

BUSH FIREbulletin

THE JOURNAL OF THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



Fire, storms, drought: A lethal combination

- Interstate Deployments
- Road Crash Rescue
- Storm Response
- State Championships



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IN THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE
WE VALUE

- community and environment
- support, friendship and camaraderie
- knowledge and learning
- integrity and trust
- one team, many players and one purpose
- adaptability and resourcefulness
- mutual respect



Foreword

The combination of drought, heatwave and severe thunderstorms have kept our members busy this past fire season with various activities in our own state, and also assisting at multiple fires in Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria.

There was intense fire activity in late winter around Cessnock, Port Stephens, Nowra and on the far south coast. By Christmas, our members had responded to over 7,500 bush fires.

As 2019 started, heatwave temperatures made conditions difficult, as did lightning storms, which sparked widespread fires. Remote area teams were called on often to respond to fires in areas such as the Snowy Mountains.

It's always hard to see homes lost when our members work so hard to protect our community. Sadly in the fires at Tingha, Tabulum and Tenterfield in the north of the state in February we lost a number of homes and outbuildings. Due to the extraordinary effort of firefighters, many lives were saved.

As well as battling fire across the season, our crews helped with the clean-up after severe thunderstorms hit the state, including in the Narrabri area, Central Coast and around Sydney in December. Building Impact Assessment teams also assisted NSW SES assessing damage and identifying hazards.

The new building that houses our Headquarters and the State Operations Centre opened in November. Its state of the art technology and the co-location of other emergency services representatives will allow this building to better support our members and the community they protect.

The NSW RFS State Operations Centre coordinated the deployment of more than 650 personnel, 25 appliances and nine aircraft, including four LATs, to assist with unprecedented fire activity in Queensland. More recently, our members have come to the aid of our Tasmanian colleagues who faced fires in the west and southeast of the state. The depth of our members' skills allowed us to send more than 320 firefighters, incident managers, public liaison, aviation and remote area specialists to Tasmania during the early months of 2019, with 621 personnel in total with our partner and interstate agencies. In February and March we also sent fire tankers, strike teams and other resources to Victoria as they battled severe fires.

As so many families are struggling with the drought, we were happy to coordinate the delivery of 13 tonnes of food and other goods to regional communities through the "Feed a Farmer" partnership with Foodbank NSW/ACT before Christmas.

The State Championships held at Lake Centenary in Temora last September was a wonderful display not only of our skilled teams showing their complex skills, but also a testament to all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes to bring these events together. It's especially gratifying to see the junior teams working well together and giving us a picture of the talents that will form our membership in the years to come.

I hope you enjoy the latest edition of the Bush Fire Bulletin.

Regards,

Shane Fitzsimmons AFSM
Commissioner

Resilient Australia Awards



For the second year, a NSW RFS project won an award in the schools category in the NSW Resilient Australia Awards. Convened by the Office of Emergency Management, the awards recognise and promote initiatives that strengthen community disaster resilience across Australia.

Peter Randall of Warrimoo Rural Fire Brigade received the award on behalf of the brigade and Warrimoo Public School.

The Blue Mountains School also won the "Highly Commended – Schools Category (NSW)" for its project at the National Awards held in Brisbane.

The school and the local NSW RFS brigade partnered to equip over 150 students with bush fire safety knowledge, skills and values. The project enhanced community awareness of the school as a safe place for students during a bush fire event.

Together, the school and brigade host the annual NSW RFS Get Ready Weekend, promoting preparedness and resilience throughout the community.

Kellie Mar won the NSW section of the National Photography Award – Highly Commended for a

portrait of Blaxland RFB Deputy Captain Emily Rawbone, titled "Portrait of a Lady". Kellie is a member of Blaxland Brigade. Emily Rawbone has over 20 years of experience and several firefighter qualifications.

According to Emily it's "no biggie" and she modestly counts herself as just another part of the NSW RFS volunteer firefighting crews who all strive for the same thing, to protect our communities.

Congratulations to the brigades and everyone else involved.

Male Champions of Change report



The Male Champions of Change Fire and Emergency Services Progress Report was released in December 2018.

The Male Champions of Change initiative is about improving the role and proportion of women in fire and emergency services.

Across the country, women fill just 10 percent of frontline service delivery roles, and one in 10 senior leaders are women. The report shows that while there is progress being made, there's much more work to do to make fire and emergency services more inclusive.

Nationally, the proportion of women in fire and emergency services sits at 22 percent.

As an industry, and in the NSW RFS, we are committed to increasing female membership, and increasing women's representation on major leadership and policy forums in coming years. Many of these initiatives have come from members of our services.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said "I have found it particularly beneficial, as part of the program, leading the numerous "Listen and Learn" sessions with volunteers

and staff, both male and female. These forums have provided valuable insights, thoughts and ideas."

Our industry is committed to making change – because when our fire and emergency services are more inclusive and representative of the community, it is something that all members benefit from.

You can read the Progress Report on the Male Champions of Change website.

Technology updates



Technology updates and new and emerging technological tools are helping members and the wider public.

The NSW RFS has released an updated version of the Fires Near Me NSW smartphone application. The new version has the ability to send push notifications to all users, such as when there are emergency warnings, widespread total fire bans or other important statewide information.

We're already building and testing the next version which will include a feature many people have asked about – watch zones, where you can set up an area to keep an eye on and receive automatic notifications when there's a fire near you.

Update your Fires Near Me NSW app on Apple or Android, and make sure you have push notifications turned on.

After gathering information about the requirements of staff and volunteers, the Service has put out an EOJ for providing technology to help track member availability.

Brigades already use a number of applications and sites to manage availability and callouts, so it would be efficient to have one system. One key to the success of such technology is ensuring any system ties in with corporate systems, like ICON or SAP.

After working with the Operations Consultative Committee to shortlist vendors we're now in the procurement phase to land on a system.

The trial of the Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) system is well underway. One of the challenges to such a system is the fact that our vehicles and people operate in remote areas and valleys where signals can be weak.

Work is also underway on an in-truck box which is a simple push button or status panel, which marks a vehicle as available, out of service or responding. Another big project is the new member website, which will replace the staff intranet and MyRFS, combining them on the one platform.

There's been extensive feedback from members about what tools, functions and features to include in the site and we're expecting to announce more about the website in coming months.

New FCC for Northern Tablelands

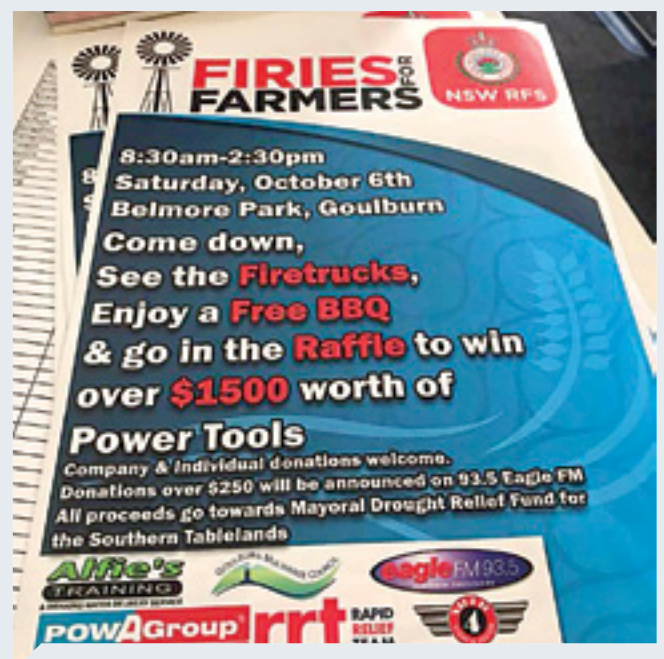


Northern NSW received a \$3.4m investment with the opening of the new Northern Tablelands Fire Control Centre. The facility, officially opened in August 2018, is centrally located in Glen Innes and also houses the Glen Innes Rural Fire Brigade in a separate two bay facility, along with State Mitigation Services crews.

The facility begins a new era for the District who had previously managed fire events from the former Glen Innes Fire Control Centre situated at the Severn Shire Council Chambers. Over the last few fire seasons it was identified that the facility, originally built in 1910, was in need of a much needed upgrade after more than 100 years of servicing the area. This new complex, with more space and updated technology, saw significant operational activity in February and March due to the fires in northern NSW.

This state of the art centre, which provides greater communication and response for major fire incidents, has offices, an operations room, training rooms, kitchen and storerooms.

Helping our farmers



The NSW RFS know that lots of people, including many of our own members, have been doing it tough due to the drought. Many of our volunteers have supported the Furies For Farmers initiative by holding local events. These events ranged from fundraisers, some held in association with Get Ready Weekend, to donations for the Farmers Drought Relief Fund, barbecues and social events to give farming families a break, to food drives collecting food for "Feed a Farmer" through Foodbank NSW/ACT.



Lightning, fires and storms

The early and rapid start to the fire season in NSW finally subsided as Mother Nature smiled on NSW and despite initial forecasts, October and early November were cool and wet. This saw a dramatic downturn in fire activity.

The downturn in the NSW operational activity provided the Service an opportunity to help others across the border. Queensland, also gripped by the prolonged drought conditions, reached out for assistance in late November. More than 650 incident management and aviation specialists along with firefighters and vehicles, crossed the border providing valuable assistance over a two week period.

The quiet run into Christmas was broken by thunder and hail as severe storms rolled across the state. Severe weather saw significant damage to homes in the Narrabri, Central Coast and Sydney areas. The assistance to the NSW SES

would see crews lend a hand right across the festive season.

With the New Year, fire activity across NSW remained relatively consistent. Unrelenting heatwaves baked the landscape after Christmas and fire dangers steadily rose. While NSW was spared the worst of the fire danger due to high humidity and the absence of strong winds, it did however receive an abundance of lightning.

Across January dozens of fires were ignited each afternoon from the thousands of lightning strikes across the state. Fortunately the majority of these fires burnt in remote country, away from major towns or property, but this remoteness led to a significant reliance on aircraft and remote area firefighters.

Following directly behind these storms would often be the Rapid Aerial Response Teams (RART). These teams were stood up in a number of

locations across the State due to the forecast of possible dry lightning. In southern NSW, RART teams working from the Hume Airbase just outside of Canberra, were scrambling to contain numerous new fires as they were reported, with the high based storms racing across the range from west to east. In a single afternoon more than 30 fires were reported around the small township of Tumut, with further ignitions reported on the Victorian border.

This fire season NSW RFS RART crews have responded to 77 incidents so far, 64 of them in January. There were 1,345 fires in January, with over almost 300 started by lightning.

The Possum Creek Fire, that burnt approximately 30km south east of Tumbarumba, started as three separate fires in the afternoon of 17 January. Although not close to property, the fire was presented with a number of obstacles, including electrical feeder

lines into Victoria. Any impact on this infrastructure had the potential to cause significant disruptions to electrical feeds across the border in Victoria.

In the following weeks, this fire was nursed in and around electrical infrastructure, with the assistance of numerous water-bombing aircraft. With rain finally falling across the fire ground the fire was declared contained on the 31 January.

During January, NSW wasn't the only state experiencing significant fire activity. Across the border Victoria was dealing with several new fires in the Gippsland area and numerous fires were burning further south across the Tasman.

A call for assistance from Tasmania resulted in incident management personnel, Remote Area Firefighters and aviation specialists being deployed to Tasmania in early January. By the end of February more than 600 people had been deployed.



Main image: The aftermath of the Tingha Plateau fire. Photo by Andrew Flakelar. **Left:** The Freemans Waterhole fire. Photo courtesy Martinsville RFS.

The NSW RFS also dispatched its Aerial Intelligence Platform Firebird 200 to provide much needed real-time vision for Incident Management Teams. In addition to this tremendous effort, all three NSW based

Large Air Tankers have run multiple missions from the main bases in Richmond and Dubbo, and from a temporary base set up at Hobart Airport. February presented a number of significant fires in the north

east of the state that saw more than 76,700 hectares burnt and 33 houses and 94 outbuildings destroyed. The hard work and tireless efforts of more than 1,000 personnel, both locally and those who

travelled from around the state, saw more than 750 homes and outbuildings saved. Above all, there was no loss of life.

The Tingha Plateau, Bruxner Highway, Wallangarra and Linton fires all began or saw an increase in fire activity around the 12 February, when the first statewide Total Fire Ban of the season was declared. The last of these fires, Wallangarra, was contained on the 22 February.



This page clockwise from top: Protection of the Tingha township was helped by the natural common that surrounds the hamlet. Cows wander freely and keep the vegetation low. February 2019. Photo by local photographer, Brayden Vickery. Haze covers the streets of Tenterfield.

Photo from the Northern Tablelands RFS team. The Yankees Gap fire, Bemboka, August 2018. Photo by Emily Smith. Tingha fire. Photo courtesy of Devils Pinch RFB.



This page clockwise from top left: Tabulum fires February 2019. Photo by Troy Middlebrook. The Inverell Volunteer Rescue Association provides a quick snack and a break near the Tingha Plateau fire. Photo by the Inverell Rescue Association.

The Linton fire, Tamworth, February 2019. Photo courtesy Curlewis RFB. What would our firefighters do without the tireless work of our catering crews. This is the Great Lakes Catering Unit at the Viney Creek Road fire in January. Photo by Selwyn Cox.

Fire

Fire trucks barricade – arched hoses – fire brigade.

Holding the monster back.

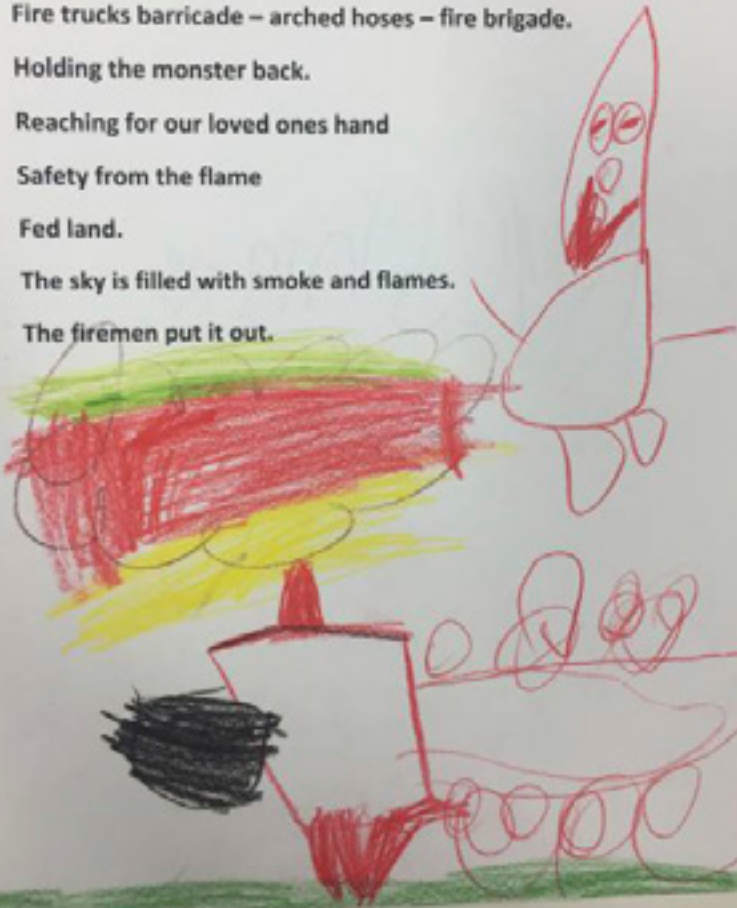
Reaching for our loved ones hand

Safety from the flame

Fed land.

The sky is filled with smoke and flames.

The firemen put it out.



Clockwise from top left: A drawing and poem by a junior student from Gilgai Public School. A St Georges Basin RFB crew battles the Mt Kingiman fire. Photo courtesy of St Georges Basin RFB. A LAT appliance approaches

the Linton fire over a Grose Wold RFB Cat 1 appliance. Photo Grose Wold RFB. Road signs at an intersection tell a tale of intense heat and damage in the Tingha Plateau fire. Photo by Chris Garlick.



