum fires. Nattai village under threat and constantly monitored. Allum River fire burning on ridge tops and aerial bombed to reduce spread.

6 December

Extension of S44 Declaration was approved from 1400 hours on 6 December for Wollondilly Rural fire District and all fires within the area of Wingecaribee bounded by the Hume Highway in the east, Mittagong/Wombeyan Caves Road in the south, Wollondilly River to the west and north to the joint shires boundary.

Containment breached on northern line of Blue Gum fire threatening "The Den". Continued to patrol and mop-up hotspots. Established hand line down escarpment to lock in western side of fire. On the Nattai fire, water bombing continued, deepening control lines on the eastern and south eastern flanks. Water bombing of gullies below Nattai continued.

Oberon Control (NPWS) inserted remote crews into Bindook fire to effect containment of hotspots. Allum River fire largely confined to plateau areas and air attack continued. Smaller fires west of Lake Burragorang, Black Coola, Tonelli East, Tonelli West, Kowmung and Byrnes Creek monitored from air. Oberon Control progressively moved east attending to these fires.

**DECLARATION
WAS APPROVED
FROM 2200 HOURS
ON DEC 3 2001
UNTIL FURTHER
NOTICE FOR THE
WOLLONDILLY
FIRE DISTRICT.**

**THE SECTION 44
DECLARATION WAS
REVOKED AT 1500
HOURS ON 21
DECEMBER 2001**

7 December

Continued to patrol and deepen perimeter of Nattai and Blue Gum fires. Nattai fire continued to threaten Nattai village. Recon of all other remote fires to identify hotspots. These were bombed or crews inserted to mop-up. Martins Creek East "contained" and Martins Creek West "being controlled". Kowmung fire still "going". The following fires were "being controlled" - Black Coola, Byrnes Creek, Tonalli East, Tonalli West, and Bindook. Allum River fire had retardant drops on southern flanks on plateau areas only, to reduce possible fire run into the Nattai Gorge to the south.

8 December

Bindook fire "contained". Martins Creek East "out". Byrnes Creek fire (90Ha) "being controlled". Continued patrol, bombing and deepening of containment lines on Nattai fire. Heavy rain impeded backburn along Burragorang Rd, Nattai. Crews secured burnt area. Burn along Burragorang Rd and around Nattai village to be completed when conditions were favourable. Blue Gum fire continued to burn slowly internally, inside containment lines.

9 December

Backburn along Burragorang Rd and around Nattai village completed and secured. Fire



Photograph by Matt Black

(Nattai) is now "contained". Blue Gum fire "contained" but continued to be monitored as southern flank slowly approached southern containment line. Allum River "being controlled", using aircraft and remote teams. Martins Creek fire "patrol". Bindook declared "out". Martins Creek West still has some hotspots but classified as "contained". Allum River fire still had hotspots. Tonalli East fire was "out". Tonalli West 1 and Tonalli West 3 "patrol". Black Coola "contained". Byrnes Creek fire "contained". Kowmung fire "being contained".

10 - 17 December

During this period no fires breached any control lines or threatened any property. Focus was on FLIR runs each morning of all fires. New and existing hotspots required bombing, remote crew insertion, or vehicle based mop-up. The most difficult fire during this period was Allum River, due to remoteness and lack of vehicular access. All fires west of Lake Burragorang were brought to "patrol" status and were monitored on a daily basis. Each FLIR flight through this period continued to identify hotspots

18 - 21 December 2001

During the final period, a small extension of the north eastern containment was necessary on the Nattai fire. This was due to fire burning into a coal deposit below Burragorang Lookout. This was readily contained and secured by backburning. All fires were declared at "patrol" status on the 21 December.

The Section 44 Declaration was revoked at 1500 hours on 21 December.

Final SITREPS were provided to STATEOPS on Monday 24 December in which all fires were declared "out".

25 December

The Wollondilly Fire Control Centre was manned as a Total Fire Ban was in force. Fire activity was being monitored in the Mt Hall area of the Blue Mountains. Two ignitions had occurred in this locality on the previous day. The Sydney Catchment Authority personnel had contained one of these fires, but the other had grown too large



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

for direct attack. Narrow Neck Tower first reported this fire to Blue Mountains Control at 1015 hours on 24 December.

This fire began to run under a strong west, northwesterly late in the morning. At approx 1300 hrs, advice received was that the fire had crossed Lake Burragorang and would impact Warragamba township in about one hour. Available Wollondilly resources were immediately deployed to Warragamba for property protection. The first impact was advised at 1411 hours. Seven heavy tankers and 1 light from Wollondilly and 1 NSWFB pumper provided the initial property protection until the arrival of 9 NSWFB pumpers progressively between 1600 hours and 1930 hours. By 2400 hours, 30 homes, 8 factory buildings and 2 shops had been lost.

