



NSW Rural Fire Service

Canobolas Zone



2014/2015 Annual Report

**"Where Risk Management is our Passion and Hazard Reduction is our Priority"
Annual Report 2014/2015**

Contents

1. Executive Overview

2. Completed projects 2014/2015

3. People

3.1. Membership

3.2. Staff

3.3. Community Consultation

3.4. Cadets

3.5. Learning & Development

3.6. Financial Information

4. Activities

4.1. Hazard Reduction Results

4.2. Hazard Complaints and Permits

4.3. Fire and Emergency Incidents

5. Infrastructure & Assets

5.1. Tanker Replacement Program

5.2. Tanker Maintenance

5.3. Station Upgrade Program

5.4. Fire Control Centre usage

6. Planned Projects for 2015 - 2016

Our Purpose

During this year our volunteers and Brigades reviewed and designed our purpose statement along with the behaviours expected of our people as they carry out their activities in the NSWRFs in accordance with the Code of Conduct and Ethics.

Extensive consultation has taken place at Brigade and Group Meetings, Gum Tree Meetings and Management Meetings to ensure ownership by all members.

The document detailing our purpose and expected behaviours has been communicated to all volunteers through their Brigades and has been published on our Canobolas Zone website.

The Canobolas Zone Purpose Statement

Our volunteers and brigades will protect our community from fires and other emergencies and aim to prevent them from becoming disasters that would severely impact our people, families, friends, our assets and the landscape.





NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



RURAL FIRE BRIGADES GOALS IN CANOBOLAS ZONE

Our Purpose:

- Our volunteers and brigades will protect our community from fires and other emergencies and aim to prevent them from becoming disasters that would severely impact our people, families, friends, our assets and the landscape.

Our People:

- Our brigades will conduct themselves according to our Code of Conduct and Ethics and will uphold the values of the Rural Fire Service and this will be evidenced by their behaviour and integrity.
- Our members will give and earn mutual respect, they will work as a team, will accept people for the time they are able to contribute and not be judgemental. They will be innovative in their work and open to change.
- We will develop and nurture our young leaders and will value our older members and seek to provide roles for everyone in the delivery of our services.
- Our staff will consult, collaborate and listen to our people to ensure we have strong and effective relationships. We deliver the outcomes we undertake to achieve and display trust and mutual respect to each other.
- New members are welcomed, encouraged and valued.
- We will value our knowledge and experience and will ensure the culture of the way we do business is blue printed and passed onto subsequent generations.
- Succession planning will be actively undertaken to encourage and nurture the passion of our work and develop leadership through the provision of responsibility.
- The safety and welfare of our people is paramount

Our Community:

- We will focus on good planning to provide great outcomes in mitigation and prevention as well as timely and weighed response to incidents to minimise damage to our people and their property.
- We will have open and quality communication with our members and the community to share knowledge of the services we deliver and to inform the community of their personal responsibilities and the actions they need to undertake.

Our Environment:

- Our landscape will be protected and improved by our activities.
- Our rural businesses will be protected and will have the comfort of a skilled, passionate, trained and capable workforce to meet all challenges.

Our Resources:

- Our equipment and resources will be of the highest standard and as it is funded by all sections of the community it will be respected and valued by our people.
- Canobolas Zone will be a respected and positive contributor to the NSWRFSA and we will share our skills and knowledge for the benefit of our neighbours in adjoining Districts.

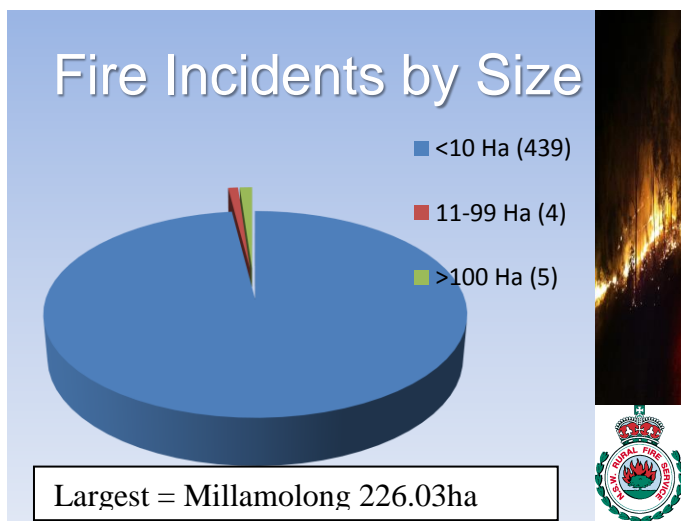
NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