Clockwise from top: Members of Ingleside RFB refill their appliance from a dam near the Tingha Plateau fire. Photo by Ingleside RFB. Members of Milton RFB display thank you notes from the local community for their efforts in fighting the Mt Kingman fire. Photo by Milton RFB.

Members of the NSW RFS, NSW SES and NSW Ambulance monitor the Campvale fire from the Cessnock Fire Control Centre. Photo by Rolf Poole. Forest set ablaze in difficult firefighting conditions at the Tingha Plateau fire. Photo by Andrew Flakelar.



Unseasonable

By nightfall almost 100 fires burnt along the east coast stretching from the Victorian to Queensland Borders.

Thirty three of those fires remained uncontained.

Early August saw relative humidity at low levels and temperatures above average.

By early morning August 15 strong north westerly winds had established themselves over much of NSW. Just after 8am a fire burning approximately 15km west of Ulladulla in the Shoalhaven was up and running towards properties west of Burrill Lake.

An emergency warning was issued with alert messages being sent to people in the Kings Point, Croobyar and Burrill Lake areas advising them to seek shelter as the fire approached.

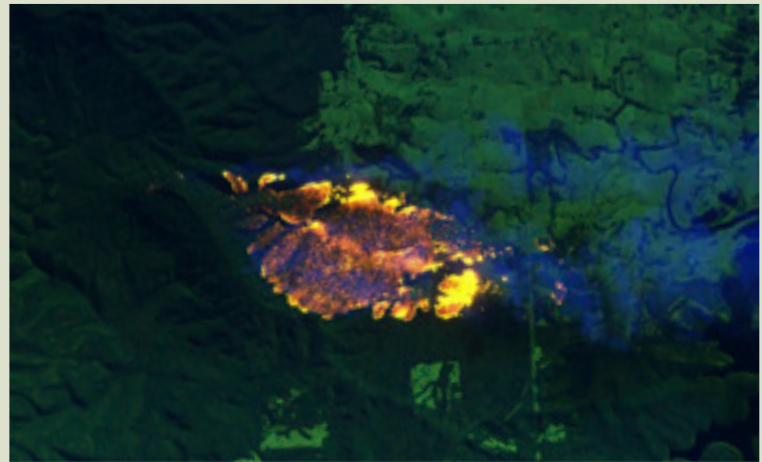
By 9am, up and down the coast, crews were responding to dozens of fires. The Bureau of Meteorology had provided a revised weather forecast with severe fire danger now likely in Sydney, Illawarra/ Shoalhaven and the Hunter.

Total fire bans were declared as fire activity continued to increase. These would be the earliest ever recorded bans for these areas.

By nightfall almost 100 fires burnt along the east coast stretching from the Victorian to Queensland Borders. Thirty three of those fires remained uncontained.

Efforts were being focused on the Bristol Arms Rd fire in the Clarence Valley, the Mothersoles Rd fire in the Richmond Valley as well as the Kingiman fire and Yankees Gap fire on the south coast.

The next three days would see no let up in the weather or the fire activity. New fires were being dealt with at Salt Ash in the Port Stephens area, North Nowra, Bilpin, and the Clarence and Richmond Valleys.



Main image: Salt Ash fire August 2018. Photo by Karl Hoffman.
Top: Linescan of the Kingiman fire. **Centre:** Linescan of the Yankees Gap fire. **Bottom:** The state of bush fires in NSW on 15 August 2018.



winter fires

August may be the last month of winter but fires were active and the Bureau's outlook continued to point to a drier and warmer spring period.

The Salt Ash fire started in the early afternoon of August 17. Crews had successfully held the fire over the previous 24 hours to the west of Oyster Cove Road, however strengthening winds around midday caused numerous spot fires and the line was breached just after midday.

Crews worked hard to protect property along Lemon Tree Passage Rd as strong winds continued to whip up fire behaviour normally seen during summer months.

Shortly before 8pm a strong and gusty south westerly wind change moved across the fire ground. Crews reported flame height at some 20 to 30 metres moving quickly towards the Tanilba Bay area.

An emergency warning was in place with alerts being sent to residents advising them to seek shelter as the fire approached.

Fire activity finally subsided in the early hours of August 18 with firefighters being able to state loud and proudly "no homes lost".

The Kingman fire burnt aggressively under strong winds and reached emergency warning level.

Tragically, during this period of increased activity, we lost a highly respected helicopter pilot Allan "Tully" Tull while he was fighting the Kingman fire.

One month on and drought conditions continued to grip the state. Firefighters had dealt with more than 2,800 fires since the beginning of August and the Bureau's outlook continued to point to a drier and warmer spring period.

In the Bega Valley the Yankees Gap fire burning since mid-August roared to life once again as unseasonable hot and windy weather pushed the fire towards property near Bemboka, Numbugga and Morans Crossing.

The Yankees Gap fire was contained on 27 September and finally declared out on 8 November. It would consume some 19,600ha of National Park and private lands, four homes and dozens of sheds and outbuildings. This fire would be one of the earliest significant fires ever recorded in the area.

Despite the Bureau's grim forecast of more warm and dry weather, October thankfully brought more favourable conditions. This provided many districts with a much needed breather.

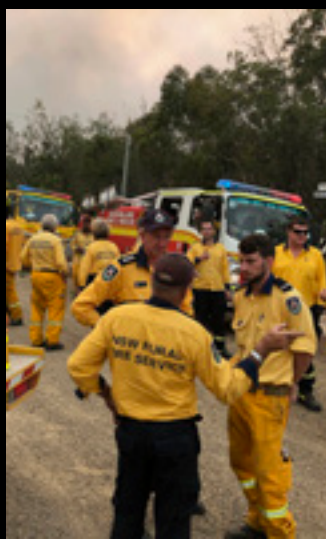
Firefighters since the beginning of July had responded to more than 8,849 bush, grass and scrub fires. Four homes were lost and another three damaged. A further 44 outbuildings had been razed, however most importantly not a single life was lost. ■



Top: Staging post for the Campvale fire, November 2018. Photo by Courtney Orr. **Centre:** Yankees Gap fire. **Bottom:** Salt Ash fire, August 2018. Photo by Karl Hoffman.

I was there: The Queensland bush fire deployment

Two firefighters offer insights about their deployment to assist their northern neighbours.



In November, in response to unprecedented fires across Queensland, AFAC National Resource Sharing Centre coordinated 1,200 personnel from across Australia to assist the Queensland services. NSW RFS members were there from 26 November to 8 December.

The VLAT 737 Air Tanker "Gaia" and Bird Dog (Air Attack Platform) were also deployed on 26 November 2018 to assist QLD authorities. The aircraft operated from Rockhampton Regional Airport and completed several sorties.

Steve Gibbs, Captain of Jerrabomberra Creek RFB and Damian Kinnane from

Bungendore RFB were part of the Lake George contingent who made the trip north.

Steve Gibbs is the current Captain of the Jerrabomberra Creek Brigade south of Canberra, where he's been a member for 40 years. Steve commented "It is a privilege to go on such a deployment. You're representing not just your brigade, but the NSW RFS and the state."

Steve was deployed to Deepwater and Angus Waters. The team from Lake George flew from Queanbeyan to Gladstone, then took a bus an hour south to the base camp, set up by Qld Urban Search

and Rescue. It was a long 22 hours, that first day just getting to base camp. They were deployed to Angus Waters and Deepwater, south of Gladstone.

This was the first time Steve was deployed without his own brigade trucks, so using the Queensland appliances took a bit of adjustment. Resources were deployed to respond to quickly changing conditions. On one occasion Steve was working with three different crews on three different vehicles. It required adaptability. Usually on a deployment you work on your own brigade's appliance for the duration with one crew, but

Main: Backburning in Deepwater.

Inset: NSW RFS crews muster at the Queensland firegrounds.
Photos by Jodi Preston.

Top right: The VLAT Boeing 737, along with LAT appliances, on the tarmac at Rockhampton Airbase. **Bottom right:** NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons sees off a NSW RFS deployment crew getting ready to depart at Sydney Airport.



because of the dynamic fire situation he was with three or four different crews on their appliances.

Steve commented that they all worked extremely well together. "The dynamic was positive." He said that while most of the crew had never worked together before, the dynamics were very smooth and "one of the best parts of the deployment was that the crew gelled very well". There were no absolute newbies in the group with the crew ranging from Advanced Firefighter to Group Leader. "The team worked really hard in difficult conditions."

Some NSW RFS brigades did travel to Queensland with their appliances. There was a convoy of appliances

that travelled from Region North and they had a police escort from Tweed Heads in a single convoy. A coachload of members travelled to Brisbane for briefing before being deployed to various incidents. Region East appliances were driven up by one crew, replacement crew were flown to Queensland, then the original drivers were flown home.

On day two, the Lake George crew was split with half at the Captain Creek's fire and half in Deepwater to respond to rapidly changing conditions. They were reunited on day three, but some of the crew worked day and some night shift.

Damian Kinnane from Bungendore RFB said that while it was a short deployment, they were there for three days, "We got a lot of work completed, particularly in the Captain Creek area, working alongside QLD National Parks and local volunteer brigade members from QFES".

Steve commented that 13 trucks had just come out of production in Qld and had not even been delivered to their brigades. "They were put into service immediately, so we got to try out one of the 13 brand new trucks that had no kilometres on the dial. Their brigades didn't even receive them nice and clean", he said, "They were deployed straight to the fire."

Damian said "It's important that when you take receipt of someone else's truck you receive a run down on the appliance. For instance, QFES use threaded couplings as opposed to the NSW RFS who use storz couplings, and of course every truck was different."

Damian's primary role for the deployment was as driver/firefighter. "Due to the duration of shifts and the unfamiliar environment/locations it made sense to

keep the same drivers for the whole deployment as you'd get used to some of the landmarks."

Damian said "We were lucky enough to work alongside members from our own brigades, which made life a lot easier as we all train using similar principles and methods. Although working within a mixed jurisdictional crew would have been a great learning opportunity also – maybe next time."

Both Steve and Damian said that there was nothing particularly different about the Qld fires except the terrain is a bit different. One thing that Steve noted was with a lot of paperbark trees, the bark peels off and starts other flareups. The conditions were slightly different in this area.

The humidity was extreme so one night even at 2am it was hard to light for backburn. Damian commented that "humidity played a very big part also, not only affecting the fire, but it also meant we had to consume a lot of water on the fireground. In some cases you were literally sweating quicker than you could hydrate. This resulted in a number of heat related injuries for members."

Damian said how efficiently they worked was one of the positive achievements of the deployment. "Our leadership group had a really good handle

on the capabilities of each crew member and were able to form constructive and harmonious crews."

"It's always a privilege to represent your state and your brigade," says Steve, "and we were welcomed by Queenslanders who were so appreciative." Damian managed to speak to a few locals and volunteers within the Captain Creek fairground area, "all were very appreciative of our efforts, considering the Captain Creek fire had been burning on and off for a period of three weeks and had been extinguished on two previous occasions, only to re-ignite during dry lightning events".

When asked about particularly memorable moments, Damian said "On one occasion a bald eagle flew into the path of our truck, in the Captain Creek area. The wingspan of the eagle was the same size as the windscreen, it was magnificent and so graceful."

As with any deployment, support from home is crucial. "Volunteering is great and you get to go out and do the stuff that is interesting to you, but without the support and understanding from your partner, family and employer it would make such deployments a lot harder. Employer support is crucial, after all you can't afford to live off a volunteer wage!" ■



Helping our island state

Tasmania has endured serious fires in the southwest, the central plateau and south near the Tahune forest. The fires have been burning in remote and rugged country, with the NSW RFS providing Remote Area Firefighting Teams (RAFT) to help local crews in slowing the spread of fires, and protecting properties and environmentally sensitive areas.

Cumberland RAFT member Alex Murphy was among the first of the NSW RFS members deployed.

“We were deployed to the Gell River fire. Each day we flew 30 minutes from our base camp. We were on the fire ground at 9:30am each day. From there we split into three teams and worked on different spot fires. We carried Pulaski tools in hand and red packs – weighing roughly 20kgs – which contained food and items in case we had to stay overnight.

“From the helipad where we landed we walked through steep and rough terrain, ranging from completely burnt out hills with fallen trees, to rainforests covered in moss as far as the eye could see.

“Our mission was to identify the burnt and unburnt areas and locate where fire had spotted over. We extinguished by dry

firefighting or helicopter water buckets on any spot fires that could pose a threat. Our first day we walked 11 kms and each day we arrived back at the base camp at 7pm just in time for dinner. Then we were in the shower and straight to bed ready to do it all over again next morning.”

Alex observed that the flora and fauna are so different from what is usually encountered and that it affected the firefighting. For instance, Tasmania firefighters often deal with “peat fires” – the peat in the soil burns. They had to dig deep into the ground using pulaskis to extinguish these fires and also use water bombing buckets from helicopters to put water on the organic soil.

The firefighters in Tasmania also routinely use gaiters, protective clothing worn over the pants and boots from the knee to the ankle, to offer protection from branches and snakes, and to stop items entering the top of their boots.

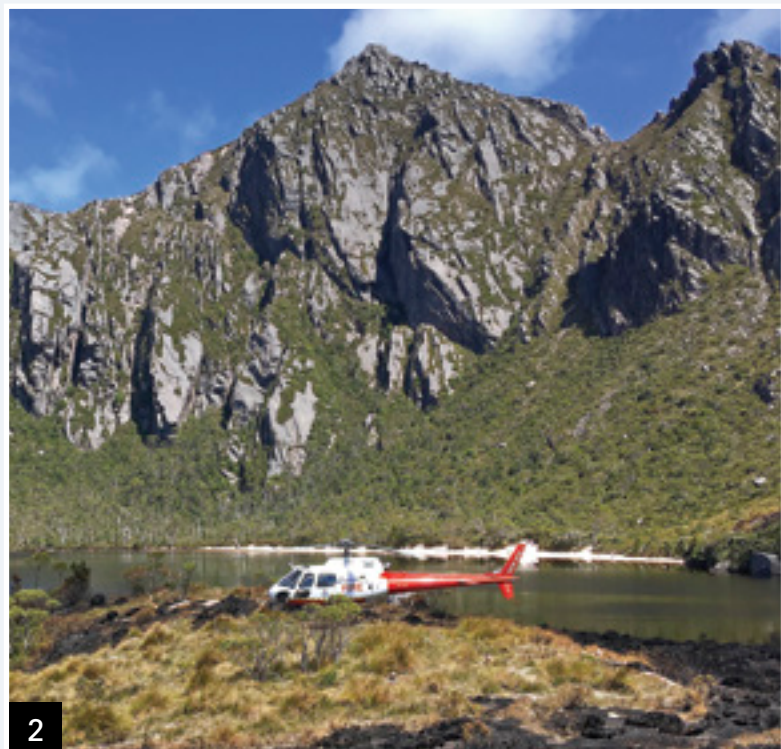
Aviation crews, fire managers and public information personnel have also been deployed to support local agencies.

James Morris, from Media Services, was deployed to Tasmania as a Public Information Officer.

He explains “This role includes publishing information and warnings to the TFS website and liaising with local communities affected by the fires to provide them with up to date incident information.

I delivered community newsletters and spoke with residents and businesses affected by the Gell River fire.”

This took him to a number of towns as far away as Strathgordon and Gordon Dam. He was based out of Cambridge Fire Centre for a five-day stint. ■





Since 7 January, more than 300 NSW RFS members have been deployed to Tasmania, to help with destructive bush fires which have impacted the state. As the fires are still burning, we'll bring a more extended coverage in the next issue of the Bush Fire Bulletin. For now, here are a few initial observations and photographs from January and early February.

Main photo: Tim Shea area of Mount Field National Park. Photo by James Morris.

1: RAFT group photo by Alex Murphy.

"This was our last day on the fireground together. It was 1800 hours and we were all exhausted on a 40 degree day. The plants around us are called button grass and the dirt we are standing on is swamp-like (snake country!)"