Prior to this, fire was reported adjacent to Inghams Poultry, Appin Road, Appin at approx 1235 hours and was "going". Assistance was sought from Campbelltown Rural Fire District. This fire ran hard under strong westerly winds

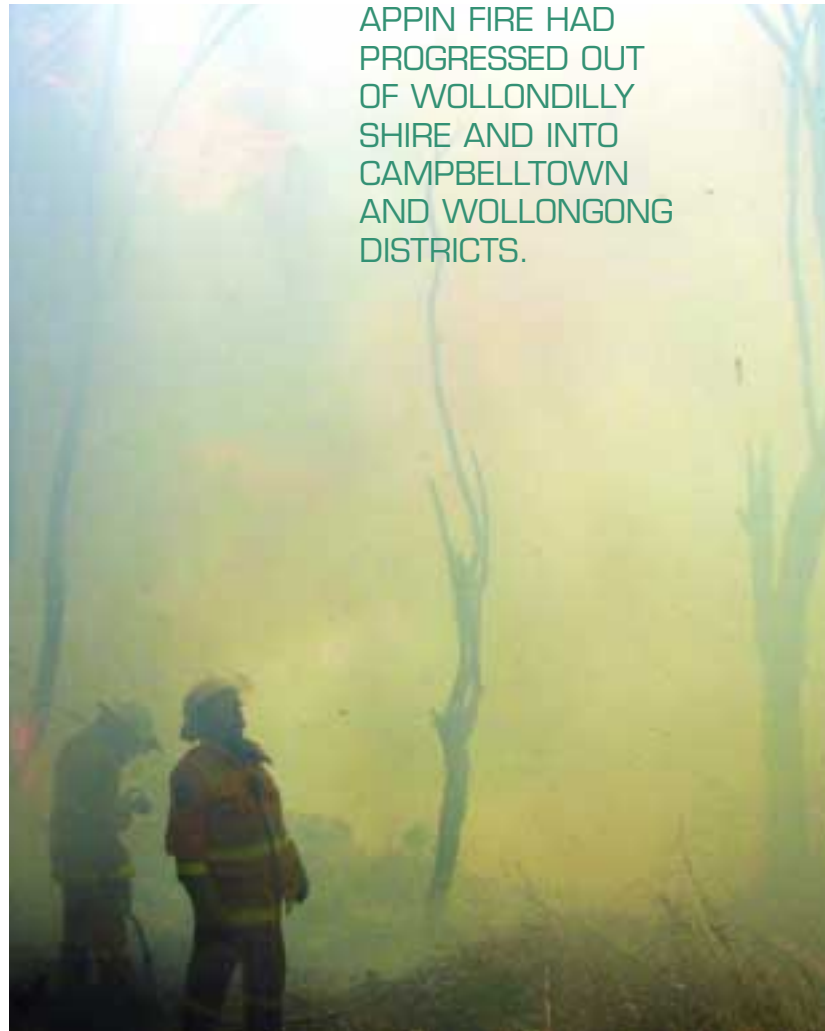
gusting to 80 km/h, and burnt away from Appin to the east onto the Dharawal Land Council land and impacted on Wedderburn airstrip and infrastructure. The fire burnt into Campbelltown District to the north and continued east into Wollongong District. Fire threatened, but did not damage Westcliff Colliery.

At 1430 hours, fire was reported at Oakdale, south of Burragorang Road. A spotfire north of Burragorang Road developed rapidly and travelled east, impacting property on Steveys Forest Road, Oakdale and then further east on the northern side of Oakdale village. By 1930 hrs, four homes and four outbuildings were destroyed.

At 1507 hrs in response to several phone calls about smoke from Thirlmere residents, NPWS reported to Firecom that no fire had been found, but heavy smoke was present over most of the area. The first confirmed fire was at 1730 hrs in the Slades Road area. Fire subsequently burnt out the Thirlmere Lakes National Park,



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth



APPIN FIRE HAD PROCEEDED OUT OF WOLLONDILLY SHIRE AND INTO CAMPBELLTOWN AND WOLLONGONG DISTRICTS.



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

Bonds Road area and extended north east into rural residential areas of Thirlmere. By 2359 hrs, four houses and many outbuildings were destroyed. The Mt Beloon Fire, is believed to have started sometime on 24 December, and progressed eastward on 25 December.

The first sighting of this fire was at 1709 hrs and reported as "smoke well out into valley, 3 columns". This fire burnt in an easterly direction, south of the earlier (3-21 December) Blue Gum fire, and impacted the Lakesland area near Kelsalls Road on the evening of 25 December. The southern head of this fire impacted the northern end of Buxton Ave, Buxton at 2324 hrs.

26 December

Warragamba fire, whilst being substantially quieter, continued to burn east toward Bents Basin Road. Backburning was begun on Bents Basin Road to effect containment.

Appin Fire had progressed out of Wollondilly Shire and into Campbelltown and Wollongong

District. Mop-up continued around Appin.

The Nattai fire continued east across New Jerusalem Road and into Back Creek area.

The Thirlmere fire largely contained west of Thirlmere, but southern flank was active west of Buxton and had high potential to impact on West Buxton. Investigation throughout the day revealed a further 4 homes lost making the total 8 with numerous outbuildings in the general area of Thirlmere Lakes, Bonds Road, Slades Road, and Dry Lakes Road.

