



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

A dramatic photograph of a firefighter in silhouette, wearing a helmet and gear, positioned in a forest at night. The scene is filled with a dense shower of sparks or embers falling from above, illuminated by a bright orange fire in the background. The overall atmosphere is intense and focused.

# ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14



# MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

02

## Legislation and governing bodies

The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) is the lead combat agency for bush fires in NSW. For over 100 years we have been a significant part of the history and landscape of NSW. Working closely with other agencies we also respond to a range of emergencies including structure fires, motor vehicle accidents, floods and storms that occur within rural fire districts.

The NSW RFS is widely acknowledged as the largest volunteer fire service in the world. Members of the NSW RFS are trained to very high levels of competence to ensure they know what to do in any emergency.

The Service aims to reduce the likelihood and consequence of bush fires occurring. This involves comprehensive risk management programs to reduce bush fire hazards and fire ignitions. It also involves the development of regulations for bush fire prone areas.

### Legislation

The management and operational responsibilities of the NSW RFS are set down clearly in the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and can be summarised as follows:

- > Protection of life and property for all fire-related incidents within all rural fire districts in the State
- > Safety and welfare of all volunteers
- > Provision of effective training and resources to rural fire brigades
- > Provision of emergency assistance to other emergency service organisations.

A number of amendments were made to the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and introduced in December 2010. The amendments formalised arrangements for Neighbourhood Safer Places and the responsibility of the NSW RFS Commissioner to issue warnings to the public about bush fires.

In 2013 the Hazard Reduction Audit Panel made 18 recommendations. The NSW Government accepted and implemented 18. Eight of the recommendations required legislative changes which were included in the *Rural Fires Amendment Bill 2013* which has been passed by NSW

Parliament. The Bill amended the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, the *Rural Fires Regulation 2013*, the *National Park and Wildlife Act 1974* and the *State Emergency Management Act* to:

- > Extend the objectives of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* to include the protection of infrastructure, environmental, economic, cultural, agricultural and social assets from damage by fire (in addition to property).
- > Task the NSW RFS with the protection of infrastructure, environmental, economic, cultural, agricultural and social assets from damage by fire (in addition to property).
- > Give the NSW RFS Commissioner quality assurance powers of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans, including the power to direct a Bush Fire Management Committee to amend plans.
- > Give the NSW RFS Commissioner power to conduct HR (hazard reduction) work on land without owner or occupier consent after reasonable attempts are made to contact the owner or occupier. The NSW RFS must attempt to serve notice of work to be carried out and conduct an inquiry of not less than seven days to identify the owner and their current location.
- > Include fire trails in the definition of HR.
- > Require public authorities to report annual HR activity to NSW RFS by July 30 every year, instead of September 30.
- > Require public authorities to provide monthly updates about planned HR activities that did not take place.
- > Allow three year HR certificates to be issued for regular HR work that will only have a low environmental impact. The previous maximum was one year.

*PREVIOUS PAGE: Remote Area Firefighting Team (RAFT) training held at Tumut, February 2014. Photo by Andrew Roberts*

### **NSW RFS Commissioner**

The Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling the activities of the Service and has other functions conferred or imposed on him by or under the *Rural Fires Act 1997*. It is the Commissioner who invokes section 44 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* in order to declare a bush fire emergency.

### **NSW RFS Executive**

The day-to-day management of the Service is carried out under the direction of the NSW RFS Executive.

The Executive consists of the Commissioner and the Service's Directors. A profile of each of these principal officers can be seen on [pages 23-24](#).

### **Corporate Executive Group**

The Corporate Executive Group (CEG) comprises the Executive and senior managers of the Service and representatives of the NSW Rural Fire Service Association (RFSA), which is the representative association of the volunteers and staff of the NSW RFS. Its principal role is to consider and provide advice to the Commissioner on strategic issues affecting the Service.

Details of representation and attendance at this Group are set out in [Appendix V](#).

### **Governance Committees**

Three bodies are empowered by legislation to assist in the operation of the NSW RFS, they are the:

- > Rural Fire Service Advisory Council
- > Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee
- > Fire Services Joint Standing Committee.

### **Rural Fire Service Advisory Council**

The Rural Fire Service Advisory Council (RFSAC) is established under the provisions of Part 6 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*. The Council advises and reports to the Minister and the NSW RFS Commissioner on any matters relating to the administration of the Service. It also provides advice to the Commissioner on public education, programs relating to rural fire matters, the training of rural firefighters and Service Standards.