"I was amazed that this can burn given the amount of moisture it contained. The man in blue was from NSW Ambulance and was our "SOT" (Special Operations Team) basically, a specialised remote paramedic. Richard from the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service is third from the left. He helped us get used to the buttongrass and also help identify the snakes."

2: Helicopter at Lake Rhona. Photo by Andrew Macdonald. Andrew was deployed early in January. The NSW RFS Squirrel helicopter, (Firebird 200), was deployed interstate to the Gell River fire located in the Franklin - Gordon Wild Rivers National Park in southwest Tasmania. This helicopter carries specialist video equipment including an infrared camera that was used to livestream

fire footage to the Tasmania Fire Service southern regional office. This footage provided the Incident Management Team with critical real time strategic information including fire location, fire behaviour, hot spots and potential threats.

3: The Gell River fire burnt in difficult terrain.

4: RAFT team doing the hard yards. Photo by Carlyle Seers, Southern Highlands RAFT.



Building Impact Assessment teams help in December storms

By Cameron Lownds and Mel O'Halloran

During December 2018 large storms affected NSW over a series of days causing significant hail, wind and rain damage to properties and disruption to the community.

As part of the response and recovery efforts, NSW RFS Building Impact Assessment (BIA) teams were tasked to support NSW SES with identifying and prioritising damage in Sutherland, the Hills District, Parramatta and Hornsby.

BIA teams are deployed by State Operations to collect and analyse data when a habitable structure has been destroyed or damaged as a result of a natural hazard.

Team members are staff and volunteers from a range of backgrounds including planners, construction experts,

ecologists, firefighters and researchers. The teams are trained in assessing damage and capturing that data using tablet app technology.

SUTHERLAND

BIA teams were deployed in the afternoon of Sunday 16 December to assess damage caused by storms the previous day by high winds and heavy rain. Four teams and a coordinator worked from Grays Point Brigade station and assessed damage to every property in the Grays Point area.

The coordinator worked alongside NSW SES to check that all damaged properties requiring assistance were logged as jobs. Tree and powerline hazards were mapped providing crews with photos and locations of branches on wires and dangerous trees.

Using the web-based mapping tools the BIA field coordinator shared the results live with NSW SES, NSW RFS, Fire & Rescue NSW and AusGrid as the information was being collected by the teams.

The team completed 676 surveys throughout Grays Point with 29 damaged assets recorded. This assessment process provided NSW SES with an accurate picture of the extent of the damage. The information was used for reporting and informed reports given to the media.

HORNSBY

On Tuesday 18 December, BIA teams were deployed to Hornsby, The Hills and Parramatta, areas also impacted around the same time as Grays Point. Six teams and two Field Coordinators worked

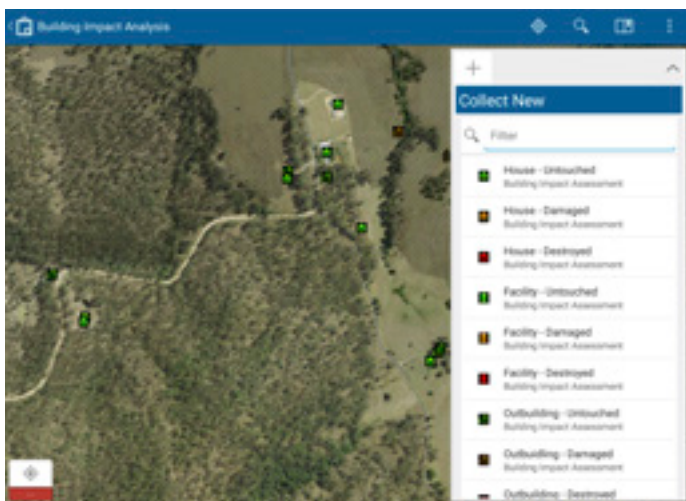
out of the SES Metropolitan Incident Control Centre at Seven Hills and the Hornsby SES Unit with the support of the BIA State Coordinator, the NSW RFS Liaison Officer and NSW SES Officers.

BIA teams assessed damage and hazards at properties while also providing welfare information to residents. Due to the scale of the event BIA teams focused on those properties where a "request for assistance" call had been received by the NSW SES.

The teams used the NSW SES tablet-based mapping system which allowed real time data to be provided to the NSW SES Metropolitan Incident Control Centre. The workload was split between Fire & Rescue NSW teams and NSW RFS BIA teams, with teams being tasked to different sectors.



Above: NSW RFS crews assisted with protecting properties from any further damage. Photo by Ben Shepherd.



Six teams and two Field Coordinators worked for three days conducting 959 surveys including 382 damaged or severely damaged properties.

BEROWRA

Another storm on Thursday 20 December caused extensive hail damage around Berowra and Cowan.

Six BIA teams and a coordinator were in the field undertaking damage assessment the day after the storm. During the two day deployment BIA crews identified 1805 damaged properties, many of these were not previously known to NSW SES.

Hail damage was identified by talking to residents, visually assessing damaged roofs and evidence from rapid repairs. Within the impacted area,

most properties with tile roofs suffered some form of damage.

Using radio communications, teams alerted the coordinator to damaged properties with vulnerable residents so priority support could be provided. The information was shared with support crews on the ground and many of these jobs were completed the same day.

CONCLUSION

The work of BIA teams was crucial after these serious storm events, providing information to the NSW SES on the extent and scale of damage, assisting response and recovery operations and fulfilling the data reporting role.

These storm assessments also provided an opportunity to test systems in a large deployment and provide field experience for new BIA team recruits. ■

Facts about BIA

WHAT IS BUILDING IMPACT ASSESSMENT?

The NSW RFS BIA teams collect information on structures within the impact area of a natural hazard. Usually this is a bush fire, but Building Impact Assessments are also provided to communities that have been affected by storms, floods and cyclones.

The initial Building Impact Assessment involves BIA Officers rapidly recording the level of damage to properties in a 1–5 minute survey of structures. This is to quantify damage to the community and provide official figures for fire and recovery operations and the media.

For large bush fire events a research survey may also be conducted. The research survey includes a more detailed analysis of structure within the impact area. Using a tablet-based survey designed by the NSW RFS in collaboration with CSIRO, BIA Officers record valuable information on the performance of building and landscape design. The data is used to better inform building codes, bush fire risk management planning and community preparedness information.

STORM, FLOOD AND CYCLONE DAMAGE

When it comes to storm damage, NSW RFS BIA teams are often required to assist NSW SES in storm and flood damaged communities.

Essentially a similar assessment to the BIA assessment is undertaken with the addition of recording hazards so they can be attended to by the relevant agency.

HOW IS BIA STRUCTURED?

BIA teams are generally deployed when a habitable structure has been reported as impacted or destroyed or suspected to be destroyed. BIA teams are deployed on request of State Operations.

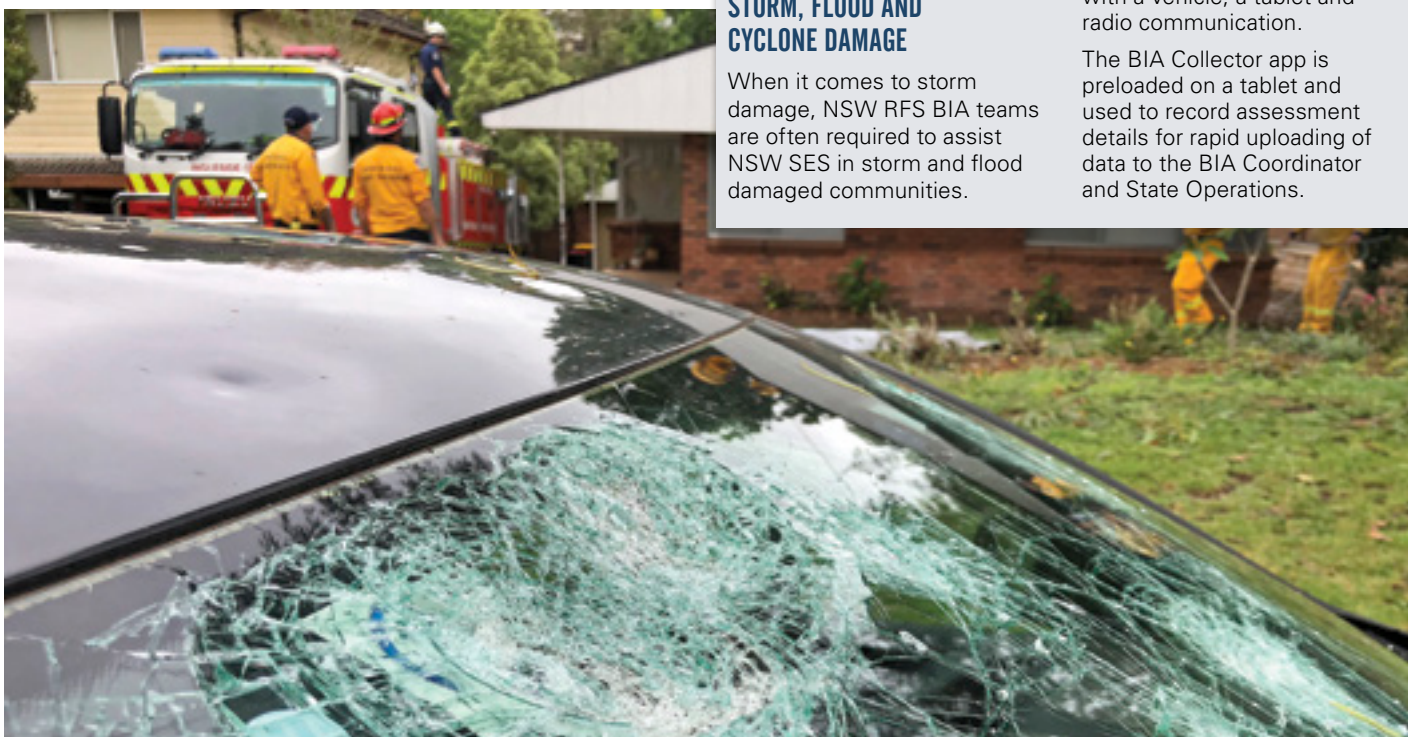
BIA teams are deployed by the BIA Coordinator (at State Headquarters) to the location of the Incident Management Team (IMT) responsible for managing the event. Teams are then deployed to the field on direction of the Incident Controller (IC).

Where BIA operations escalate, a BIA Field Coordinator is inserted into the IMT. Their role is to support the team, monitor the situation and liaise with IC and other delegated personnel.

The teams report either to the BIA Coordinator or the Field Coordinator (if there is one) who is responsible for tasking, logistics and monitoring and supporting the teams.

Each BIA team typically consists of two personnel with a vehicle, a tablet and radio communication.

The BIA Collector app is preloaded on a tablet and used to record assessment details for rapid uploading of data to the BIA Coordinator and State Operations.



Top: Members use the Collector App to log damage. Photo courtesy of NSW RFS BIA.

Above: Severe thunderstorms wreaked havoc on cars, homes and trees. Photo by Ben Shepherd.



Learning from Portugal's fire experience

In June and October 2017, Portugal suffered catastrophic fires in which 119 people lost their lives.

In November last year, Dr Simon Heemstra, the NSW RFS Manager of Planning and Predictive Services, visited the sites of these fires when he attended the International Conference on Fire Research in Portugal. After visiting these sites, and touring the world-leading fire research centre at the University of Coimbra he came back with knowledge and ideas to share.

As an invited keynote speaker at the conference, Dr Heemstra also shared the Australian experience of fires research, and incident planning and response, reporting on the pilot project of the new national Fire Danger Rating System in Australia. He also presented a report on behalf of the Bureau of Meteorology about the weather reanalysis project.

The conference is held every three years and is attended by people sharing knowledge and expertise in wildland/bush fire policies, research, management and capacity.

2017 PORTUGAL FIRES

After the conference, Dr Heemstra attended tours of two areas affected by the devastating fires of 2017. Community members and

fire analysts discussed the aftermath of the fires and the lessons learnt. 2017 was a tragic year for Portugal, with 119 lives lost and 442,000 hectares burned in fires that raged between June and October. This was more than four times the average area burnt in the previous 10 years. Thousands of dwellings and industrial sites were destroyed, and there were incalculable social and environmental impacts from the fires.

With particularly hot weather and long periods of dryness fire conditions were extreme. Strong offshore winds from Hurricane Ophelia brought fierce hot winds from Africa with extraordinary velocity causing countless spot fires.

The fires were complex with exceptional fire spread and episodes of extreme fire behaviour, such as spotting, fire whirls, horizontal roll vortices, active and independent crown fires, eruptive fires and merging fire fronts.

Another reason the fires were so ferocious is the predominance of eucalyptus and acacia trees in the landscape. First introduced in the fifties and sixties as a source of timber, paper pulp and soil

improvement, the introduced species have taken over.

More than 25 percent of the forested landscape is now eucalypt and strong regrowth is already evident only a few months after being razed by fire.

Many people lost their lives as they fled fast-moving fires in their cars along narrow winding roads. There were crashes including one in which a car

collided with a fire tanker. The tour of the areas showed not just how the fires affected the towns and landscape, but also how the communities are recovering and working on their own resilience and capabilities for dealing with any future fires.

One town, for instance, has built its own fire break around the community. And a new building has been designed that





offers a safe place of refuge for people and also fire appliances in case of overrun.

FOREST FIRE LABORATORY

The University of Coimbra has one of the world's largest dedicated fire behaviour research laboratories, the Forest Fire Research Laboratory LEIF (LEIF – Laboratório de Estudos sobre Incêndios Florestais).

Conference participants had the opportunity to see the test devices in the laboratory and to attend to the performance of some experiments.

The equipment in the laboratory is designed and purpose-built by engineers to conduct experiments and tests in fire behaviour. The laboratory looks like a large aircraft hangar.

Combustion tunnels and fire vortices generators allow simulation studies of fire whirls and the dynamics of fire under unstable atmospheric conditions. A firebrand generator produces showers of burning embers.

Another produces and measures the effects of fires burning up canyons under a controlled environment. The engineers can control the large surface area, creating varied critical angles to study eruptive fire behaviour, for example to study at what angles fire attachment occurs.

The equipment uses physics-based modelling, which allows engineers to have greater control over variables. "Canyon or tilt tables"—large flat "tables" laden with straw, then ignited, whose angles and inclination can be adjusted to study fire behaviour.

A canyon table is designed for the study of eruptive fire propagation in canyons and slopes. Hydraulically controlled,

the platform is 3 x 3 metres squared and allows the mechanical variation of slope along two axes.

One tray table has wind tunnels inbuilt underneath to study vortices driving the lateral spread of fire. It's helpful for testing and demonstrating the leeward vortices on hills.

Another interesting simulator tests the effects of fire on passing firefighting appliances. The fire front simulator has 21 metres of metal rails on a concrete floor where vehicles move along a lateral 10 metre fire front. A row of "cages" containing different fuel is ignited to provide a range of radiant heat sources. It simulates conditions for a fire vehicle crossing or travelling along a road in flames.

This equipment is providing world-leading research in improving our understanding of fire behaviour models and fire effects on vehicles and structures. ■



Main left: An enormous forest fire threatens residential suburbs in Monção, Portugal. **Main right:** Canyon Tilt Table. Photo courtesy of Forest Fire Research Centre of ADAI (University of Coimbra, Portugal). **Bottom left:** The fire front simulator tests the impact on a vehicle travelling along a 10m fire front. **Bottom right:** Community members and fire analysts discuss the aftermath of the tragic 2017 Portugal fires. Photos by Simon Heemstra.



Our new HQ

4 MURRAY ROSE AVENUE, SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK NSW 2127

The new NSW Rural Fire Service State Headquarters and State Operations Centre was officially opened on 21 November 2018.

This state of the art, technically advanced facility supports firefighters in the field, providing complex operational information and assistance and support from partner agencies to ensure coordinated response.

Partner agencies like Fire & Rescue NSW and the State Air Desk are located in the State Operations Centre and the NSW SES Sydney Metro Regional Office is housed within the building.

The new building will service the community of NSW for decades to come and increases the state's capability to respond to bush fires.