27 December

Thirlmere fire continued to threaten Buxton and property further south into Wingecarribee Shire along Wilson Parade. Work commenced with 2 dozers to construct a fireline from Buxton to Hilltop. Backburning from Buxton to Balmoral conducted during the evening. Fire had crossed West and East Parades Buxton and burnt east generally parallel to Bargo River Road. "Kiah Lodge" on Bargo River Road near the Bargo River, was



Photograph by Sean Davey

evacuated as a precaution. This section of the fire was contained on Remembrance Drive, Tahmoor. The Thirlmere and Mt Beloon fires, having joined, was now considered a single fire. The Nattai fire continued, now in a southeast direction, crossing Burrarorang Road to the southern side and impacting Belimba Park. One home was lost. Warragamba fire activity focused on Bents Basin Road to stop extension of the fire across the Nepean River into Liverpool District. This was achieved. Mop-up all earlier burnt areas continued. Appin fire mop-up and patrol continued.

28 December

Mt Beloon Nth fire. Mop-up around Thirlmere area, Thirlmere Lakes, and Bargo River Road area continued. Fire burning south into Wingecarribee Shire was now named Mt Beloon South. Fireline construction continued from Balmoral to Hilltop and backburning continued south between Balmoral and Hilltop. The Nattai and Warragamba fires were linked to become the

Burrarorang Complex. Fire was still active in the Belimba Park area although largely contained. As fire moved south from Warragamba, on the western side of Silverdale Road, backburning was commenced to link the old Warragamba fire to the old Nattai fire. Active fire persisted east of Warragamba on Bents Basin Road.

29 December

Mop-up and patrol continued around Warragamba, Bents Basin Road area, Oakdale, Belimba Park and The Oaks. Mop-up and patrol around Thirlmere, Buxton, and Bargo River area continued with no extension of fire in these areas. Mop-up continued around the Appin fire. On the Mt Beloon South fire, backburn completed to Elizabeth Way, Hilltop. Fireline extension continued south around Colo Vale.

30 December

A burn was carried out on the northern side of Burrarorang Road, Nattai, to protect village from fire in the north. Patrol of Silverdale Road from The Oaks to Silverdale continued. Mop-up continued in Bents Basin area.

All fire extinguished in Bargo River area near Remembrance Drive, Tahmoor. All other areas patrolled and mopped up where necessary. On the Mt Beloon South fire, control line burnt from Hilltop to Colo Road at "Blatches". Staging areas set up at Hilltop and Yerrinbool.

31 December

Fire continued to burn north on the western side of the old Blue Gum fire, (3-21 December) this could run east through Sheehys Creek and threaten property on Barkers Lodge Road, Oakdale/Lakesland. Mop-up of all firegrounds from Nattai to Warragamba continued. In Wingecarribee, fire breached control line on the Mt Beloon South fire at Hilltop. Homes west of Tee Tree, Sackville, and Ligar Streets were evacuated.

1 January

An ignition between Cataract Scout Park and Appin Road was contained rapidly on Appin Road, Old Cataract Road and the Scout Camp. This fire was called "Cataract". Sheehys Creek was monitored closely as fire came

**BY 2400 HOURS,
30 HOMES,
8 FACTORY
BUILDINGS AND
2 SHOPS HAD
BEEN LOST.**



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

close to the "Bailey Bridge" at the western end of Sheehys Creek. Burn Plan for Sheehys Creek finalised. On Mt Beloon South fire, mop-up between Buxton and Colo Vale continued, and containment line extended to High Range.

2 January

Backburn carried out west of "Bailey Bridge" to stop fire run up Sheehys Creek. This proved unsuccessful as fire spotted over the Nattai River at mouth of Sheehys Creek. Sheehys Creek burn to proceed. To the south west of the Mt Beloon fire, preparations commenced on containment line in the Joorilands, Murphys and Bonnum Pic area. This would ultimately link up with the Mt Beloon South control line now proceeding west from High Range to Mt Flora, north of Mittagong in Wingecarribee Shire. Cataract fire continued to be mopped up and patrolled. All other firegrounds were patrolled and mopped up as required.

3 January

Fire progressed slowly up Sheehys Creek and was monitored continually. Cataract fire broke containment on Baden Powell Drive and ran on Appin Road. This fire now handled by Wollongong. New fire, "Nepean River" began off Picton Road about 1200 hrs and burnt into Nepean Gorge. Fire was contained the following day to the Nepean Gorge, Picton Road, Southern Railway and Wilton Parachute Centre. Two other ignitions, "Menangle Piggery" and "Douglas Park" were contained rapidly and patrolled for the next three days. In Wingecarribee Shire, on the Mt Beloon South fire, burning conducted around "Blatches" at Mt Flora. Fallback lines were cleaned up in Colo Vale and Mittagong areas.

4 January

Nepean River and Cataract fires patrolled. Sheehys Creek containment line burnt overnight and deepened and patrolled through day. Patrols of all firegrounds continued.

In Wingecarribee, backburned around Mt Flora and Nattai River area to stop advance of main front. Fire crept around Nattai cliff edges but held at fallback positions.

5 January

Deepening of Sheehys Creek line continued as did patrols of all fire grounds in Wollondilly. In Wingecarribee, backburning around "The Craggs" was completed successfully. The control line had now progressed to a point where the main threat to Mittagong and Welby had passed.