Details of representation and attendances at the Council are set out in [Appendix V](#).

### **Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee**

The Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee (BFCC) is established under the provisions of section 46 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*. The Committee is chaired by the NSW RFS Commissioner and supported by the Service.

The BFCC is responsible for planning in relation to fire prevention and coordinated bush firefighting. It also advises the Commissioner on bush fire prevention and mitigation and coordinated bush fire suppression.

The BFCC constitutes Bush Fire Management Committees (BFMCs) for all rural fire districts and areas with significant risk of bush fire. It also approves operations coordination and Bush Fire Risk Management Plans that are prepared by the BFMCs.

Details of representation and attendance at this Committee are set out in [Appendix V](#).

### **Fire Services Joint Standing Committee**

The *Fire Services Joint Standing Committee Act 1998* provides for the establishment of the Fire Services Joint Standing Committee (FSJSC).

The major functions of the Committee are to develop and submit to the Minister strategic plans for the coordinated delivery of urban and rural fire services at the interface; to undertake periodic review of fire district and rural fire district boundaries; the minimisation of duplication and the maximisation of compatibility between the NSW RFS and Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW).

The Committee is chaired alternately by the Commissioners of FRNSW and the NSW RFS.

Details of representation and attendance at this Committee are set out in [Appendix V](#).

### **Audit and Risk Committee**

The Audit and Risk Committee provides assistance to the NSW RFS Commissioner by overseeing and monitoring the governance and accountability requirements of the NSW RFS. The Committee is chaired by an independent member and advises the Commissioner on a range of matters including: the effectiveness of the Service's internal audit function; legislative

compliance; the financial statements and financial reporting of the Service; risk and control frameworks; business continuity and corruption prevention activities.

Details of representation and attendance at this Committee are set out in [Appendix V](#).

### **Consultative and stakeholder committees**

Consultation with our stakeholders and related agencies plays a key role in the governance of the NSW RFS.

#### **Consultative committees**

The Rural Fire Service Association (RFSA) is a State-wide non-partisan member association and a valued partner of the NSW RFS. The NSW RFS Commissioner relies on a number of consultative committees, comprising RFSA representatives and senior staff of the Service, for advice on the NSW RFS operations and management.

The Committees that met in the reporting period were: Community Engagement, Membership Services (including the Young Members Group, a sub-group of the Membership Services Consultative Committee), Infrastructure Services and Operational Services.

Details of representation and attendance at this Committee are set out in [Appendix P](#).

#### **Local Government NSW RFS Liaison Committee**

The principal roles of the Committee are to discuss and resolve significant issues of a strategic nature that are of mutual interest to local government and the Service.

Details of representation and attendance at this Committee are set out in [Appendix V](#).

#### **Stakeholder liaison and collaboration**

The Service is also represented on a number of external organisations:

- > Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) and its various committees
- > Association of Environment Education (NSW) Border Liaison Committees
- > Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre

- > Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre
- > District Emergency Management Committees
- > District Rescue Committees
- > Emergency Services Communications Working Party
- > Emergency Services Industry Reference Group
- > Emergency Services Personnel Support Advisory Group
- > Environmental Education Officers' Group
- > Fire Protection Association
- > Museum Education Officers' Group
- > National Aerial Firefighting Centre
- > NSW Health Disaster Management Committee
- > Public Sector Occupational Health and Safety Group
- > Standards Australia – various committees
- > State Emergency Management Committee
- > State Rescue Board
- > National Emergency Management Committee
- > Fuel Loads Management Working Group
- > The National Bush Fire Arson Prevention Working Group.

#### **Governance and Ethical Standards**

During 2013/14 the Service formalised its governance arrangements through the development and endorsement of a Corporate Governance Statement. The statement provides an overview of NSW RFS key Corporate Governance components. These include: the planning and reporting process, risk management, the committee's structure, the Audit and Risk Committee, Internal and External Audits, Policy and Service Standard framework, ethics encompassing the Code of Conduct, financial management and delegation arrangements and a stakeholder engagement plan.

In relation to the key governance components of ethics, the Service remains committed to the highest level of ethical behaviour and satisfactory conduct being displayed at all times by its members. All day-to-day activities of the Service are supported by the [Service's Code of Conduct and Ethics Service Standard 1.1.7](#) which applies to volunteer and salaried members alike. There were no changes to the Code during the reporting period.