It supports modern firefighting operations, and includes capabilities such as live fire response information, intelligence sharing, digital mapping, as well as public information and media

broadcasting resources. This new technology supports the 74,000 RFS volunteers in their local communities each day. The facility enhances inter-agency coordination with the State Operations Centre, located within the facility.

The State Operations Centre can accommodate more than 200 multi-agency personnel from other firefighting agencies, as well as the NSW Police, Department of Defence, NSW Ambulance, Forestry Corporation, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service and Bureau of Meteorology working alongside one another.

There is also a secondary operations centre to allow for simultaneous major events, as well as the State Emergency Service (SES) Metro Zone office housing up to 30 officers.

The proximity to senior staff of other agencies was an

important factor in the decision to build the new SOC and HQ in Sydney rather than a regional location. It is located 30-40 minutes from the Sydney CBD to ensure efficient access for other emergency services such as Fire & Rescue NSW and NSW Police.

This decision about location was also based on satisfying infrastructure capabilities, such as water, power, telecommunications and data resilience, proximity to media, a major airport and temporary accommodation.

As it houses a designated critical service, the building (like hospitals and other critical post-disaster infrastructure) needs to be operational immediately after an earthquake or other disastrous event.

The technological advances are significant. The facility includes 180 screens, 640km



If you are ever in Sydney and would like to visit the State Operations Centre, email reception@rfs.nsw.gov.au and we'll arrange a tour.

of data cables and 5,200 data access points.

The infrastructure has to mitigate against power and water failures so that it can continue functioning in case of extreme emergency. For example, the building has



Main left: The new NSW RFS Headquarters. **Main right:** The state-of-the-art State Operations Centre. **Inset above:** Thank you to Brendan Kerin, representative of the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council and a NSW RFS volunteer from the Blaxland Brigade, for a wonderful Smoking Ceremony and Welcome to Country. **Below:** Former Commissioner Phil Koperberg attended the official opening of the building, humbly accepting the decision to name our new board room, "The Koperberg Room".

inputs from two separate mains power feeds (substations), delivered through two separate conduits. The building also has redundant power provided by a dedicated diesel generator and multiple diesel fuel tanks (with a capacity to run 24 hours without the need for refuelling). Power feeds through an uninterrupted power supply (UPS) battery backup system with a full load capability for a minimum of 60 minutes.

NSW RFS has two water supplies from main water service and the Water Reclamation and Management Scheme (WRAMS) within Sydney Olympic Park.

Communication resilience is also paramount. The building has dual street frontages on the northern and southern sides of the building, Murray Rose Avenue and Parkview Drive. NSW RFS has carrier

and path redundancy for telecommunication services as the providers service the building from these two different street frontages.

Diverse telecommunication services are provided by three carriers: Optus, TPG and Telstra. NSW RFS communications systems operates a tower on the roof and another, independent, radio site within the Sydney Olympic Park area via fibre and radio frequency.

Internal structured cabling infrastructure has been designed with additional capacity and resilience. NSW RFS has dual internal and external data centres with resilient data linking architecture.

The Operations Control Centre (OCC) is constructed alongside a fire escape with two-hour rated firewalls,



to mitigate the need to immediately evacuate during false fire alarm activations. The design of the headquarters acknowledges the important role the media play in communicating warnings and other crucial public information,

with numerous rooms available to accommodate major outlets so they can broadcast information efficiently.

If your brigade would like a tour of the State Operations Centre, email reception@rfs.nsw.gov.au and we'll arrange it. ■



After ten years: Black Saturday remembered

Saturday 7 February 2009 was one of the darkest and most tragic days in Australia's history and it permanently changed the way we think about bush fires in this country.

Following an extensive heatwave, a series of large and destructive bush fires devastated communities across Victoria. The intensity and magnitude of the fires had never been seen. A total of 173 people died in the bush fire disaster, with thousands of homes and properties damaged or destroyed.

That 173 people lost their lives was shocking, so too was the many many people who were displaced, injured or traumatised by these fires.

The intensity and size of the fires was simply unprecedented, with more than 450,000 hectares burnt. The loss and destruction from these fires is nothing less than shocking. Yet the Black Saturday bush fires saw an incredible response, including

fire and emergency services from across the country, as well as the Australian community. The national response to the tragedy is something for all to be proud of, including the important role of volunteers in the firefighting effort and recovery.

As Victoria was suffering, help came from all across the country and the NSW RFS response to Black Saturday was immediate, efficient and lengthy. In fact, the assistance given during the Black Saturday fires was the largest and most sustained interstate deployment in the history of the NSW RFS.

The NSW RFS coordinated the NSW firefighting deployment which included NSW Fire Brigades, National Parks and Wildlife Service, State Forests and NSW Ambulance. This

massive organisational and logistical effort touched every aspect of the Service, with willing volunteers deployed from nearly every region in the state.

More than 3,000 individuals assisted, with many personnel returning several times to Victoria. The total number of personnel deployed was 4,161.

NSW RFS members were deployed in roles such as firefighting, Major Incident Coordination, Incident Management Teams, fire investigation, public information, Building Impact Assessment, GIS, Aviation Support, mechanical maintenance and repairs.

On an average day during the deployment, the NSW RFS had 25 aircraft in the air, moving up to 620 people a day around NSW and to Victoria.

In early March 2009, the Bureau of Meteorology issued weather predictions of winds gusting to 200kph and temperatures in the mid-40s.

It was on Monday 2 March that the NSW RFS deployment peaked, with 188 vehicles on the ground and 1,033 people at work offering a massive 12,396 person hours over the 24 hours.

Fortunately rain and cooler weather conditions soon brought the immediate fire emergency to an end. Apart from specialist operations, the NSW RFS wound up its firefighting deployment on Friday 6 March.

The Victorian Premier at the time, John Brumby, announced a Royal Commission into the fires that concluded in July 2010.



“It was probably blowing at close to 100kph. Unbelievable. It came over the mountains like a thunderstorm. It was unbelievable. Roll of thunder. I have never seen anything like it. There wasn’t so much fireballs in the air, it was more just roaring through the treetops. Unbelievable. Something I’ve never seen before. There were a few large flames over the horizon, but really this just turned day into night and just roared.”

Whittlesea
Brigade Captain, Ken
Williamson

“It was the impact on the people that affected me. They have lost so much.”

NSW RFS firefighter

In the longer term, the knowledge gained from this Commission would set a new benchmark for firefighting in Australia. Some of the suggestions included:

- Simplifying language and not using agency jargon
- The need for greater public awareness before major fire events and community liaison during these events
- Communities needing a broader understanding of potential fire and associated risk
- More precise language to assist people to evaluate their safety and take appropriate actions.
- Taking a comprehensive approach to community shelter options
- Identifying vulnerable communities and having measures in place to provide necessary assistance and protection.

Following the 2009 fires, a number of broad ranging initiatives were developed, nationally and within NSW, including:

- An increased focus on survival through the nationally consistent “Prepare. Act. Survive.” framework.
- A revised Fire Danger Rating system, including the highest level of “Catastrophic” to better reflect the magnitude of risk.
- The “Emergency Alert” telephone warning system was developed, delivering a warning message via mobile or landline telephone to areas identified as under threat of impact from bush fires or other natural disaster.
- The “Neighbourhood Safer Places” initiative was also developed. These are locations that have been identified as potentially

providing a higher level of protection during life threatening bush fires.

- The NSW RFS also produced the comprehensive “Bush Fire Survival Plan”, which guides people through the process of preparing for and surviving a bush fire.
- The establishment of the ongoing “Prepare. Act. Survive.” public awareness campaign in NSW, which has consistently focused on the importance of planning and preparation for bush fires.

The NSW RFS recognises the contribution of all fire and emergency services during the disaster, as well as those who assisted during the extensive recovery process which continues today.

We also recognise the impact the event continues to have on communities, and to those who responded. ■

Above: Photo by Matt Inwood

To seek crisis support call the Critical Incident Support Services (CISS) or Chaplaincy on 1800 049 933. The following services can also provide assistance: Lifeline, Beyond Blue, Black Dog Institute, Kids Helpline.

Care and maintenance of bush fire gloves



Your gloves keep your hands safe, but do you know how to look after them so that they can look after you?

Kee your gloves in the best condition to maximise their protective properties by checking them regularly, cleaning if necessary and replacing if damaged.

Check for the following and order replacement gloves if they are damaged or can't be cleaned:

- Cleanliness (dirt, tar, oils, body fluids, paints, chemicals and hazardous materials). Clean them using the tips below
- Cuts, tears, holes or loose seams
- Abrasive materials such as glass, wire or other foreign material embedded in the glove's material
- Discolouration, hardening, charring or cracking in the material can result from heat, chemical or UV light damage
- Excessive wear

CLEANING

Clean your bush fire gloves when they are soiled:

- Brush off any loose dry debris using a medium bristle brush
- Fill a basin with warm water (less than 45°C) and a mild detergent. Use only synthetic detergents (eg Biozet, Cold Power, Dynamo, Omo, Spree, Castle, Drive, FAB, Radiant or Surf)
- Add gloves and soak until thoroughly wet
- Using a medium bristle brush, scrub gloves for approximately three minutes
- Rinse thoroughly in clean water
- Gloves can be machine-washed using a normal wash cycle in water less than 40°C
- Gently squeeze out excess water and hang up and allow to drip dry naturally in a shaded area. Don't wring them tightly

WARNINGS

- Do not use PPE if it is damaged and in need of repair
- Gloves should be cleaned as soon as possible after they have been contaminated or exposed to tar, fuels, oil, resins, paints, acids or any other hazardous material
- Don't use chlorinated bleach or detergents containing chlorinated bleaches (eg Domestos, White King). Chlorinated bleaches will compromise the protection afforded by the gloves
- Don't wash gloves in soap-based powders, such as Lux, Velvet and Advance
- Do not use gloves if not completely dried
- For gloves contaminated with asbestos, refer to OP 1.2.6 – Management of Asbestos Incidents

STORAGE

Store your gloves away from UV light (such as sun or fluorescent lights) in a cool, dark, low humidity area. And store them away from sharp objects or other materials that might physically damage them.

It's up to you to maintain your PPE so that it's in safe and workable condition, so replace your gloves if they are damaged and remember that only approved PPE can be used on the fireground.

Email equipment@rfs.nsw.gov.au if you have any questions about the care and maintenance of personal protective equipment. ■



Sun safety and skin cancer



NSW RFS members spend a lot of time outside responding to incidents, attending training and community engagement events. Being exposed to the sun puts you at risk of developing skin cancer. As part of the “Your Health Matters” initiative, here’s some information that might help you.



SUN SAFETY

It’s been slip, slop and slap since the 1980s. Now there are a few more hints:

- Slip on protective clothing – use clothing to cover as much skin as possible.
- Slop on SPF 30 or higher sunscreen – make sure it’s broad spectrum, SPF30+ and water resistant.
- Slap on a hat – wear a broad brimmed hat that covers your face, head, neck and ears. When wearing a helmet use a brim attachment where possible.
- Seek shade – make use of trees, built shade or bring your own. You’ll still need sunscreen as reflected sun can still burn you. Try to work and take breaks in the shade, particularly in the middle of the day when UV levels are highest.
- Slide on some sunglasses – Sun can damage your eyes too. Close-fitting wraparound styles with an eye protection factor (EPF) of 10, offer the best protection.

USE THE ABCD OF MELANOMA DETECTION

Two in three Australians will develop skin cancer before the age of 70. The good news is that 95 per cent of skin cancers can be successfully prevented, but noticing them early and going to your doctor as soon as possible is important.

See a doctor immediately if you notice:

- A skin spot that is different from other spots around it.
- A mole or freckle that has changed in size, shape or colour.
- A new spot that has changed over weeks or months in size, shape or colour.
- An inflamed sore that has not healed within three weeks.
- Check the identification chart overleaf for a guide. And next time you see your GP ask them to do a quick skin check for you.

FACTS ABOUT SKIN CANCER

- Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world.
- Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in Australia.
- About two in three Australians will be diagnosed with some form of skin cancer before the age of 70.
- Almost 770,000 new cases of Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC) and Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC) are treated each year. BCC can develop in young people, but it is more common in people over 40. SCC occurs mostly in people over 50.
- More than 12,000 people are diagnosed with melanoma each year. It is among the five most commonly diagnosed cancers in all age groups.
- In 2010, more than 1700 cases of melanoma and 14,190 SCCs were prevented by long-term sunscreen use.

SUNSCREEN FACTS

Sunscreen protects against the damaging effects of the sun by reducing the amount of ultraviolet (UV) rays that reach the skin.

SPF stands for “sun protection factor”. The higher the SPF the more protection the sunscreen provides against UVB radiation and sunburn. SPF30+ = 96.7% protection.

Broad-spectrum sunscreens filter both UVA and UVB rays. UVB is the principal cause of sunburn, but both UVA and UVB contribute to increased skin cancer risk.

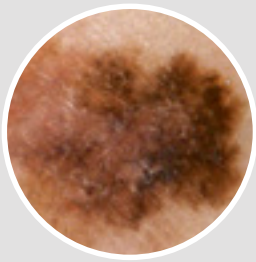
The Cancer Council recommends adults use about one teaspoon of sunscreen (5ml) for the face, neck and ears; one teaspoon for each arm and leg; and one teaspoon each for the front and back of the body. This equates to a total of 35ml (approximately seven teaspoons) for a full body application.

Apply 20 minutes before going outside, to allow it to bind to your skin, and reapply every two hours.

Continued page 28

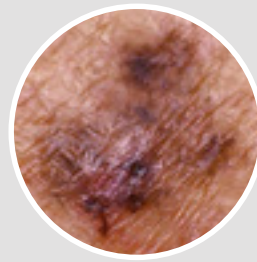
95% of skin cancer

Use the ABCD of melanoma detection



Asymmetry

If the spot or lesion is divided in half, the two halves are not a mirror image.



Border

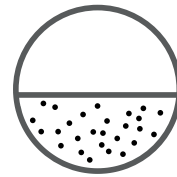
A spot with a spreading or irregular edge.

CHECK YOURSELF



Check your skin regularly

- To check your skin, undress completely and stand in good light.
- Use a full-length or hand-held mirror to check your back, legs and scalp. If there are areas you can't see properly, ask a family member or your GP for a skin check – don't ignore them.
- Make sure you check your entire body as skin cancers can sometimes occur on parts of the body not exposed to the sun, for example the soles of the feet. Go through the same checking sequence each time to get into a routine.



See a doctor immediately if you notice:

- A skin spot that is different from other spots around it.
- A mole or freckle that has changed in size, shape or colour.
- A new spot that has changed over weeks or months in size, shape or colour.
- An inflamed sore that has not healed within three weeks.

EVERY DAY COMMON-SENSE PREVENTION



Slip on protective clothing

- Use clothing to cover as much skin as possible.



Slap on a hat

- Wear a broad-brimmed hat that covers your face, head, neck and ears.



Slop on SPF 30 or higher sunscreen

- Make sure it's broad spectrum and water resistant.



Seek shade

- Make use of trees or built shade or bring your own.

is preventable

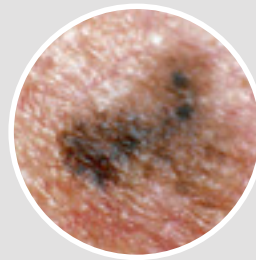
Two in three Australians will develop skin cancer before the age of 70. The good news is that 95 per cent of skin cancers can be successfully prevented.

A simple check could save your life. We should all check our skin regularly. Get to know your skin and see your doctor if you notice any changes.



Colour

A spot with a number of different colours through it.



Diameter

A spot that is growing and changing in diameter or size.



Check your:

- > **Head, scalp, neck and ears** – Take an extra close look around the nose, lips, ears and scalp.
- > **Torso** – Check the front, back and sides of the torso.
- > **Arms, hands, fingers and nails** – Remember to look at the spaces between the fingers and the beds of your fingernails.
- > **Buttocks, legs and feet** – Remember to check between toes, under toenails and on the soles of feet.



Slide on some sunglasses

- > Close-fitting wrap-around styles offer the best protection.