6 January

Focus of the Wollondilly fires was now to the western side to ensure that no extension across the Wollondilly River to the west occurred. Preparation of control lines along W4 Fire Road from Murphys to Bonnum Pic and south to Ben Har proceeded. Burning of this line would not proceed until Wingecarribee had burnt to Ben Har from the south. The Burke River fire in the north east of Wingecarribee Shire, broke containment near Cordeaux Dam and crossed Picton Road near

Cordeaux Colliery. Wollondilly would manage this new fire "West Bellambi".

7 January

The controlled burn from Murphys to Bonnum Pic commenced, but would not proceed south of Bonnum Pic until Wingecarribee reach Ben Har. The burn in Wingecarribee went beyond Mt Waratah and continued to Mt Jellore and High Range area. The West Bellambi fire remained a threat to Wilton in the west and Appin to the north. Containment lines identified at Allied Colliery in the east, and the north south power line from Picton Road, east of Wilton, north through to Appin via Broughton Pass. Patrols of all other fire grounds continuing.

8 - 11 January

Over the following three days, close containment strategies limited the spread of the West Bellambi fire. Bombing of hotspots identified by FLIR runs, obviated the need for broader containment. Protection of the remaining unburnt catchment areas was a priority. All other Wollondilly fire grounds were patrolled on a regular basis. On the Mt Beloon South fire in Wingecarribee, control burning progressed steadily from Mt Jellore to Ben Har. A spotover at Mt Waratah late on the 8 January was quickly contained.

11 January

Wollondilly and Wingecarribee lines linked at Bonnum Pic. This effectively achieved containment of the whole Wollondilly/Wingecarribee complex. Close containment strategies on the West Bellambi fire continued successfully with only isolated hotspots being dealt with by bombing or ground crews.

12 - 14 January

All lines held over this three-day period. Continued monitoring with reduced ground crews and aerial observation, assured full containment had been achieved on all fires.

Revocation

The Executive Committee of the Wollondilly District Bush Fire Committee met and recommended that the Commissioner be advised that the declaration be lifted at 1700 hours 14 January.



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ST. JOHN'S INVOLVEMENT IN BUSHFIRE CRISIS

ST JOHN PROVIDED
COMPREHENSIVE
ASSISTANCE
AT THIRTY SIX
OF THE MAJOR
SITES INCLUDING
FRONTLINE
FIREFIGHTING
POSTS.

The Christmas 2001 bushfires brought together diverse groups of government agencies, private businesses and volunteer organisations working collaboratively to protect human life and property. St John Ambulance was one of these volunteer organisations with hundreds of members on duty or stand-by, providing several thousand hours of service to the community and members of fire agencies.

St John provided treatment for more than 1500 people including: 792 at the frontline, 540 at interstate firefighter accommodation venues, 184 members of the community at evacuation sites, and provided assistance to 296 residents from nursing homes.

"First aid is a valuable, and necessary, component of any major incident response and as Australia's leading first aid organisation St John is always prepared and proud to put our skills to good use," said St John NSW Commissioner Christine Purdie.

St John provided comprehensive assistance at thirty six of the major sites including frontline firefighting posts such as Colo Heights and various sites in the Blue Mountains.

Colo Heights was a good example of St John's capabilities. Volunteers John Christie and Vanessa Cook were trapped there with residents and members of the fire agencies as bushfires blocked Putty Road on both sides to Wilberforce and Singleton. Working a shift which extended to eighteen hours, John and Vanessa treated 136 people. After a day off, they returned to continue their first aid services.

St John volunteers provided first aid at the interstate firefighter accommodation venues at Parramatta, Homebush Bay, Casula, Bowral, Wollongong, Nowra, Berry, Gerringong and Penrith. Shifts were organised to cover the return of firefighters from the frontline. A total of 540 treatments were rendered at these venues. St John members were able to provide ongoing care when necessary, monitor firefighters'

conditions and provide reassurance. For many away from home, the presence of St John and the camaraderie, which developed between the two groups of volunteers, played an important role in ensuring their comfort during their tour of duty.

Of the thirty conditions treated, the most common was eye irritation with sixty nine percent of firefighters requiring eye irrigation. Other conditions treated included blisters, smoke inhalation and headaches. Eleven percent of those at the frontline suffered minor wounds. Less than one percent of those treated required transfer to hospital.

Apart from offering first aid at accommodation venues, St John also worked at evacuation centres such as Sussex Inlet. Here, seven first aiders were taken in by boat and treated more than 150 people when all the roads were blocked by fire.

The request to be on standby for the crisis came to St John on Christmas Day from the NSW Health State Disaster Control

Centre. Within one hour, forty members were ready to be deployed. Later that evening a team was requested to assist nursing home residents following their evacuation to Picton. Over the next twenty one days St John assisted at several venues in the State.

The first aiders were commanded from the St John State Control Centre and worked closely with the Rural Fire Service and other organisations in the emergency response team. St John NSW Commissioner Christine Purdie ensured close cooperation by participating in the daily briefings held at the RFS headquarters.

