



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



FARMING COMMUNITIES ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

JULY 2018

➤ Farming communities Engagement Strategy

This strategy aims to deliver a program of activities and supporting resources that reduce the risk of fire and other emergencies on farming communities. Farming communities for the purpose of this strategy are those where primary industries across agriculture, livestock and horticulture represent the bulk of the local economy as opposed to smaller hobby farms. These will be developed and implemented in collaboration and in partnership with farmers, rural communities, industry representatives, professional associations and NSW RFS Members.



➤ The Strategy

Exploring the issue with stakeholders identified a number of initiatives to reduce risk in farming communities. Delivering the issues and initiatives below and supporting members to implement the activities is critical to the success of the Get Ready Farmers Program.

➤ Get Ready Farmers Program

Activities that focus on farmers communities part of the NSW RFS Fire Ready Farmers Program. Arranged in an order from Level 1 to Level 4 activities, they provide an indication of the reach and effectiveness of the activity.

ACTIVITIES				
Higher reach Lower effectiveness		Lower reach Higher effectiveness		
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	
Public Information	Community Relations	Behavioural Interventions	Community Development	Community Liaison
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Your Guide to Making a Property Fire Management Plan ➤ Escaped & Illegal Burns Campaign ➤ Harvest Safety Alerts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Field Day Series ➤ Gumtree Meetings ➤ NSW Farmers Representative at BFMC/IMT ➤ Your Guide to Private Firefighting Equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hotspots (Large Farm Fowrmat) ➤ Get Ready Homesteads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Community Protection Plans ➤ Get Ready Communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rural Liaison Officers ➤ Community Field Liaison

ISSUE	INITIATIVE	2018-19 DELIVERABLES	2022 OUTCOME
Speak To Me Rural communities want to see and consume tailored information and campaigns for their context rather than a common 'interface' community.	Your Guide to Making a Property Fire Management Plan Tailoring the successful guide to making a bush fire survival plan for residents of large rural properties.	Deliver and test the effectiveness of a new Guide.	>60% of landholders on large farms have effective property management and survival plans.
Escaped and Illegal Burns Fire is commonly used in rural communities for land management and agricultural purposes but many are conducted illegally and/or escape impacting their community or emergency services.	Sub-Campaign: Escaped and Illegal Burns A communications campaign with online, broadcast, face to face and outdoor assets for implementation by NSW RFS members according to local conditions.	Deliver campaign assets including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Online ➤ Social Media ➤ Radio ➤ Outdoor ➤ Face to Face Establish monitoring and evaluation framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reduce the seasonally adjusted rate of escaped burns on farms by 5% annually. ➤ Reduce the rate of illegal burn re-offending by 10% annually.
Harvest Fires Harvesting presents an increased risk of header and crop fires that impart a significant economic impact and risk to local communities.	Harvest Safety Alerts A public information campaign designed to alert harvesters of an increased risk, and actions they should take to reduce the risk of fire.	Deliver assets to support Operational Management Procedure including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Social media ➤ Online ➤ Radio ➤ Media Release Establish monitoring and evaluation framework.	Reduce the seasonally adjusted rate of escaped harvest fires by 5% annually.
Meet on our Terms Farmers work long hours and travel significant distances daily with fire preparedness being one of many competing priorities.	Gumtree Meetings Already delivered across the state, Gumtree Meetings are short, informal meetings held with residents. They provide an opportunity to discuss and prepare for the coming season.	Deliver facilitators guide and supporting resources.	Increased participation in Gumtree meetings by 5% annually contributing to and increased overall recognition of risk and undertaking of preparedness actions in the farming community segment.
Private Equipment Farmers commonly have private firefighting equipment and regularly use them to fight wild fires alongside fire authorities, ensuring this equipment is up to standard and maintained is critical for all parties.	Your Guide to Private Firefighting Equipment Deliver a simple resource reinforcing the importance of private equipment but also the standards and expectations of working on a fire ground that is also a workplace.	Incorporate advice into a Rural Fire Management Planning Guide Provide facilitators guide to assist with promotion and distribution through Field Day and Gumtree activities.	Landholders and firefighters have clear understanding of equipment, standards and expectations on firegrounds and operate effectively together.
Skills to Burn Providing knowledge and skills to farmers to effectively managed land through the use of fire and gain the ecological and agricultural benefits of fire as a tool.	Hotspots Delivered over a series of workshops, Hotspots brings together the skills of fire managers, ecologists and agronomists to support farmers developing and implementing a property management plan.	Deliver facilitators guide and supporting resources.	>95% of Hotspots program attendees develop and share their property fire management plan.
House and Home Due to the scale of properties in fires, husbands, wives and children have different roles to protect life and assets. Developing skills to implement them effectively if crucial.	Get Ready Homesteads A practical program that targets women and children to develop the skills required to implement their property management and bush fire survival plans.	Deliver facilitators guide and supporting resources.	>50% of participants can readily apply their bush fire survival plan to a tertiary level (i.e. three alternatives in defense or disruptive questions in leave early)
Empower Communities Some communities already have significant strengths they can build on to increase preparedness and resilience.	Get Ready Communities A community-led program to supports communities to enquire into their risk and develop local solutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Deliver facilitators guide and supporting resources. ➤ Conduct pilot trial and establish monitoring and evaluation framework. 	Get Ready Communities demonstrate a recognition of risk and undertaking of preparedness action at >10% higher than other similar communities.
Local Knowledge Residents hold valuable local knowledge, particularly in times of emergencies but regularly feel unheard following fires.	Rural Liaison Deploy Rural Liaison Officers as well as Community Field Liaison to provide a conduit between the community and Incident Controllers.	Refine the integration of Rural Liaison Officers into operations.	The deployment of Field Liaison Officers for major fires has been normalised and community sentiment improves to reflect increased communications.

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Farming communities at a glance

The NSW RFS uses *Mosaic* segmentation to identify, understand and tailor communication and engagement to at-risk communities. The ***Distanced Existence*** segment (E) represents the typical farming communities targeted through the Get Ready Farmers Program. This segment can be further refined to two types:

Working The Land (E19)

- › Represents 3.78% of households
- › 80% of this segment live on very large properties (>1000ha)
- › Predominantly Anglo-Australians with families

Crops & Country (E20)

- › Represent 2.74% of households
- › High rates of volunteering
- › Typically long term residents (>10 years)

Method

The NSW RFS Community Engagement Team use the **TESTER** Framework to develop and implement these targeted engagement strategies. This strategy represents the output of the 'target' and 'explore' phases. As programs are delivered they will be rigorously trialled before expanded and reviewed for ongoing continuous improvement. To find out more and view the Behavioural Insights Toolkit visit MyRFS.

Acknowledgements

This strategy was developed in consultation with farmers, rural communities, industry representatives, professional associations and NSW RFS Members. Thank you for your contributions.

Comments on draft

The NSW RFS welcomes any comments on this draft strategy through a number of channels:

- › By commenting on the NSW RFS Community Engagement Facebook Group.
- › By emailing: community.engagement@rfs.nsw.gov.au
- › By calling: 02 8741 5416

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