For more information call

Cancer Council Information and Support on 13 11 20 or visit www.cancercouncil.com.au



EYE DAMAGE

The sun can also damage your eyes.

In the short term, sun exposure can cause burns to the eye similar to sunburning of the skin.

Long-term exposure can lead to cataracts (clouding of the lens), pterygium (tissue covering the cornea) and cancer of the conjunctiva or cornea.

It is important to protect your eyes by wearing sunglasses with UV protection and a broad-brimmed or bucket hat.





When outdoors on sunny days, a wide-brimmed hat offers great protection for exposed skin around your head and shoulders.

Sunscreen does not work as well if it is past its use-by date or stored incorrectly. Store sunscreen out of the sun and at temperatures below 30°C.

The Cancer Council recommends using any sunscreen that is labelled broad-spectrum, water-resistant and SPF30 or above.

Sunscreen does not prevent you from getting Vitamin D from the sun. You need very little exposure to absorb the amount of Vitamin D required.

For more information call Cancer Council Information and Support on 13 11 20 or visit www.cancercouncil.com.au

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

A mole is a mole is a mole: Nope, not all cancers are equal. There are different types of skin cancer. Some are easily treated. Some are much more serious and might require surgery and chemotherapy.

Study the mole ID Guide to learn about BCCs, SCCs and melanoma.

Seven teaspoons: The Cancer Council recommends adults use about one teaspoon (5ml) for the face, neck and ears; one teaspoon for each arm and leg; and one teaspoon each for the front and back of the body. This equates to a total of 35ml (approximately seven teaspoons) for a full body application.

Not all sunscreens are equal: You don't need expensive sunscreens, but make sure they meet standards. Sunscreen formulas and their

ingredients are regulated through the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

SPF: Stands for "sun protection factor" The higher the SPF the more protection the sunscreen provides against UVB radiation and sunburn. But surprisingly SPF 50+ does not offer a lot more protection than SPF 30 SPF30+ = 96.7% protection, SPF50+ = 98% protection.

20 minutes: Best to apply sunscreen before you go outside and do it every morning as part of your routine. It "binds" to the skin and is more effective than applying once you're in the sun.

Soles of your feet: Did you know that it's common for melanomas to occur between your toes and on the soles of feet.

How waterproof? If you get out of the pool or beach and rub yourself dry you'll probably rub off your waterproof sunscreen. It's best to reapply when you dry off. And if you are out fighting fires, rubbing the sweat off your face or neck is an effective way to remove your sunscreen, so reapply.

Broadly speaking: "Broad spectrum" sunscreen is the best to use as it protects you from UltraViolet A (UVA) and UltraViolet B (UVB) sun rays.

Baby it's cold outside: You can still get burnt in winter and when it's cloudy. Reflective surfaces like snow also increase sunburn risk.

Weather: Use sunscreen if the UV levels reach three or higher. Many weather forecasts

MYTHS ABOUT SUN PROTECTION

1. You can't get burnt through a car window
2. We need the sun to get Vitamin D
3. I tan but don't burn, so I don't need sunscreen
4. You can stay out in the sun much longer when wearing SPF 50 instead of SPF 30
5. I've got olive or dark skin so I'm not at risk of skin cancer
6. Sun damage isn't possible on windy, cloudy or cool days.
7. Fake tan darkens the skin and protects it from the sun.
8. Sunscreen isn't necessary if you use cosmetics with an SPF.
9. You can stay in the sun much longer if you use an SPF 50 than an SPF 30

also indicate UV levels now and you can check UV levels for your area on the Bureau of Meteorology website or the free SunSmart app.

Yuk! Some people don't like the look or feel of sunscreen. New types of sunscreens are much less gloopy than they used to be. Look for "dry touch" formulations that won't be as sticky to the touch.

Some sunscreens contain titanium dioxide or zinc oxide, which provide a physical barrier to the sun's rays. They often have a whitish appearance and don't rub in completely. If you don't like this, look for a sunscreen that uses a chemical barrier instead.

Spray, pump, roll, pour, squeeze: Pump packs are easy to use. There's some evidence that people who use sprays or roll-ons don't apply enough sunscreen.

Rain or shine: Have you noticed that more people are using umbrellas on sunny days? Not so strange as they offer good additional protection to your skin.

Not so easy to treat: Skin cancer treatment is more than having a lesion "burnt off your skin". It can include surgery and chemotherapy, can leave permanent scarring and can spread to other parts of your body. Each year, more than 2,000 Australians die of skin cancer.

That's a bit rash: Long sleeve rashies are a great way to protect yourself at the beach, river or pool. And it's a bit quicker and easier than applying sunscreen to arms, back and front. There are even fashion rashies now.

The best sunscreen is... the one you use! So find one you like that's easy to apply. ■

HEALTH AND SAFETY REPS APPOINTED: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MEMBERS?

Health and Safety Representatives (HSR) for your area or “workgroup” have recently been appointed.

WHAT IS A HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE (HSR)?

An HSR represents you on health and safety matters, carrying through any of your concerns about safety to make sure they're investigated and dealt with if they can't be first resolved at district level.

Your representative won't take the place of existing processes to deal with health and safety issues and they will help you use these processes (such as maintenance requests or grievance procedures) should you ask for their assistance.

Your representative will also raise awareness of safety matters and encourage members to work safely and report potential issues early.

HOW ARE HSRs CHOSEN AND APPOINTED?

The NSW RFS asked the NSW Electoral Commission to conduct the elections. Elected HSRs commenced their three-year term on 1 March 2019.

Of the 47 “workgroups”, 45 are based on NSW RFS Districts and their geographical boundaries, one workgroup is Headquarters and one is Glendenning (incorporating Operational Mitigation Services), and Planning and Environment Services.

The workgroups for NSW RFS have been defined in consultation with members.

Visit MyRFS for more details or contact the team at safety@rfs.nsw.gov.au



WHAT DOES A HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE DO?

The functions of an HSR are to:

- Represent workers in the workgroup in matters relating to work health and safety;
- Monitor the measures taken by NSW RFS to comply with WHS legislation;
- Investigate complaints from workers of the workgroup relating to health and safety;
- and inquire into anything that appears to be a risk to the health or safety of workers and others, arising from NSW RFS authorised activities.

A new era in Road Crash Rescue (RCR) for brigades

As the NSW Rural Fire Service commences to introduce Road Crash Rescue (RCR) into remote and isolated communities in NSW, the question that is often asked is, "How come the NSW RFS is doing Rescue?"



Left and above: The Mungindi Rescue Unit.

The answer can be found in a small Rural Fire Brigade in Mungindi in north-western NSW. Mungindi is a small rural township of 750 people, which sits on the New South Wales and Queensland border, with a police station, ambulance and hospital, which is located on the Queensland side of the Barwon River.

Historically in NSW, NSW Police Force, NSW Ambulance, Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW), the NSW State Emergency Service (SES) and the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association (VRA) have been accredited to undertake general land rescue, which included attending to motor vehicle crashes.

Five years ago, Kim Stanford, the Captain of the Mungindi Rural Fire Brigade, identified an issue with the time that the closest rescue unit took to respond to incidents in the local area. The closest rescue unit to Mungindi was 140km away at Moree. The brigade area sits on a major link road between central Queensland and the southern states, road accidents are common, and it could take

well in excess of an hour for rescue assistance to reach a crash scene. Ambulance NSW and The Royal Flying Doctor Service could also arrive prior to rescue, and while they could administer medical care, it was limited, as they could not extricate an injured person from a crash.

The Mungindi RFB were responding to road crashes and waiting a considerable time for the closest rescue Unit to arrive. This caused considerable distress to the brigade members and the local community, particularly when these incidents involved members of the community.

Feeling helpless and isolated, the brigade believed there must be an alternative and as a motivated group took up the challenge to question the reasoning behind how rescue services were delivered in NSW.

Captain Stanford, with the brigade's commitment, approached the Namoi Gwydir District and together they identified the issue with the Local Rescue Committee. With her persistence and belief that

there must be a better way, Captain Stanford started the ball rolling and three years later Mungindi RFB became the first General Land Rescue Unit for the NSW RFS.

As part of the NSW RFS's commitment to supporting the Mungindi RFB, a purpose-designed medium-sized rescue vehicle was built based on the current NSW and Victorian SES rescue vehicle. The NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons recently handed over the new vehicle to the Brigade.

Subsequent to Mungindi's accreditation process, the State Rescue Board (SRB) sought to identify whether other local communities were in the same situation as Mungindi. As a result, the SRB established the Capability Matrix Working Group with representatives from NSW RFS, SES, FRNSW, VRA, Police and Ambulance NSW to look at the rescue capability across NSW.

The group was tasked with mapping the location of all rescue services across the state, identifying road

crash "black spot" locations and areas where no rescue services were provided within 60 minutes.

The group was also tasked with investigating how the provision of rescue services could be better delivered to these rural and remote areas and whether a new accreditation of Road Crash Rescue (RCR) would be of benefit.

The SRB Review of Land Rescue in NSW Report outlined a number of recommendations, which include the introduction of Road Crash Rescue as a standalone capability and identified 11 areas where current rescue response arrangements exceeded 60 minutes. Of these 11 locations, there are 16 Rural Fire Brigades, which may be in a position to provide rescue services to the local community.

As part of the consultation process with those Brigades identified in the Report, it was agreed that the NSW RFS would consult with Brigade members to ascertain their willingness to participate in RCR.



The NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, Inspector Angela Daly and Scott Mack with the Mungindi RFB and the new Medium Rescue Unit.

Superintendent Chris Ryder and Inspector Brett Hagan from Remote Area Firefighting and Specialised Operations section (RAFSO) travelled in a seven-day period, over 3000km, meeting Brigades for lunch and dinner to discuss the Report and what this meant to each Brigade. Several other visits to relevant Brigades have been conducted as they continue to meet with and support brigades in these rural and remote communities.

RAFSO are responsible for the rescue policies and procedures; the procurement of equipment; training and ongoing skills maintenance and the ongoing support to the Brigade and is the point of contact for rescue services within the NSW RFS. The RAFSO team has been continually working with brigades in these areas to provide information, guidance and support to assist them in making an informed decision about providing a RCR capability in their local area.

Where a brigade is committed to taking on the SRB–RCR accreditation the training, equipment and specialist vehicles are being provided through the District and RAFSO.

The response to date has been overwhelmingly positive, with some members stating they were already going to the jobs and waiting with the crash survivors, so they were pleased that they could now gain the training and equipment to provide more assistance at rescue incidents.

As part of the consultation process, a clear need was quickly identified for vehicles that could carry the required rescue equipment and travel off road. The current tankers would be unable to carry the additional equipment and are unsuitable to access some of these areas. One example is Louth in Western NSW, where the current road network is all dirt roads with significant amounts of bull dust and sand.

The Brigade currently has a Cat 9 vehicle in its fleet, and the only vehicle capable of travelling off-road in the area. Without a suitable vehicle, members would have to take equipment off the NSW RFS trucks and put on their own 4WDs to access accidents.

Both RAFSO and Engineering Services, in consultation with NSW Police Rescue, have designed a purpose-built light rescue vehicle based on the NSW Police Rescue vehicle.

The prototype, a Toyota Landcruiser, was designed to simultaneously store the required rescue equipment and meet the demands of off-road capability. All future vehicles are being constructed using the Isuzu DMAX chassis.

There was considerable internal design work carried out based around workflow and ease of access for the specialist hydraulic equipment and rescue tools.

RCR training has been developed to be delivered over four days and is generally delivered over two weekends, with an assessment to follow. Training is being undertaken at each brigade station with RAFSO providing all required equipment, including vehicles for practical training.

The NSW RFS is looking at gradually bringing brigades online with the RCR at a rate of approximately two brigades per year. Ellerston RFB (Hunter Valley RFD) and Moulamein RFB (Mid Murray RFD) have been granted pre-accreditation by the Minister for Emergency Services and the SRB with several other brigades currently undertaking the training and pre-accreditation process. ■



QUESTION AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE RCR UNITS

What areas are affected?

Eleven areas have been identified for RCR. These are:

- Putty/St Albans
- Ellerston/Nowendoc
- Boggabilla/Boomi/Yetman
- Bourke/Cobar/Nyngan
- Cobar/Nyngan/Hillston/Condobolin
- Broken Hill/Menindee/Balranald/Wentworth
- Balranald/Hay/Deniliquin
- Ivanhoe/Hay
- Tibooburra/Wanaaring/Bourke
- Wilcannia/Cobar
- Tibooburra/Broken Hill

This list relates to the areas between the towns identified, not to the towns themselves.

Is the NSW RFS going to take on rescue responsibility in all of these areas?

No. In some of these areas, there are already other existing rescue agencies, such as the NSW SES. The NSW RFS has made it very clear that if there is another rescue agency in a position to fill these gaps, then the NSW RFS will not participate.

What kind of training is being provided?

Brigades will undertake training in line with the State Rescue Policy and includes the relevant National Units including, Participate in a Rescue Operation and Undertake Road Crash Rescue.

What kind of equipment is being provided?

The SRB have set a minimum standard of equipment, including hydraulic rescue equipment, lifting kits, dry-chemical and water fire extinguishers, first aid, glass management kit, lighting, power tools, and various pieces of protective equipment.

The items of equipment, including a purpose built and designed vehicle, being provided to participating brigades is based on extensive research and consultation with those brigades and other rescue agencies.

A focus has been placed on user operability, weight and agency inter-operability.

Why would the NSW RFS take on responsibility for rescue?

Most of the areas identified in the review are located in remote and isolated parts of the State, with the NSW RFS the only emergency service in the area. These brigades currently attend motor vehicle crashes and through supplying appropriate training and equipment, members are able to assist members of their local community and visitors.

What happens if a brigade does not want to provide rescue services?

There is no requirement for brigades to take on rescue responsibilities. If a brigade declines, the SRB will work with other emergency services to identify possible options in the interests of community safety.

FOR MORE INFORMATION EMAIL RESCUE@RFS.NSW.GOV.AU



Wallangarra fire whirl

Andrew Macdonald, Group Captain in the Macarthur Zone, was in the right - or wrong - place to capture extraordinary footage of a fire whirl at the Wallangarra fire in late February. He explains here what the conditions were like on the day.

At 5.30pm, what had been a fairly typical day on the fireground at the Wallangarra fire, on the NSW/QLD border, rapidly escalated in a matter of minutes into a frantic effort by firefighters to save property and contain a major fire breakout.

The day started out like so many. Forecast fire danger was high to very high with a light westerly breeze blowing all day. The temperature was 34 degrees Celsius, humidity was 10–20 percent and wind was 20kph and variable from southwest through to westerly.

Strike teams from Macarthur/Wollondilly and Region West had been carrying out backburning along the remaining 4km of the western section of the Wallangarra Fire about 10km north of Tenterfield.

With the backburning all but complete, a fire whirl and significant wind change developed on the fire edge.

The fire whirl rapidly increased in size, ultimately reaching an estimated diameter of over 50m and travelling in a northwesterly direction over unburnt ground for half a kilometre.

Subsequent investigation of the fire whirl's track would reveal ground that was almost completely devoid of all vegetation and which resembled an older style gravel/clay tennis court.

Lasting less than 20 minutes the impact of the fire whirl and wind change on fire behaviour was immense. The fire immediately changed direction and spotted multiple times.

Laurence McCoy, Supervisor Predictive Services at the NSW RFS, confirms that fire whirls are very complex and very dangerous.

"They're caused by a range of factors and can occur during

or even after a fire. Fire whirls are particularly dangerous for crews because they are difficult to predict and can cause erratic fire behaviour."

Crews were suddenly put in dangerous situations although luckily most could escape onto grass paddocks that were very low on fuel due to the drought conditions.

Close to the fire whirl, the surrounding grass paddocks and bush areas seemed to spontaneously combust in numerous locations. The sudden intense increase in wind strength and constantly changing wind direction blew the fire across contained fire lines.

Two properties that were previously considered safe were immediately threatened. The fire spotted to the west (against the prevailing westerly ground wind that had been blowing all day), and crossed the New England Highway putting more properties at risk overnight.