Zoe Townsend
St John's Ambulance



Photographs by St John's

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FIRE REPORTS 12 WOLLONGONG



Burke River Fire

24 December to 14 January

Area of fire

47,138 Hectares

Perimeter of fire

155 Kilometres



THE BURKE RIVER FIRE WAS DETECTED IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON OF 24 DECEMBER.

THE APPIN ROAD FIRE STARTED ON THE 25 DECEMBER.



Photographs by Sean Davey

Burke River fire

Point, date, time of origin of fire

24 December.

In the early hours of the morning 24 December there was a series of lightning storms across south eastern NSW. The Burke River fire was detected in the early afternoon. The point of origin was within the metropolitan catchment area.

Burke River fire

Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	19-35°C
Hum	5-99%
Wind Dir	W
Wind Vel	22-48km/h

Strategies Deployed

Burke River fire

Ground observation, conditions too dangerous for direct attack.

Property Loss, Burke River fire

184 Ha, Sydney Catchment Authority land.

Appin Road fire

Point, date, time of origin of fire

25 December.

The Appin Road fire started on the 25 December. Appin Road, Appin.

Declaration and period of Section 44 Appointment

The declaration was made at 1630hrs on 25 December to cover the Wollongong Local Government Area. The appointment was amended at 2200hrs on 25 December to include the Wingecarribee Rural Fire District. The declaration was further amended at 1200hrs on 26 December to exclude the part of the Wingecarribee Rural Fire District west of the F5 and north of the Wombeyan Caves road.

The declaration was further amended at 2000hrs on 27 December to include the Kiama and Shellharbour Local Government Areas. At midnight on 7 January an amended declaration excluded the Kiama and Shellharbour Local Government Areas and at 1700hrs on 14 January the Section 44 was terminated.

Appin Road fire Prevailing Meteorological Conditions

Temp	12-34°C
Hum	13-71%
Wind Dir	NW-W-SW
Wind Vel	36-82

Details of Strategies employed Appin Road

Property protection was the only strategy deployed given the extreme fire behaviour. Wollongong RFS units *en route* to Hawkesbury were initially deployed at Appin for property protection before being redirected to Thirlmere by Wollondilly District.

Initial response within the Wollongong LGA was to Darkes Forest village with the fire impacting on the area at 1528hrs. As additional units became available they were deployed to other properties in the path of the fire.

At approximately 1620 the fire jumped the Princes Highway and then the F6 freeway.

Two NSWFB units were deployed into Stanwell Tops Christian Conference Centre. They were then cut off from the Stanwell Tops Village. An RFS troop carrier responded to Stanwell Tops Village and carried out property protection using standpipes and hose.

RFS units then fell back from Darkes Forest to carry out property protection in the Lawrence Hargrave Drive area between Stanwell Tops and Helensburgh, gradually falling back as the fire path progressed northwards.

An RFS unit was also responded to Otford to contain a spotfire east of the village and units from the NSWFB and RFS were deployed into the western side of Helensburgh as the wind shifted from the west to a more southerly direction. This opened up the northern flank of the main fire into the firefront.

At 1658hrs a fire was plotted in the Bulli Tops area, one kilometre north of Sublime Point. The cause of this fire has not been determined, however it was not within the path of the Appin Road fire and could have been caused by a separate ignition.

THE MAIN FIRE-FRONT HAD PASSED THROUGH THE NORTHERN END OF HELENSBURGH BY ABOUT 2200 HOURS.



Photograph by Nick Moir

This fire spread towards the edge of the escarpment north of Bulli Tops and dropped over the edge, spreading slowly down the cliff face. Ground crews continually monitored this fire.

As the wind gradually changed from north west to south west, the northern flank became the main front, impacting on the southern and western side of Helensburgh during the late afternoon. During the evening on the Princes Highway, west of Helensburgh and properties in Parkes Street, Rajani Avenue, Laurina Avenue and The Ridge. Property protection strategies were implemented where possible on these properties. The main firefront had passed through the northern end of Helensburgh by about 2200 hrs. Mopping up and patrol strategies were then put into place.

MONITOR UPPER AVON WATER PUMPING STATION FOR PROPERTY PROTECTION AND EVACUATIONS.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Ground observation, conditions too extreme for direct attack.

Property Loss, 25 December, Appin Road

Darkes Forest Rd, Darkes Forest, Wollondilly LGA.

- 1 x machinery shed and work shop 60m x 20m -100%
- 1 x house - 40 % damaged
- 2 x cars
- 2 x motorbikes
- 1 x caravan
- 2 x tractors
- 4 x ride on mowers
- 1 x pump
- tools, fencing, pipeline
- 1 x shed 40' x 8' - 100%
- 1 x mower
- 2 x saddles
- 2 x chain saws
- horse rugs, ropes
- 1 x plastic water tank

Princes Hwy Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- 7 x sheds
- crane, machinery, scrap metal, mine conveyor belts, forklift, tractor
- mushroom business - 100% (\$200,000.00)

- 2 x garages
- 1 x carport
- 2 x cars
- 1 x motorbike
- 1 x boat
- 1 x railway carriage
- 1 x residential premises

Parkes Street Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- 1 x residential premises
- 4 x light industrial premises

Excelsa Ave, Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- 1 x residential premises

Laurina Ave, Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- 3 x residential premises

The Ridge, Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- 1 x residential premises

The Ridge, Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- 1 x garage - 100%
- 1 x house - 15%
- tools & equipment - \$20,000.00
- 1 x above ground pool, fencing, landscaping, BBQ's
- 1 x shed
- fencing



Parkes Street, Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- light industrial premises – nursery

Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- 1 x residential premises
- 1 x kit home
- 4 x containers containing car parts and antique machinery.