The Service's Professional Standards Unit (PSU) also provides advice, education, training and mentoring relating to fraud prevention and corruption prevention issues. It is designed to ensure the community's ongoing trust in the NSW RFS by maintaining the highest standards of ethical behaviour among our members.

The PSU is responsible for overseeing the management of all serious misconduct/ breaches of discipline (including criminal matters) and serious performance-related matters. The Unit investigates complaints of unethical behaviour, misconduct, fraud, corruption and maladministration by Service members. The Unit also provides advice and assistance to NSW RFS Regions in relation to Professional Standards matters being investigated or reviewed at that level.

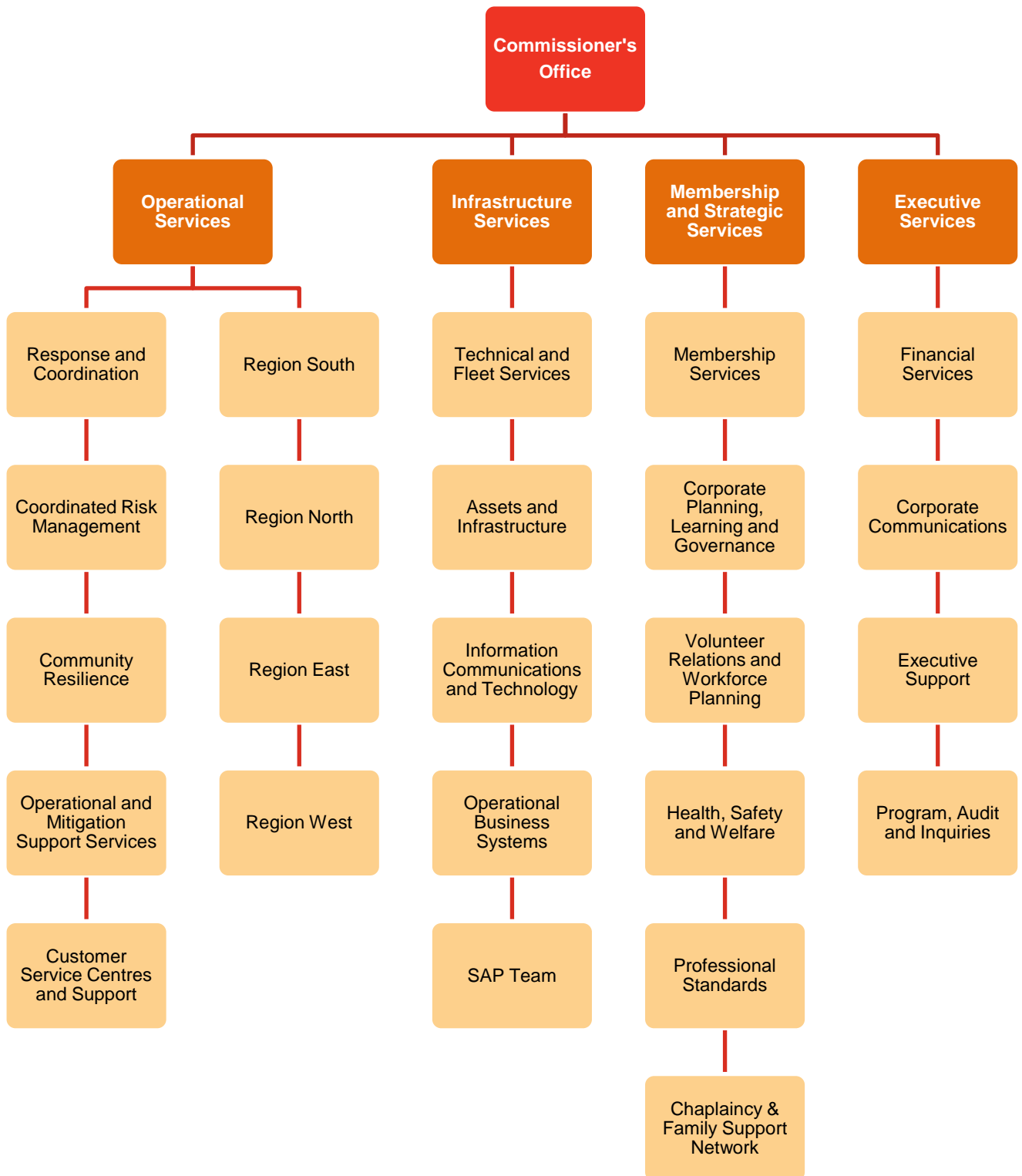
The PSU continued to maintain strong relationships with a number of external agencies, including the NSW Police Force, Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and NSW Ombudsman's Office. The Unit also responds to complaints referred from these agencies.