Almost as quickly as it started the fire whirl dissipated and in about half an hour general weather conditions returned to being relatively benign.

Quick work by the Region West team saved one property from certain destruction (the fire reached within metres of the property) with the joint Macarthur/Wollondilly crews setting up for property protection to save another house.

Ultimately the fire whirl and wind change caused another 200 hectares of grass and bush to be burnt but no properties were damaged.

A day later the Wallangarra fire was fully contained with a total of over 42,000 hectares being burnt. ■

You can view video of the fire whirl at tinyurl.com/y2wzUU3u



Top left: A fire whirl takes on destructive form during the Wallangarra fire.
Bottom left: Photo taken afterwards from the hill top. The landscape was left burnt and bare from the intense effect of the fire whirl. Photos by Andrew Macdonald.



Girls' fire and emergency services camp

NSW RFS was proud to be part of the inaugural Firefighters Mutual Bank Girls' Fire and Emergency Services Camp (GFES Camp) in 2018, a unique program designed to encourage young women between 15 and 17 to consider a future in the fire and emergency services.

The GFES Camp was initiated by FRNSW Station Officer Bronnie MacIntosh, who pitched the idea of a pilot camp to AFAC's Workforce Management Group.

After being awarded the Churchill Fellowship in 2016 to observe how international fire services were embracing diversity, Bronnie found that the Girls Fire Camps in the United States were providing an excellent way to introduce and recruit young women to the emergency services. Such camps teach young women firefighting and emergency services skills while building confidence, resilience and encouraging participants to use problem-solving, teamwork and leadership skills.

Bronnie's idea was enthusiastically supported by AFAC and the three NSW agencies, FRNSW, NSW RFS, and NSW SES, who

agreed to work together to deliver the pilot camp in 2018. A research partnership with Monash University was formed to evaluate the pilot, and Firefighters Mutual Bank came on board as major sponsors. Finally, YMCA Camp Yarramundi agreed to host the pilot at their outdoor education facility in the Hawkesbury.

Expressions of Interest for Volunteer Camp Leaders and Activity Facilitators were sent out to recruit adults to mentor the participants. There was strong interest from NSW RFS members to become leaders and facilitators, and NSW RFS was well represented throughout the week.

Even with limited time to promote the program, there was also plenty of interest from girls wanting to attend the camp. The final twenty were selected based on their applications and their interest in a career within

the emergency services. Some were already volunteer members of the NSW RFS or NSW SES, while others had no prior connection to the emergency services.

During the six-day camp staff and volunteers from the NSW RFS, FRNSW and NSW SES delivered practical and theory-based sessions to give the participants an introduction to the important role the emergency services play in the community, and educate them about a wide variety of emergency service roles. The action-packed program was filled with other fun and challenging activities including abseiling, high ropes, and an overnight hike.

The NSW RFS members who took on the responsibility of being Camp Leaders, staying on site for the entire six days to guide and mentor the girls, were:

- Alysha Springett, Empire Bay Brigade, Central Coast
- Jan Andrews, Bungendore Brigade, Lake George
- Beth Dalton, Operational Officer, Mid Lachlan Valley
- Joan Opbroek, LowerMacdonald Brigade, Hawkesbury
- Patsy Marshall, Administration Coordinator, Hornsby Ku-ring-gai
- Kim Cooper, Buxton Brigade, Southern Highlands
- Dez White, Operational Officer, North West Zone

Joan said "We would all have loved to have this 20, 30 or 40 years ago. If we had, it would have been a different Service now, but it's happening now and this is the future."

Kirsty Channon, District Officer from Mid North Coast, was a facilitator for one of the day activities at the Camp. Kirsty, along

Main image left: NSW RFS members volunteered to assist at the Girls' Fire and Emergency Services Camp. Left to right are Patsy Marshall, Hornsby Ku-ring-gai, Brianna Sten of Couotts Crossing RFB, Ivana Marinov of Hillside RFB. Photo by Belinda Lee.

with volunteers from Hawkesbury brigades, organised and ran the NSW RFS presentation on Tuesday morning. The young women rotated around four stations: Familiarisation with a Cat 1; Cat 7 and Cat 9 appliance; learning how to use a portable pump, and gas attack. Kirsty also gave them an introduction to bush fire behaviour and different types of fires.

Kirsty said "No doubt the young women had gained a lot of skills and an insight into emergency services, but the most important thing they would have learnt is the value in teamwork."

Peter Jones, volunteer from the Hawkesbury District, put in a great effort to assist in coordinating logistics.

Internationally, camps like these have proved to be a successful way of normalising career options for girls who might never have considered them. The emergency services are stronger and more able to assist the community if

their membership actually reflect that community's population. Australian fire and emergency services are encouraging members across the community to consider volunteering or pursuing a career in the sector, regardless of their sex or background.

NSW RFS Assistant Commissioner Rebel Talbert commented that "The Girls Fire and Emergency Services camp is a really effective way to introduce young women to the broader emergency services environment.

"It's been carefully designed to give participants hands on experience in all hazards, not just fire. The reality of emergency services is that agencies don't operate in isolation, we work together. If these young women enter emergency services with this broad context then the next generation of brigade captains, inspectors or assistant commissioners will be even better prepared to be effective leaders." ■



Above: Members of the NSW RFS, NSW Fire & Rescue and NSW SES came together to introduce young women to opportunities in the emergency services. Photo by Greg Allan.



Many players at the NSW RFS

Competitors from across the state travelled to Temora to display their skills and teamwork while competing for glory, prizes and the ultimate bragging rights as NSW RFS State Champions.

Having spent months honing their skills in training or completing regional qualifiers, 14 senior, 12 junior and seven catering teams joined with 12 individual chainsaw competitors to face the challenging scenarios in the biennial NSW RFS State Championships at Lake Centenary in Temora in central NSW.

At the end of the first day of competition, our two-time defending Champions Orana Composite found themselves at the back of the pack having been handicapped by the late replacement of a teammate with a district staff member.

They soon adapted to the challenge and on day two surged up the leader board.

In the end it was to no avail as the team from Oakville RFB proved a model of consistency, taking out the honours in the Senior division.

Taking out second place for the second time in a row was Narrabri, just heading off Jindera from Region South.

In the Junior division it was Gundagai High securing the win from defending Champions St Paul's.

After debuting at the 2016 State Champs in Narrabri as a very young team, the Northern Tablelands juniors showed the benefits of

experience by moving up into third position.

Having taken out Marshal Troy Gersback's event two championships in a row, he said of the team, "Their approach on both occasions has been flawless! They really typify NSW RFS values and what it means to be a volunteer. Not only do they undertake the tasks required to a high standard, but it is clear they have fun while doing it.

"I take my hat off not only to the team, but to the coaches for fostering this attitude and environment for them."

The members of the Northern Tablelands juniors come from Inverell, Delungra, Tenterfield and Glen Innes and are trained

by Gum Flat Group Officer Ray White. Ray says that he sees it as "training the future".

After two gruelling days of competition, Mick Williams from New England took out the Stihl Chainsaw Challenge, with Chris Strange of Shoalhaven second, and regular competitor Danny Kerr from Northern Tablelands third.

Undertaking a range of practical and desk-top scenarios designed to test their knowledge and skills, cutting techniques and safety procedures, the Challenge also features the very popular chainsaw carving event.

This year the Chaplain's Encouragement Award – for a team or individual who has

RFSA "EAT STREET" CATERING CHALLENGE

By Jacinta Lowrie, Castlereagh Support Brigade

Even before the event weekend began we had to complete several tasks, such as preparing our menu, attending a planning workshop, ordering the produce and equipment and, most difficult of all, deciding on our team name, the "Castlereagh Country

Tucker Team". As first-time competitors we found the planning workshop was really beneficial, not only because of the content, but in settling our nerves. It made arriving at Temora for the Championships easier as we were reunited with familiar faces.

Once in Temora, we operated from a makeshift kitchen, working alongside the other teams to prepare our own individual menus.

And just when we thought we were travelling okay with our preparation and timing, the event marshals would throw

in a curve ball, like mixing up the members of the teams to prepare and serve the breakfasts. This was done to test the skills of team leaders and the adaptability of team members.

The competition was judged on menu, budgeting, standard



STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018

Main left: The MVA event was a cross-agency activity with police helping to supervise.
Above: Senior champions Oakville RFB and junior champions Gundagai High. Photos by Adam Hollingworth.

demonstrated through action and attitude the qualities that best represent the Championships – was presented by NSW RFS Senior Chaplain Ian Spall to the Tumut Alpha junior team.

The Meritorious Service Award – awarded to an individual or group who has made an outstanding contribution to “behind the scenes” organisation and delivery of the Championships – was deservedly won by our long-serving Championships Operations Officer Amelia Maria, a volunteer from the Lake George District.

A Big Thank You

An event of this magnitude doesn't happen without the

support of brigades, districts, councils and our generous commercial partners.

Whether it's Hornsby Ku-ring-gai loaning us their barges, Lake George ponying up their OCV, Canobolas sending off their flatbed or our good friends at Operational & Mitigation Services providing the base camp facility and logistics transport, the event relies on the goodwill and efforts of all sections of the NSW RFS.

The NSW RFS Protocol Squad and Pipes and Drums add that sense of occasion to the opening and closing ceremonies.

The Temora Shire Council provided access to amazing facilities

including the Temora Railway Precinct and the Lake Centenary complex for the Championships. The M*A*S*H-themed Championship dinner was held in the Temora Aviation Museum surrounded by Spitfires and other vintage aircraft.

Our Principal Partners, Gilbert and Roach Huntingwood and Isuzu Trucks, continue their support with the State Champions, Oakville RFB, receiving an Isuzu D-MAX Community Support vehicle for their district. The Championships are also stronger for the involvement of our Major Sponsor, the RFSA. ■

Story by Paul Fowler and Kristine Wendtman

and timeliness of customer service, food handling and, of course, taste. The event was scored by the event marshal, two celebrity judges – Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and RFSA President Ken Middleton – and by votes from the competitors.

It was a fantastic surprise to hear our names called out as the overall winner of the “Eat Street” Challenge.

I would strongly encourage all catering units to consider nominating for the 2020 State Championships. We learnt so much from the other competitors, the marshals and volunteers – new meal and snack ideas, new catering procedures and strategies – and we also made a raft of new friends and had an awesome experience.

A huge thank you must go to the “Eat Street” Challenge Marshal Adam Rutter, and assistants Vanessa Mepham, Di and Lindy, and our fellow competitors.

Editor's Note: The Castlereagh “Country Tucker Team” took out the challenge with their menu of Honey Mustard Chicken with Rice and Seasonal Vegetables and a snack item of Pizza Bites.

“I take my hat off not only to the team, but to the coaches for fostering this attitude and environment for them.”

Troy Gersback,
Event Marshal





Cllockwise from top: The theme of the Championship dinner was M*A*S*H mess hall. The dinner was held in the impressive Temora Aviation Museum with tables surrounded by Spitfires and other vintage aircraft.

Cadets play a major role in the NSW RFS State Championships, alongside their senior competitors. The 2018 Championships had it all with planes, trains, automobiles and boats.



From top, left to right: Fire trucks of all the ages were on display during the events. The chainsaw events are a very popular spectator event, and the competition is hard and fast-paced. Members of the Castlereagh team look

on during the opening ceremonies. The events demand technical skills and expertise from mature age to cadet competitors alike... but there's always time for plenty of fun as well. All photos by Adam Hollingworth.

REGISTER YOUR BRIGADE FOR



**GET
READY
WEEKEND**

PREPARE FOR BUSH FIRE

14-15 SEPTEMBER 2019

GET READY WEEKEND is the largest activation of our members outside fire activity. Last year more than 560 Brigades got involved, and we're hoping we can beat that this year.

Did you know research has shown 67% of people have some form of a fire plan? While this shows that the level of planning is improving, there can still be improvement in the level of preparation.

This **GET READY WEEKEND** we'll be asking our members to engage with their local community and ask them "How fireproof is your plan?"

Log on to MyRFS for more details or contact the Get Ready Weekend Team get.ready@rfs.nsw.gov.au



**HOW FIREPROOF
IS YOUR PLAN?**

ONE NSW RFS TOOL KIT

All of our collateral, from documents and advertising, through to brochures and online applications, reflect our unity and professionalism – as One NSW RFS.

Community event invitations

BUSH FIRE SAFETY COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

FOR RESIDENTS AND FAMILIES IN THE PATERSON, MARTIN'S CREEK, VACY AND GRESFORD AREAS.

SUNDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2013
9.30am – 1.00pm | Paterson Fire Station

This workshop is to assist residents in the preparation of a personal **BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLAN**, as well as provide the opportunity to learn practical bush fire preparation and protection skills.

Specifically the program will include:

- Issues to consider when preparing your **BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLAN**
- What to do in the event of fire - **LEAVE EARLY or STAY & DEFEND**
- Implementing your **BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLAN**

In addition, the program will provide practical skills regarding:

- The use of personal firefighting equipment including pumps, fire blankets and home sprays.

If you would like to attend this **FREE** workshop, please email us at **<email address>** and provide the following information:

- Name/s of attendees
- Contact telephone number (for confirmation and provision of further workshop details)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
Contact your local brigade or **<contact person>** at Paterson Brigade on **<phone number>**

BUSH FIRE INFORMATION LINE
1800 NSW RFS
18 00 6 7 9 7 3 7
www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

PREPARE ACT SURVIVE

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NEW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

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Basic Report

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TYPE TITLE

Heading 1

Heading 2

Heading 3

Heading 4

Body and Numbered Lists

Table 1: Table heading

Table heading

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The footer information supporting the RFS. Does not count 500 lines or 500 or more.

Meeting Minutes

NEW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting: Type meeting subject/number
Chairperson: Type name of chairperson
Attendees: Type names of attendees
Guests: Type full name of guest
Date and time: Type date and time
Address: Type address of meeting
Minutes by: Type name of minute taker

1 Minutes

Type minutes here

File name: <meeting title> (do not enter 'Min' or the Date and time) (do not use spaces)

Table 1: Attendee Names

Name	Initials	Present	Exc. Abs.	Notes

Table 2: Documents referred to in the meeting

Document title	Author	Date	File

Table 3: Next meeting

Meeting	Date/Time	Place	Location

Memorandum

NEW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

MEMORANDUM

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PowerPoint

NEW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

<MAIN TITLE>

<SUB HEADING/DESCRIPTOR>

<Presenter name> - <Date>

The One NSW RFS Tool Kit provides a suite of templates for staff and brigades and useful resources to assist members to develop consistency in our communications, engagement activities and materials.

It includes a range of resources for members to use, without needing to work out the design:

- easy-to-use templates
- generic presentations
- multimedia such as videos and images
- key information sheets
- community and event flyers
- NSW RFS social media links

FIND THE ONE NSW RFS TOOL KIT ON MYRFS.



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



Cadet program for home-

Members from the Mid Coast District recently conducted a Secondary School Cadet Program for home-schooled students in November 2018.

The idea originally came from assessing school visits in the area. It became clear that the home-schooled students were missing out on the traditional visit by their local brigade and the opportunity to learn about fire behaviour and the role of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

A Bush Fire Information Session was held for home-schooled students in February 2018 and there were a number of students who were in the 12–16 year age bracket so the natural progression was to offer them a Secondary School Cadet Program (SSCP).

The traditional SSCP runs in year 9 or 10 at school and encompasses the ages of around 15 to 16. Home

schoolers do not necessarily follow the same structured patterns as in schools with activities encompassing a wide range of ages rather than by year of study.

The district decided to offer the program to 12 to 16 years olds to ensure we had enough numbers to run the program and to allow siblings to attend. In this group, we had 11 students from six families and most regularly attended activities together.

The program was offered via a Facebook group set up by local home-schooling parents as a way of planning activities together. A post was put up looking for expressions of interest and within a few hours, 13 students had put their names

down. Two were unable to attend due to illness. After the first day, there was a number of enquiries about whether we would take late enrolments.

The program was held at the Fire Control Centre in Taree. Parents dropped their children off in the morning and there was not one morning that anyone was late!