Plateau Rd, Stanwell Tops, Wollongong LGA

- residential premises

Stanwell Tops Christian Conference Centre, Wollongong LGA

- 2 x large conference buildings
- 5 x fibro cottages
- 3 x carports
- 1 x garage
- 1 x house
- 1 x kitchen – mess area
- 1 x large brick campsite
- 1 x large workshop
- 1 x bobcat , tools, mower etc.

Princes Hwy, Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- 1 x large industrial shed – nursery

Wilson's Creek Rd, Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- 3 x disused mushroom sheds – 20%

Cemetery Road, Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- 1 x container
- 12 x wooden power poles
- 6 x second hand wooden power poles
- 12 galvanised power poles
- 1 x trailer, cables, builders poles and switch boards, fences.

Baines Place, Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- 1 x shed
- 1 x water tank
- 1 x motor bike
- 1 x back hoe

Old Illawarra Road, Helensburgh, Wollongong LGA

- 1 x shed

13,320 Ha*, of lands of various tenure including private property, Darawal Nature Reserve, Garrawarra Nature Reserve and the Heathcote and Royal National Parks.

**Note: This amount and the subsequent amounts show only the hectares burnt within Wollongong, Campbelltown and Wollondilly Local Government Areas and does not include any*

lands within the Sutherland LGA which are included in the Waterfall S44.

Property Loss, 25 December, Burke River
4452 Ha of Sydney Catchment Authority lands.

26 December
Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	12-27°C
Hum	13-71
Wind Dir	SW-W
Wind Vel	26-67

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road
Property protection, black out fire edge near urban interface, respond to any new outbreaks. Tactical backburn to protect Maddens Plains radio transmission towers. Respond to Sutherland Shire to assist with property protection.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River
Monitor fire edge and spotfires over the edge of escarpment. Monitor Upper Avon water pumping station for property protection and evacuations. Prepare fire trails for backburning.

Property Loss, Appin Road

- 1 x derelict building, at Garrawarra Hospital
- 1,146 Ha

Property Loss, Burke River
6,018 Ha, SCA land

27 December
Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	10-28°C
Min Hum	15-57%
Wind Dir	S-SE var
Wind Vel	17-38

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road
Backburn along Wilsons Creek and Sir Bertram Stevens Drive to link up with Sutherland crews coming from the north. Black out fire edge north of the Hacking River trail to prevent it spreading south. Water bombing to protect infrastructure and control spot fires.

Backburn along fire road 10Q, Fire Road 10 and Appin Road after spot fire ignited this area.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River
Backburn Hotel sector from fire road 15 to Cordeaux Manor to protect Mt Kembla.



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

Property Loss, Appin Road
1,995 Ha

Property Loss, Burke River
5336 Ha SCA Land

28 December
Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	8-31°C
Hum	25-70%
Wind Dir	NW-NE
Wind Vel	19-33

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road
Backburn from Fire Road 10, west along Appin Road to Westcliffe Colliery. Spotovers occurred across the Appin Road, one of which flared up several days later. Blackout and patrol fire edge and spotovers and establish dozer trail south of Hacking River Trail, north east of Helensburgh; contain flare-ups west of Scarborough railway station. Tactical backburning carried out around the perimeter of Darkes Forest Village to provide property protection on exposed sides.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River
Backburn along Fire Road 15 to

one Km south of summit tank. Backburn Golf sector along Cordeaux Dam. Backburn Foxtrot and Echo sectors. Bulldozers deployed establish containment lines around a spotover which occurred from Foxtrot sector, on fire road 6 west of Cordeaux Dam wall.

Property Loss, Appin Road
1,155 Ha

Property Loss, Burke River
4,476 Ha

29 December
Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	13-35°C
Hum	22-75%
Wind Dir	NW
Wind Vel	19-38

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road
Final containment around Garrawarra Hospital; extend containment line with dozer and handtools South of Hacking River Trail. Blackout fire edge in Darkes Forest area, Blackout and patrol along Bulli Tops and Appin Road. Extinguish flare up at Woronora Dam pumping Station. Contain flare up near Appin township.



Photographs by Dean Sewell

ZULU SECTOR – FIRE STILL SPREADING DOWN CORDEAUX GORGE. BEING HELD BY AIRCRAFT.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Dozer deployed to contain spot fire in foxtrot sector. Continue backburning along Fire Road 15 and along southern containment lines from the west (Wingecarribee and CFA crews) and the east (Wollongong and Kiama/Shellharbour crews) with crews nearly meeting up.