The PSU ensures that the Commissioner complies with mandatory reporting requirements to the Independent Commission Against Corruption as well as the NSW Ombudsman.

The PSU reviewed the NSW RFS Public Interest Disclosure Service Standard to address the changes in legislation during 2013. The revised policy was approved and published in December 2013 and is available on the NSW RFS intranet. Existing training was amended to incorporate this change.

# NSW RFS Organisational Chart 2013/14

(as 30 June 2014)



## Principal Officers

### **NSW RFS Commissioner**

#### **Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM**

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons has 30 years experience with the NSW RFS serving as both a volunteer and salaried officer.

In 1998 he was appointed an Assistant Commissioner with the NSW RFS and has held portfolio responsibilities for Operations, Strategic Development and Regional Management. In 2004 he was appointed the inaugural Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) Visiting Fellow to the Australian Institute of Police Management (AIPM) for a period of 12 months.

In September 2007 Mr Fitzsimmons was appointed Commissioner of the NSW RFS. He was appointed a Director of the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) in March 2008 and was the Chair of the NAFC Board from 2009 to 2013. He is also a member of the NSW State Rescue Board and was appointed Chairman in 2008. In December 2009 he was appointed a Director on the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre. He was appointed a Board Member of the NSW Government Telecommunications Authority in July 2012.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons was awarded the National Medal in 1999 and the Australian Fire Service Medal in 2001.

### **Director Operational Services**

#### **Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers, AFSM**

Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers joined the NSW RFS in 1979 as a volunteer member of the Belrose Brigade.

In 1995, Deputy Commissioner Rogers commenced his career as a salaried officer as Deputy Fire Control Officer for the Greater Taree District. Since 2002, he has held various Executive positions responsible for Regional Management, Risk Management, Community Safety and Operational Services.

In 2004, he was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal. In July 2008 Deputy Commissioner Rogers was appointed Director Operational Services which brought together the two service delivery areas of Community Safety and Operations into a single cohesive team. In 2011 he was appointed Deputy Commissioner.

In May 2013, the Service undertook a realignment that included the Regional Services Directorate being amalgamated into the Operational Services Directorate.

Deputy Commissioner Rogers represents the NSW RFS on numerous international and national bodies including the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the Wildland Fire Policy Committee, National Bush Fire Arson Taskforce and several AFAC Groups.



### ***Director Membership and Strategic Services***

#### ***Bronwyn Jones***

Ms Bronwyn Jones was appointed to the Service in November 2008.

Prior to joining the Service, Ms Jones had extensive senior level experience in strategic planning and reporting, human resource management and project delivery gained in various public sector agencies, including the Premier's Department, the Department of Community Services, NSW Police Force and IAB Services.

She holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Labour Relations and the Law (University of Sydney); a Master of Arts (Interdisciplinary Studies) degree and a Master of Commerce (Human Resource).

### ***Director Executive Services***

#### ***Richard Lyons***

Mr Richard Lyons has been employed in the NSW Public Sector since 1979. Over his career he has principally worked in policy-related areas in the Health and Attorney-General's Departments, the Ministry of Police and, prior to this appointment to the Service in August 2008, he held the position of Director, Office of Emergency Services for 13 years.

Mr Lyons holds tertiary qualifications in Science and Law and has responsibility for managing the Executive Services Directorate.

### ***Director Infrastructure Services***

#### ***Assistant Commissioner***

#### ***Bruce McDonald, AFSM***

Assistant Commissioner Bruce McDonald was appointed as the Director Infrastructure Services for the NSW RFS in May 2013.

Assistant Commissioner McDonald joined the then Bush Fire Brigade in 1980 and progressed through the organisation, holding various brigade positions culminating in Group Captain in the mid-1990s.

He commenced as a salaried officer in 1998 in the role of Deputy Fire Control Officer - Operations, bringing to a close a 25-year management career in the automotive industry.

Since 2001, Assistant Commissioner McDonald has held various management positions at NSW RFS Headquarters, including State Operations Officer, Manager, Operational Communications and Group Manager, Assets and Infrastructure.

In 2008 he was seconded to head up the implementation of a SAP Enterprise Resource Planning System replacing the Service's Finance and Procurement systems.

Assistant Commissioner McDonald was awarded an Australian Fire Service Medal in 2011.