We provided lunch each day and were able to adjust the timings of the sessions and breaks to suit the energy of the students. We found that lunch breaks were short and practical sessions were popular.

The SSCP was designed as a 20-hour program offered over 10 weeks as part of their PDHPE curriculum (Personal

Development, Health and Physical Education). The home-schoolers are not constrained by school timetables so we were able to offer a four-day intensive program with the students graduating on program completion on Thursday afternoon.

Mid Coast (and other districts) have been running five-day programs for a number of years and they work well as the set up time each day is minimal. Timing was critical on the four-day program and the focus was on practical activities.

We included a visit from Fire & Rescue NSW and Police. We visited the local SES on a day when the weather turned nasty and it was too wet to go outside.



schoolled students

By Kirsty Channon
District Officer
Mid North Coast



Top and above: The home-schooled students attended a four-day intensive program.

Overall, the program was a great success with lots of positive feedback from participants and parents.

Youth Development Officer, Paul Cunningham, congratulates Kirsty and the team for their commitment to youth development in the Mid Coast district, and the great initiative shown to deliver this unique type of program.

“Kirsty is a real driving force behind the positive growth of the secondary School Cadet Program, but more importantly, educating and engaging young people in the district.” ■

For more information about School Cadet Programs contact volunteer@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

KIRSTY AND THE TEAM

District Officer Kirsty Channon and an experienced team of Cadet Instructors (Adam Parish, Bruce Annetts, Gary Channon, Martin Davies, Bert Bennett, Sam Bartlett) ran the course with help from local brigades.

The students graduated in front of parents and friends on Thursday with certificates presented by Stephen Bromhead MP, Mayor Cr David West and Inspector Max Ryan.

AUSTRALIAN FIRE SERVICE MEDALS 2019

The Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) is awarded for distinguished service by a member of an Australian fire service.

The AFSM was introduced in 1988 and replaced the Imperial awards of the Queen's Fire Service Medal for Gallantry and Queen's Fire Service Medal for Distinguished Service.

AFSMs are awarded each Australia Day and Queen's Birthday. They are awarded at an Investiture ceremony at Government House.



AUSTRALIA DAY 2019 AFSMs

Six NSW RFS members have been recognised for contributions to their local community as part of Australia Day celebrations.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said the six recipients have demonstrated an outstanding level of commitment to the NSW RFS and their local communities.

"Our volunteers are dedicated to helping their local communities for the want of nothing in return, other than to merely make a difference," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

"Our members don't do what they do for awards or accolades but this is worthy recognition of their extraordinary dedication and commitment to serving the community."



**GROUP CAPTAIN
WILLIAM (BILL) BEAN**

Shoalhaven District, Region South

Group Captain William (Bill) Bean of the Shoalhaven District has provided 54 years of devoted, active service as a volunteer of the NSW Rural Fire Service. He first joined Blaxland's Ridge Brigade in the Hawkesbury District in January 1964.

His commitment and dedication to volunteers, the community and the Service led him to be awarded Life Membership of the brigade in 1985. Group Captain Bean quickly rose through the ranks and upon moving to the Shoalhaven District in 1991, he was appointed Group Captain, which he held until 2002. He joined Basin View in 1993, while still maintaining the role of Group Captain. In addition, he also joined Shoalhaven Headquarters (now Shoalhaven Operational Support) Brigade in 2002 and holds dual membership for both brigades as well as currently undertaking the role of Brigade Training Officer for the two brigades.

Since moving to the Shoalhaven District in 1991, he has been heavily involved in all aspects of training, as well as maintaining his role as

Group Captain. He is constantly undertaking courses and training to update his skills, only to return with enthusiasm to mentor and teach all he has learnt. Group Captain Bean has been responsible for the development of numerous training programs with training trainers, assessors and training coordinators, in addition to senior staff and volunteers in the management of large-scale fire operations. He has a positive and pervading influence on the performance of the Service.

Group Captain Bean has played an integral part in the development of the Safety Officer position and role in incident management teams during major fire events. He was instrumental in the formation of the new Shoalhaven Operational Support Brigade, which was established in 2013 and to

which Bill was appointed Group Captain. He retains this position.

Group Captain Bean was awarded a National Medal in 1990 and the Rural Fire Service Long Service Medal for 40 years' service in 2010. Notably he has participated in numerous major fires in the Shoalhaven District including the 2000/2001 Hylands Fire, 2001 Touga Fire, 2009 Dingo Road Fire, 2013 Deans Gap Fire and Wirritin Fire, to name but a few, in addition to the 2003 Canberra Fires.

He has been part of many out of area deployments across the state and his expertise extends beyond the role of firefighter with his skills being called upon to assist other agencies and resource management coordination.

Group Captain Bean's commitment to and support of the volunteer members of the Service is exemplary. He has provided 54 years of dedicated and distinguished service in every way and continues to be a highly respected and valuable member of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Group Captain William (Bill) Bean is a worthy recipient of the Australian Fire Service Medal.



GROUP CAPTAIN GORDON HECKENDORF

**Orana Team,
Region West**

Group Captain Gordon

Heckendorf joined as a member of the Tyrrie and Corry Brigades in October 1952 and has held the positions of Deputy Captain, Captain and Group Captain.

Group Captain Heckendorf has been an advocate for training, mentoring and has assisted in the management and delivery of the Bush Firefighter Grassland, Crew Leader Grassland programs and Brigade recruitment for the rural remote brigades in the area. His wealth of knowledge is invaluable to the Orana Team and the mentoring that he does is above and beyond what is expected of him.

He has been the Group Captain in the Narromine FCC since 1998 and has been the pivotal leader in a Senior Management role for a number of years representing the members of Narromine in major District decisions including tanker replacements, maintenance, shed locations and builds. Group Captain Heckendorf has attended many fires, Section 44s in the Orana District and out of area incidences.

Group Captain Heckendorf was presented his 60 year Long Service Medal in 2015 which is a great achievement not only for himself but for the recognition, hard work and dedication to his Brigades. Group Captain Heckendorf's dedication, passion and distinguished leadership as both a volunteer make him a most valuable member of the NSW RFS.

Group Captain Heckendorf has served the NSW RFS and community of NSW with distinction.

Group Captain Gordon Heckendorf is a worthy recipient of the Australian Fire Service Medal.



GROUP CAPTAIN PETER ALAN HOLDING

**South West Slopes Zone
Region West**

Group Captain Peter Holding has been an active NSW Rural Fire Service member for 43 years and started his volunteering in 1975 with the Cunnigar Brigade.

Group Captain Holding's first RFS leadership role was that of Captain at Cunnigar in 1990 and he held that position until 2002 before being elected in 2003 to the position of Group Captain for the South West Slopes Zone, a position that he still holds today.

Group Captain Holding has worked in a supervisory capacity at numerous fires within the South West Slopes Zone including the Wallendbeen, Geegulalong, Junee and Cobbler Road 544 fires. Group Captain Holding has undertaken leadership roles at out of area incidents including fires at the South Coast and Canberra.

Group Captain Holding is an active and dedicated member of the South West Slopes Zone Senior Management Team. Group Captain Holding has chaired and contributes to SMT meetings, Captains meetings and workgroups with a passion for improvement. Peter is always willing to sacrifice his time to ensure the voice of the volunteer is heard and he advocates strongly for the

betterment of the South West Slopes Zone during Council liaison meetings and Bush Fire Management Committee Meetings.

Group Captain Holding played a leadership role in the development of the South West Slopes Pre-incident plan. Peter's involvement in the development of the plan, and his commitment to promoting the operational processes within it, has led to improved incident response and coordination across the Zone.

Group Captain Holding's operational leadership, and commitment to firefighter safety and efficiency, has led to brigades within the Harden area using pre-formed strike teams, which, over many years, has proved very effective in combating running grass fires. He has exhibited outstanding leadership qualities in his role at Group Captain always leading by example and providing sound operational advice to members.

Group Captain Holding has actively promoted firefighter safety over many years by encouraging all members to undertake training and operate within sound operational parameters. Members regularly seek advice from him due to his understanding of NSW RFS procedures and his local know-how.

Group Captain Holding has played a pivotal role in assisting to modernise the tanker fleet within the Harden area and South West Slopes Zone. He has worked closely with both Council and the NSW RFS over many years to help build the modern fleet the South West Slopes Zone has today.

Group Peter Alan Holding is a worthy recipient of the Australian Fire Service Medal.



FIREFIGHTER MARCIA MAY LEBUSQUE

Clarence Valley, Region North

Firefighter Marcia LeBusque joined the Trenayr Bushfire Brigade of the NSW Rural Fire Service in 1988.

Firefighter LeBusque has been an active member of the Trenayr Brigade for over 30 years and has held the roles of Secretary from 2004 to 2013; First Aid Officer from 2009 to 2011; Treasurer since 2012; and Community Engagement Officer since 2014.

Firefighter LeBusque is a motivated and hard-working member of NSW RFS and has achieved many outcomes for the Service.

Her commitment and dedication are evident in her involvement locally with Community Engagement, First Aid training and her activities associated with being on the Board of the RFSA and other various state committees.

As a valued member of the local community her determination is well recognized and she is always prepared to put in the extra hours to ensure the success of any activities or projects undertaken.

Leading by example, Firefighter LeBusque is well respected by fellow volunteers and is recognised for her empathetic nature and excellent listening skills.

Firefighter Marcia LeBusque is a worthy recipient of the Australian Fire Service Medal.



FIREFIGHTER HARRY ALFRED LEBUSQUE

Clarence Valley, Region North

Firefighter Harry LeBusque joined the Trenayr Bushfire Brigade of the NSW Rural Fire Service in 1988.

Firefighter LeBusque initially joined his local bush fire brigade after fire destroyed his residential property. He reflected on the importance of local bush fire brigades and the feeling of involvement in and concern for one's local community.

Firefighter LeBusque became an influential leader within the former Copmanhurst Bush Fire District identifying and applying his life skills and aptitude in training and his capacity that transitioned the small farm based bush fire brigades into the skillfully trained and well equipped rural fire brigades they are today.

Firefighter LeBusque has demonstrated exceptional leadership capabilities on numerous occasions by serving in a range of field officer positions including Group Captain, Brigade Captain, Senior Deputy Captain and Deputy Captain.

Firefighter LeBusque has also held a number of other positions within the brigade including Brigade President, Training Officer and Permit Officer.

Prior to joining the NSW RFS, Firefighter LeBusque had a distinguished and decorated career with the Australian Army

and was principal of a civil engineering company.

Firefighter LeBusque has been an extremely active firefighter and has performed with distinction in the role of Task Force Leader, Divisional Commander, Sector Commander and Crew Leader. In addition to attending bush fires locally, he has been deployed to major campaign fires in many areas across NSW and interstate. He has served as a member of the Clarence Valley Bushfire Management Committee, Senior Management Group and District Training Committee.

Firefighter LeBusque has represented the views of the NSW RFS volunteers on the NSW Rural Fire Service Association, serving in voluntary executive roles for many years at branch, divisional and State Council.

Firefighter LeBusque is highly respected by both volunteers and staff within the Clarence Valley Rural Fire District, and his outstanding contribution as a volunteer over many years has been of significant benefit to the NSW RFS and his local community.

Firefighter Harry LeBusque is a worthy recipient of the Australian Fire Service Medal.



GROUP CAPTAIN JAMES (JIM) ALBERT SIMPSON

Riverina, Region South

Group Captain James (Jim) Albert Simpson joined Lake Albert Brigade in 1953 and is

the longest serving member of the Lake Albert Brigade. He was the first member in Lake Albert Brigade to receive Life Membership.

Group Captain Simpson was elected Secretary/Treasurer 1969, Group Captain 1991, Brigade President 1997, Brigade Captain 1999 and Senior Deputy Captain in 2013.

Group Captain Simpson was instrumental and heavily involved in the acquisition, design and build process for the current brigade station.

He was directly involved with the acquisition of eight appliances, housing and maintaining Category 1 and Category 9 vehicles on his property. His skills as a dedicated leader for Lake Albert Brigade have been unwavering and for this he is well respected within the brigade.

In 1994 Group Captain Simpson completed the Bush Fire Driving (BFD) course and assisted organizing the first BFD course in Wagga. He has committed many hours to the training of RFS personnel within the Riverina Zone and is only too happy to share his extensive knowledge and leadership skills.

Group Captain Simpson has demonstrated leadership at Brigade, District, Zone and Regional levels.

At every incident his duties have been conducted at the highest level of safety, while maintaining effective and efficient outcomes for the community effected.

Group Captain Simpson has attended many incidents over the years locally and interstate including the Black Saturday Fires in 2009 and Junee Jail Break Inn Fires in 2006.

Group Captain James Simpson is a worthy recipient of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

MYUNA BAY SPORT & RECREATION CENTRE
30 September to 3 October 2019



2019 AUSTRALIAN

FIRE CADET

CHAMPIONSHIPS



REGISTRATIONS NOW OPEN

How to enter a team in the championships.

- STEP 1:** The Expression of Interest form should be submitted by 24 May 2019. This form does not commit you to attending, but allows the organisers to select teams and invite them to register.
- STEP 2:** Successful applicants will be sent a team registration pack.
- STEP 3:** Complete and return the registration form in the pack by 19 July 2019. This will indicate a formal acceptance and commitment to attend.
- STEP 4:** Select your team members and commence training!
- STEP 5:** To complete the registration process the team information, adult information and cadet information forms, included in the team registration pack, must be completed and returned by 28 August 2019.

Team nominations are coordinated by the relevant state service. If you are a cadet and would like to attend the championships, contact the cadet coordinator in your area.



Proudly co-hosted by NSW Rural Fire Service
and NSW Rural Fire Service Association

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Captain Peter Speet

Oakville Brigade

Deputy Captain 1969-94
Group Captain 1987-2015
Captain 1994 to current



The technology might have changed, and there's certainly more paperwork, but the principles are the same according to Captain Peter Speet who has been a member of the Oakville Brigade for over 50 years and captain for the last 24 years. It's all about good people.

Chris Garlick took the opportunity to ask Captain Speet about how he keeps volunteers engaged and whether things have changed.

What was the NSW RFS like when you first joined?

Joining up was just turning up to the fire in those days. There was no station and no truck. Our truck was an old Blitz with an 1100-gallon tank, which swayed around a bit. It was just a group of blokes that had formed the brigade.

How big is the brigade?

About 70 active. The best we've done is one week when we had 28 crews. That was stretching it.

And what does the brigade do outside of incidents?

Everyone does everything, fighting fires and community engagement. We go to field days, to the schools and preschools whenever they

want us. We go to the church fete and car show.

We support the championships. We went to the State Champs in 1993. We thought we were good because we'd only gone to local ones. But we weren't. We got flogged (laughs).

Do you remember your first fire?

Yes – it was on Saunders Road where Simpson's fuel depot is now in Scheyville National Park. We put the fire out with rakes and knapsacks down in the gully – it was a pretty hot day.

What incident stands out to you the most?

The one that stands out the most was the meatworks that burnt down in 1970-71. There

were six men killed there.

We worked on that fire and worked on helping clear the rubble that was on top of them. One of my friends got killed – it was an emotional time because at the time I was only 29. You might think that 29 is old, but it's not old when you're dealing with bad things like that.

When you look at fires now and compare them with old fires, are they much different? Are they fiercer?

They aren't fiercer now, but I think we would get stuck in to put them out [rather than let them run]. Because where we are, we can't let the fires run. We've got to put them out. The trucks and equipment are much better now. And there's better support.

“There was no formality then. To join a brigade you just turned up to fight a fire.”

How have things changed?

We do more village stuff. We get a lot of accidents. Two weeks ago we had three accidents and two electrical fires in one week. So there's a lot more knowledge for members to learn. It used to be straight out fires. That's the main difference.

The farms are different now. They used to be all big 50-acre farms around here, but now it's all five-acre blocks.

There was no paperwork in those days. There was no fire control, as such, the police would give you the call.

And the equipment is bigger [now]. Big aircraft and helicopters.

In the Killarney fire the helicopter landed near me and he took me up to see where they were dropping the water. It was interesting, but I had a look then said, "Ok then, you'd better put me back down so we can get into it with the truck".