Property Loss, Appin Road

1,975 Ha

Property Loss, Burke River

4,692 Ha

30 December

Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	14-34°C
Hum	24-74%
Wind Dir	N-NW var
Wind Vel	14-29

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Protect scout camp after spotfire flare up west of Cataract Dam access road on the Appin Road, backburn along Appin Road to Appin Mine and halfway along southern edge. Patrol around Westcliffe Colliery. Patrol south of

Hacking River trail. Patrol along Buttenshaw Drive Austinmer and extinguish spotfires near Bulgo Hill.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

(CFA crews entered scene)

Direct attack by dozer failed on the spotover in Foxtrot Sector so management now under Wollongong IMT. Backburn Yankee and Zulu sectors (extension of Foxtrot sector), attempt to prevent fire entering Cordeaux Gorge and spotting out further north. Complete handtool trail on Delta sector and implement backburn from Avon Dam to powerlines, continued to strengthen backburn in Mike, Lima, India and Juliet sectors.

At this stage a single IMT was established at Wollongong for the fire, with Wingecarribee still continuing to supply resources for the western end.

Property Loss, Appin Road

520 Ha

Property Loss, Burke River

7,073 Ha

31 December

Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	16-35°C
Hum	27-78%
Wind Dir	NW var
Wind Vel	24-48

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Assisted Wollondilly crews to contain flare-ups at Cataract Scout Camp, Hacking River Trail patrolled. Patrolled all containment lines.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Contained spotover on eastern side of containment lines in Zulu sector. Fire within containment lines in Juliet sector. Water bombed Cordeaux Gorge and contained in accessible country by ground crews and helicopters within Yankee sector.

Property Loss, Appin Road

51 Ha

Property Loss, Burke River

8,053 Ha

1 January
Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	13-35°C
Hum	13-74%
Wind Dir	NW-SE
Wind Vel	26-70

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Patrolled all areas, assisted Wollondilly crews at Cataract Scout Camp.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Asset protection at Avon Dam, Dozer to strengthen lines on Mike and Lima sectors, completed backburn in Delta sector. Major fire run required property protection at Cordeaux Dam. Continue patrolling remainder, water bomb gorge. Property Protection in Southern Division around Calderwood Valley.

Property Loss, Appin Road

No recorded loss

Property Loss, Burke River

945 Ha

2 January
Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	14-31°C
Hum	17-55%
Wind Dir	NW-W
Wind Vel	29-72

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Monitor outbreak from Cataract Scout Camp, establish containment lines between Appin Road and Cataract Dam. Extinguish flareups near Lawrence Hargrave Drive and a derelict building in the Coalcliff area. Patrol and monitor for hotspots along Hacking River trail.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Crews pulled off various sectors due to high winds. Active fire in Cordeaux gorge held by aircraft and ground crews monitor for spot overs. Strengthen containment lines in Juliet sector.

Property Loss, Appin Road

- One Derelict Building, Coalcliff area
- 447 Ha

Property Loss, Burke River

187 Ha

3 January
Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	16-31°C
Hum	12-48%
Wind Dir	SW
Wind Vel	26-62

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Establish containment lines and backburn along old fire trail from Appin Road to Cataract Dam to hold outbreak from Scout Camp and protect Letterbox radar tower. Monitor and patrol Hacking River Trail. Remainder of Appin road fire edge contained. Property protection, facilities at Bulli Tops.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Contain multiple spotfires in Juliet sector, grade trail along eastern fallback lines. Monitor for flareups in Cordeaux Gorge for Yankee and Zulu sectors. Zulu East, Spot fire from 1/1 flared up east of containment lines, and property protection carried out at Cordeaux Colliery and on the eastern side of Cordeaux Dam. Prepare fire trails 8I and 8B for backburning. Prepare fall back lines in Charlie and Delta sectors. Continue containment of spotfires and active fire edge, backburn along Mt Murray Road in Juliet sector. All the southwestern edge considered safe.

ZULU SECTOR – FIRE STILL ACTIVE AND WITHIN NEPEAN GORGE AS WELL, STILL BEING CONTAINED BY AIRCRAFT AND GROUND CREWS.


Property Loss, Appin Road

245 Ha

Property Loss, Burke River

1,335 Ha

4 January
Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	12-33°C
Hum	14-65%
Wind Dir	NW-NE
Wind Vel	17-38

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Cataract Sector, property protection to Letterbox Radar Tower after fire jumped containment lines, fall back line prepared along trail just west of Loddon River to Cataract Dam. Hacking River Trail sector handed over to NPWS through Sutherland FCC to monitor.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Complete handtool trail on Fire Rd 3D with hand tool crews and complete backburn in Charlie Sector. Contain spotover near Avon Dam in Delta Sector. Patrol and deepen backburns and provide property protection in Juliet sector. Continue water bombing and ground patrol around Cordeaux Gorge. Zulu East- Backburn along 8I and 8B, northern side, black out where safe. Zulu Sector - fire still spreading down Cordeaux Gorge. Being held by aircraft.

Property Loss, Appin Road

642 Ha

Property Loss, Burke River

1360 Ha

Photograph by Adam Hollingworth



THERE WHERE NO CRITICAL INJURIES REPORTED BY FIREFIGHTERS, OTHER EMERGENCY SERVICES OR THE PUBLIC.

5 January

Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	14-32°C
Hum	28-71%
Wind Dir	NW-SE
Wind Vel	17-38

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Prepared line west of Loddon River from Appin Road to Cataract dam backburned. All trails south and east of cataract north arm prepared and tankers placed for spotovers. All other sectors in patrol status.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Juliet sector- blackout burnt edge, prepare fallback lines, monitor for property protection, Delta sector backburn implemented, extinguish spotovers, Zulu and Yankee continue aerial suppression and monitoring by ground crews as fire continues along the bottom of the Gorge. Zulu East, hold and deepen backburns on 8G and 8I, contain northern sides by control line established off Fire Road 8.

Property Loss, Appin Road

413 Ha

Property Loss, Burke River

1,564 Ha

6 January

Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	20-33°C
Hum	38-80%
Wind Dir	NW var
Wind Vel	17-43
Rain	1.4mm

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Patrol all sectors and monitor/ extinguish flareups, prepare further fall back lines in Cataract Sector.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Juliet Sector – Patrol all containment lines. Zulu Sector – fire still active and within Nepean Gorge as well, still being contained by aircraft and ground crews. Zulu East – strengthen backburn due to poor depth. All other sectors in patrol status.

Property Loss, Appin Road

7 Ha

Property Loss, Burke River

274 Ha

7 January

Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	20-33°C
Hum	38-80%
Wind Dir	NW var
Wind Vel	17-43
Rain	8mm

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Patrol and strengthen containment lines on Cataract sector, All other sectors out.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Juliet Sector – Patrol, Kiama Shellharbour lifted their Section 44. Zulu – Insert RAFT team into Cordeaux and Nepean Gorges for inspection, Zulu East patrol eastern side, strengthen containment lines on 8B, northern side handed back to Wollondilly IMT.

Property Loss, Appin Road

No property Loss

Property Loss, Burke River

177 Ha

8 January

Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	18-33°C
Hum	12-57%
Wind Dir	SW
Wind Vel	24-58
Rain	Nil

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Patrol and strengthen containment lines on Cataract Sector. All other sectors out.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Zulu East – patrol, develop fallback strategies for containment of spotover into north of Cataract Dam. Yankee and Zulu Sectors, contained in Gorge, patrol spotfires above Gorge. Asset protection fallback strategies implemented for Bellambi Creek substation.

Property Loss, Appin Road

No property loss.

Property Loss, Burke River

889 Ha

9 January

Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	15-29°C
Hum	25-74%
Wind Dir	NW
Wind Vel	17-43
Rain	Nil

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Patrol and strengthen containment lines on Cataract Sector. All other sectors out.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Zulu East – Direct attack onto previous days spotover, backburn from containment lines in evening. Yankee and Zulu Sectors, contained in Gorge, patrol spotfires above the Gorge.

Property Loss, Appin Road

No property loss.

Property Loss, Burke River

119 Ha



Photograph by Matt Black

ASSET PROTECTION AT AVON DAM, DOZER TO STRENGTHEN LINES ON MIKE AND LIMA SECTORS, COMPLETED BACKBURN IN DELTA SECTOR. MAJOR FIRE RUN REQUIRED PROPERTY PROTECTION AT CORDEAUX DAM. CONTINUE PATROLLING REMAINDER, WATER BOMB GORGE. PROPERTY PROTECTION IN SOUTHERN DIVISION AROUND CALDERWOOD VALLEY.



Photograph by Sean Davey

Property Loss, Burke River

No property loss.

Total Area, Appin Road Fire (Excluding Sutherland LGA)

21,917 Hectares

Final Circumference

92 Kilometres

Total Area, Burke River Fire

47,138 Hectares

Final Circumference

155 Kilometres

Summary

The impact of the Appin Road and Burke River fires involved an unprecedented firefighting campaign for Illawarra emergency services.

Although there was a significant loss of property in the Helensburgh, Stanwell Tops and Darkes Forest areas on Christmas Day, there was no major loss of property during the remaining 20 days of the incident.

In addition, there were no critical injuries reported by firefighters, other emergency services or the public.

10 January

Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	15-29°C
Hum	25-74%
Wind Dir	NW
Wind Vel	17-43
Rain	Nil

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Patrol Cataract Sector. All other sectors out.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Yankee and Zulu Sectors, contained in Gorge, patrol spot fires above Gorge. Whiskey Sector – patrol and deepen backburn.

Property Loss, Appin Road

No property loss.

Property Loss, Burke River

No property loss.

11 January

Prevailing Weather Conditions

Temp	16-33°C
Hum	29-65%
Wind Dir	NW
Wind Vel	19-38
Rain	Nil

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Patrol Cataract Sector. All other sectors out.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Yankee and Zulu Sectors, contained in Gorge, patrol spot fires above Gorge. Whiskey – patrol and deepen backburn.

Property Loss, Appin Road

No property loss.

Property Loss, Burke River

No property loss.

Strategies Deployed, Appin Road

Patrol Cataract Sector. All other sectors out.

Strategies Deployed, Burke River

Patrol Yankee, Zulu East and Whiskey Sectors.

Property Loss, Appin Road

No property loss.

MILD WEATHER CONDITIONS WERE EXPERIENCED THROUGHOUT THESE THREE DAYS.