How do you look after your members? How do you make it gel?

I've always said there'll be no bullying in the brigade and no cliques. We're in it together.

We don't kick people out if they don't come along to everything. Some people mightn't come to everything, but when there's a big fire they'll phone up and offer [their services] and the logistics people will put them on crews. But the members have always stepped up.

Do you think it's something that you're doing?

Yeah. I think it's respect for the people. You use every person's ability. The people that join, you don't leave them out of things. And you ask people to join. Might take a couple of years, but they'll eventually come.

How do you get volunteers?

Make the place friendly and make them welcome. They don't all stay, but make sure you use their expertise. If there's a smart member, you don't leave them down the bottom.

You use the expertise they have and while you do that you won't have trouble getting members.

Have you got young members?

Yeah, we really push that. We've got a whole lot of young ones in their early twenties. We get them to do their courses. And the members who have done their courses help out the ones who are preparing for theirs.

And now that the schools have the cadets it gives the kids a chance to think about [doing] something they might never have considered.

Juniors all want to go to a fire. If they go and their nose is running, their eyes are watering and they've got a bit of a headache, they think geez I had a good time. And that's what they stay for.

How do you cope with change?

I'm really proud of the brigade and how we go along with things, [with changes and developments]. They thought I wouldn't, but I do. We have more women members now, and we've got pagers and the 911 app.

I'm not good on computers but I can work the app. We've put a lot of people on training courses. We just keep going.

You've been a member and captain for a long time. Are you still active?

If there's not an officer going to a fire, then I'll go. I'm still active yeh. And I still do the training. Every Sunday 9 to 11am. And Tuesday night too. I like doing the training. I've got a lot of knowledge.

Any plans to retire?

I wouldn't do it if I didn't enjoy it. I've still got my farm but I need this. Even when I retire from captain I'd do this. I think I've still got a fair bit to contribute, y'know?

You obviously enjoy being in the NSW RFS.

Wouldn't do it if I didn't. I couldn't think of anything better [to be involved in]. I'm very proud of the organisation, because it's the people that make it. All my family is in it and help. Wherever you go, all over, you'll find someone from the bush fire brigade to talk to. I'll keep going while they want me.

This is a shortened version of Chris Garlick's interview with Captain Speet. You can see the video interview on Hawkesbury's Facebook page.



COFFEE4KIDS 2019

Charity Ball

24 AUGUST

VENUE: DOCKSIDE DARLING HARBOUR

BOOK ONLINE AT ★ www.coffee4kids.org.au

the children's hospital at Westmead



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Errol James Smith AFSM

Retired Group Captain Bulga RFB

1942 – 2019



Errol passed away January 6, 2019, aged 76. Present and past NSW RFS members formed a guard of honour for Errol's funeral service in Singleton on January 10 as a tribute to his dedication and service.

Errol had been a member of the NSW RFS for over 50 years. He was well known across the Hunter Valley District not only for the vast number of fires and emergencies he attended but also for his happy-go-lucky approach to life. Errol was quick to respond to many incidents yet also took time to teach and show newer and younger members the ropes.

His passion was the Rural Fire Service. He joined the Bulga Bush Fire Brigade when he was 14 in 1956, when they used branches and wet bags to extinguish flames. In 1970 Errol was elected Deputy Captain of the Bulga Bush Fire Brigade and held that position for 12 years. From 1982 to 1984 Errol was Senior Deputy Captain, from 1985 to 1990 he was Captain, then in 1990 he was appointed Group Captain South. He held that position for 23 years.

During these years Errol attended many bush fires, hail storms,

motor vehicle accidents and floods. His favourite message back to base was "no worries, she'll be out by lunch time".

In October 2013 due to ill health Errol stepped down as Group Captain but retained the position of Retired Group Captain. He was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal in 2013 for his distinguished service to the NSW RFS.

While Captain of Bulga RFB, he was instrumental in establishing the Bulga Brigade Station, negotiating the donation of land and organising the building materials. Errol remained an active member of the brigade, participating in the brigade's fortnightly maintenance morning teas and was actively involved in group skills and maintenance training. In 2004 the Bulga Brigade awarded Errol with life membership in recognition of dedicated service and commitment to the Brigade.

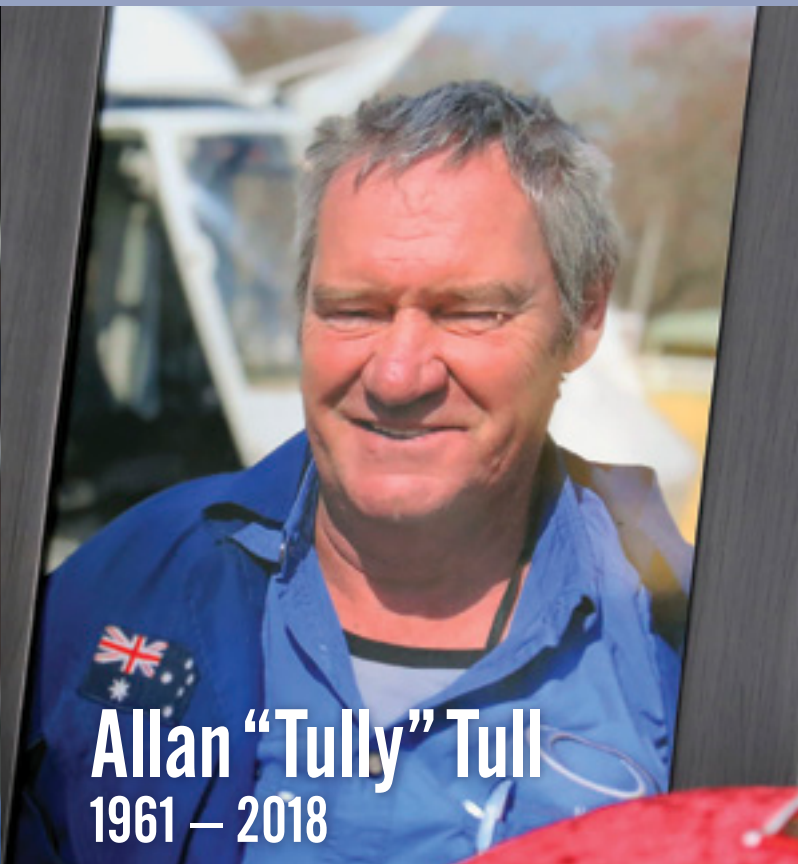
Errol regularly volunteered his time in staffing the Fire Control Centre to keep it operational when staff were committed elsewhere. He was an active member of the Senior Management Team, and represented the interests of volunteers with great passion.

He was a very experienced firefighter, a highly skilled fire manager and a great mentor. His information and insight was an inspiration to many firefighters.

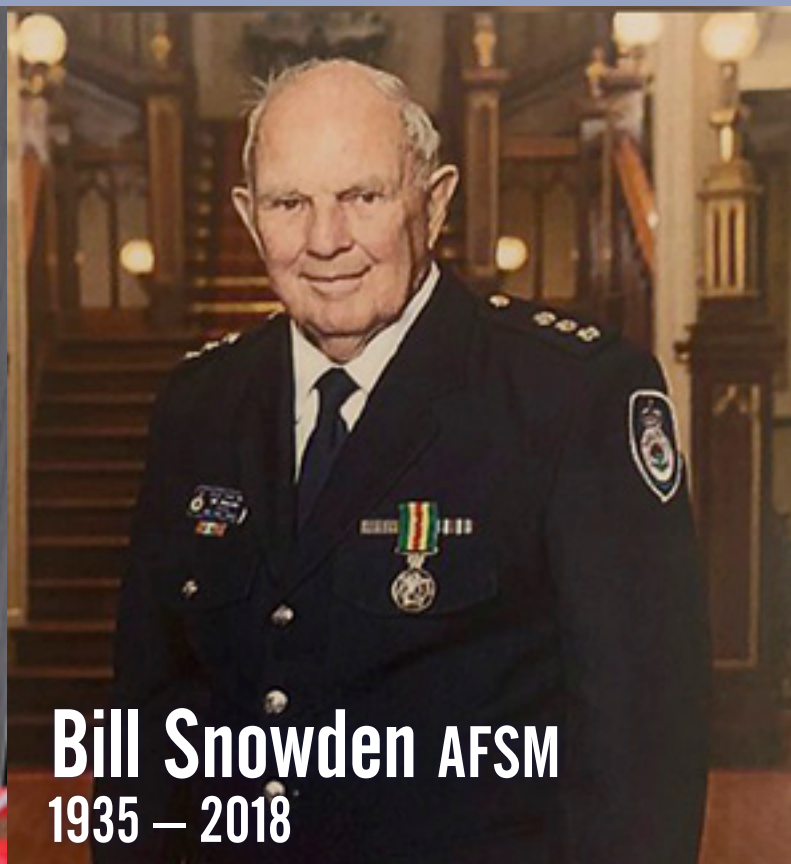
He was involved in the Bulga Community Centre, Milbrodale School, Bulga Scouts, Singleton Men's Shed Bulga Progress Association, Rural Fire Service, Westpac Rescue Helicopter Singleton Support Group and Hunter Valley Off Road Racing Association. He was proud to be associated with the Truckies' Memorial on the Putty Road. Errol was always giving to the community.

His passion was the Rural Fire Service. He joined the Bulga Bush Fire Brigade when he was 14 in 1956, when they used branches and wet bags to extinguish flames.

Errol and Judy – who continues to Captain the Communications Team at the Brigade – married in 1971 and raised three beautiful children, Darren, Sherrie and Wade and now 12 grandchildren. ■



Allan "Tully" Tull
1961 – 2018



Bill Snowden AFSM
1935 – 2018

Pilot Allan Tull, known to his friends and colleagues as "Tully", was killed on August 17 in a helicopter crash during firefighting operations at the Kingiman Fire, west of Ulladulla on the NSW South Coast.

A memorial service was held 24 August at Sydney Helicopters to commemorate his life and service. NSW RFS members, fellow emergency service personnel, pilots and aviation industry representatives, family, friends and colleagues paid tribute to Allan "Tully" Tull.

A guard of honour was formed, and Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons presented Tully's family with the NSW RFS Commissioner's Commendation for Service, in recognition of Allan's decades of service.

Allan James Tull known as "Tully" to his friends and colleagues, was born in New Zealand in April 1961. With a passion and love for flying Allan Tull was first introduced to the skies in 1988 when gaining a student pilot's licence. Further refining and learning Allan Tull was later

awarded his Commercial Helicopter Pilots Licence in late 1998.

On Friday 17 August 2018, whilst flying a BK117 Helicopter for Sydney Helicopters, Allan Tull was tasked to water bomb the Kingiman Fire within the Shoalhaven Local Government Area. A task that Allan had done so many times for so many communities across New South Wales. Flight crews played a critical role in containing the Kingiman fire enabling ground crews to consolidate containment lines. During this water bombing operation an unfortunate event occurred that resulted in Allan tragically losing his life while protecting communities.

"Tully" will always be remembered as an accomplished pilot and member of the firefighting fraternity for his professionalism and courage which will never be forgotten." ■

Group Captain Bill Snowden AFSM joined the Tinonee Rural Fire Brigade (then known as the Tinonee Bush Fire Brigade) in 1971.

Bill's wife Shirley joined at the same time. From 1986 until 2015 Bill was also the group officer of five brigades – Tinonee, Burrell Creek, Krumbach, Firefly and Mount George.

Bill was involved in all aspects of brigade management, administration and training.

Bill was awarded an AFSM on the Queen's birthday honours' list for his 46 years of continuous meritorious service to Tinonee and Burrell Creek Rural Fire Brigades.

Shirley was also recognised in November 2018, awarded the Emergency Services Commemorative Medal for her 45 years of service to the Brigade providing service

in operational support through administration, communications and catering.

The funeral in Taree on 14 June, 2018, was attended by Bill's many colleagues from the NSW Rural Fire Service, along with his family and friends who joined to remember and farewell retired.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons presented Shirley with a NSW RFS commemorative flag and thanked her and Bill for their extraordinary service and commitment of more than 45 years.

Bill was widely respected and admired by all who knew him and he will be dearly missed by us all. ■

OUR BULLETIN HISTORY

Bush Fire Bulletin

Published Quarterly by the Bush Fire Committee

Volume 2, No. 9

1st March, 1957.

Registered for transmission through the post as a periodical

AIRCRAFT ASSISTANCE FOR CARRATHOOL BUSH FIRE BRIGADES

Bush fire brigades operating in the relatively wide open spaces in the Carrathool Shire have become airminded, thanks to the enthusiastic lead given by Redex Air Trial Winner, Councillor W. A. Murrell.

A conference of brigades within the Shire readily agreed to use the aircraft assistance offered by Councillor Murrell and to establish suitable landing strips at selected homesteads in order to get the scheme under way.

Explaining the programme of action, Councillor Murrell informed brigade members that landing airstrips for his Auster aircraft would need to be 400

yards long and up to 20 feet wide, the surface of which should be such that a car could travel at 30-40 m.p.h. in reasonable comfort. The ends of the 400 yard strip should be marked with sheets on the ground or by four large white markers.

"It is essential", said Councillor Murrell "that homesteads selected for airstrips be connected with telephone to relay messages to the Shire Office for transmission over Station 2 RG for the information of outlying brigades."

As an adjunct in keeping brigades posted with air observations, specially prepared message bags made up to Councillor Murrell's design are dropped from the aircraft at strategic points.

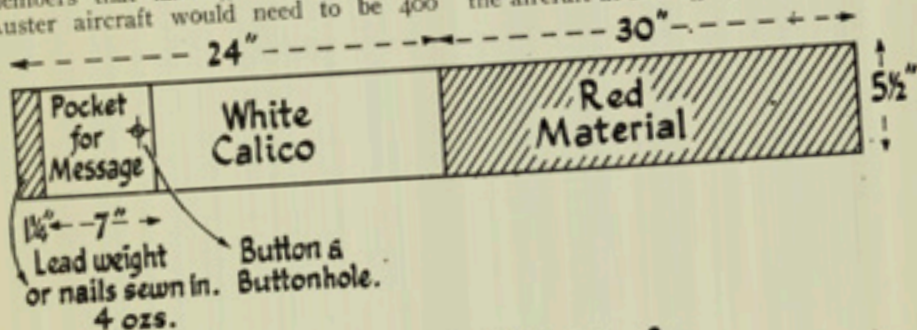


Diagram of Aircraft Message Bag.

BUSH FIREbulletin

onTrove



The NSW RFS has joined forces with the National Library of Australia to digitise the entire collection of the Bush Fire Bulletin dating back to September 1952.

All editions of the Bush Fire Bulletin are available online and are fully searchable, making this huge historical archive easily accessible.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons has praised the chance to make the Bush Fire Bulletin so accessible.

"The skill and dedication of our volunteer service has been recorded in the pages of the Bush Fire Bulletin,

informing and bringing to life the important work our members undertake," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said. "I am very proud that this history of the NSW RFS will be available for all of Australia and the world to see."

Search place names, brigade names, dates and fire-related topics such as "fire trails".

How to search Bush Fire Bulletin On Trove

1. On the Library page of the NSW RFS website, use the search box for Trove.
2. Type in your search term
3. Click "Go". You will be taken to the Bush Fire Bulletin's archive on the National Library of Australia's Trove website
4. A range of articles will be offered for selection
5. Click on the green View Online box on right to view the article.

You can print, download or simply read online.

To initiate another search return to the search box on the Library page on the NSW RFS website.

Or leave the search terms ("nla.obj-284283986" OR "nla.obj-284265362") in the search box to stay within the Bush Fire Bulletin archive.



BUSH FIRE BULLETIN

EMAIL YOUR DETAILS TO Bush.Fire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au TO RECEIVE THE **BUSH FIRE BULLETIN** DIRECT TO YOUR HOME OR TO UPDATE YOUR DETAILS.



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NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE
 Reply Paid 67059 Locked Bag 17
 Granville NSW 2142
 (No stamp required)

Name:
 (Please include any post-nominals)

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