1. Executive Overview

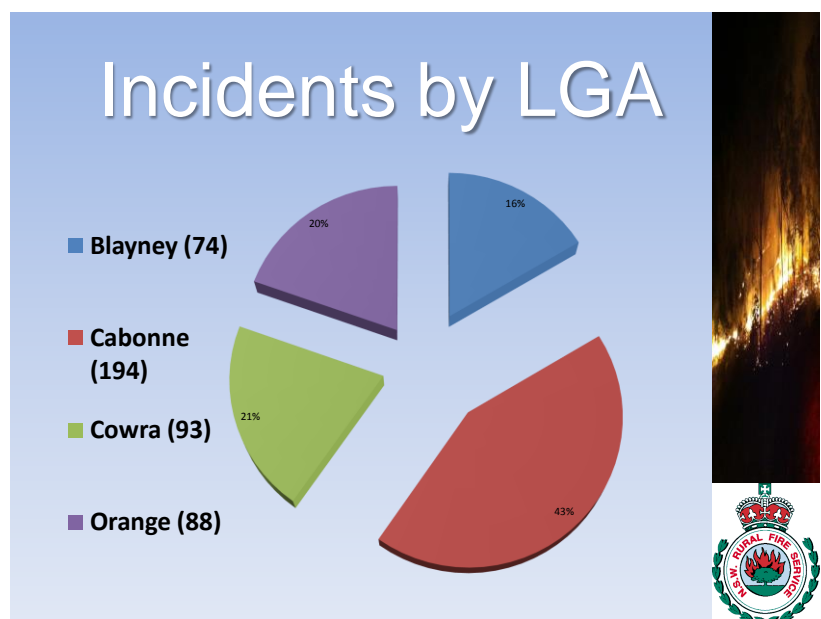
The 2014/2015 fire season had predicted forecast and warnings of a dangerous summer. Above average temperatures, below average rainfall and early heatwave conditions were expected and these were proved to be correct.

For the year Canobolas Zone had 317 incidents and 223 of these occurred in the fire season. The great work of our volunteers and brigades was responsible for keeping these fires small with only 6 larger than 100 hectares, 4 between 11 and 99 hectares with 154 contained to less than 10 hectares.

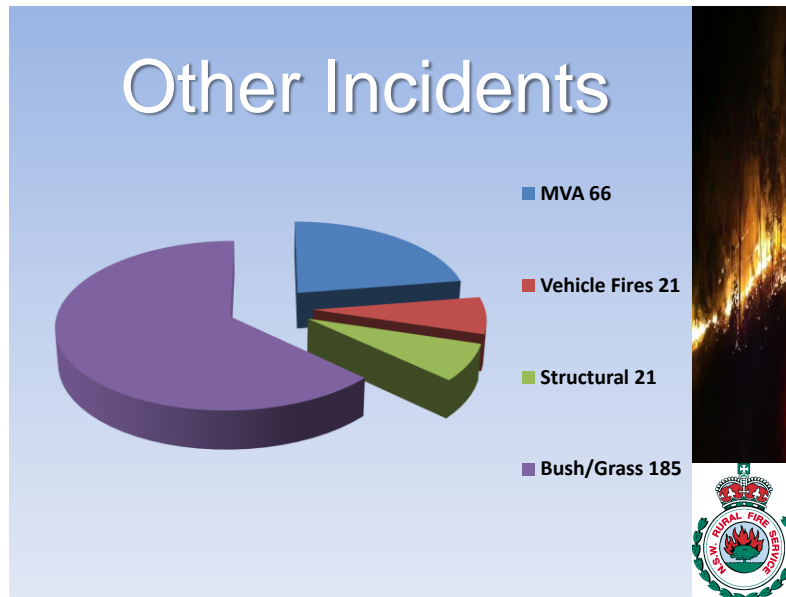
The total area burnt by wildfire for the year was 1,165 hectares.



A total of 1021 hectares was lost through fires throughout the year.



Other Incidents



Despite being submitted in 2012/2013 our new Risk Management Plan is still awaiting approval but is being implemented by the Canobolas Zone pending approval.

Financially, we received a budget of \$6.928m in 2014/2015 which was down from the previous \$7.65M in 2013/2014.

Two further standard design two bay stations were officially opened at Borenore and Byng / Emu Swamp brigades.

It was very disappointing during the year to lose the Moorbel Station along with the Category 1 and Category 7 tankers due to an arson attack on the station. Our thanks go to Illawarra District for providing a replacement tanker as an interim arrangement and Cabonne Council for facilitating alternate accommodation until a replacement station can be constructed.

2. COMPLETED CANOBOLAS ZONE PROJECTS FOR 2014/2015

1. We achieved our Hazard Reduction Goal by completing 10.60 hectares of hazard reduction for each hectare that we lost from wildfire. Our target is to achieve at least 7 ha of hazard reduction for each hectare lost by wildfire and this target was exceeded.
2. Officially opened the Standard Design Borenore Station and the Byng / Emu Swamp Station.
3. The Canobolas FCC Operations Room was upgraded with new technology. Installed new equipment in the Operations room functionality to incorporate a “Knowledge Wall” in line with Communications, Command and Control (CCC) Training framework.
4. A 10 Year Strategic Funding Plan was adopted with our Councils to ensure adequate funding levels in future years.
5. Our Operational Response Code was entrenched in the Canobolas Zone culture and provides the basis for the appropriate weighted response to incidents and ensures local control.
6. Receipt of a new tanker for the Carcoar Brigade in Blayney.
7. Continued the “Gum Tree Meeting” process.
8. Reviewed our 2013/2015 Strategic Plan with specific 2015 Milestones.
9. Facilitation of two Zone “Exercises” to test the operational capability of our Brigades.

3. People

3.1 Membership

During the 2014/2015 period the total volunteer membership remained stable across the four local government areas. We had 130 new members and 130 members retired, passed away or resigned across the Canobolas Zone.



Gumble Brigade members learning about the Cat 6 capabilities!

Congratulations AFSM John !!



4E IN HIS VEINS: John Sturgeon will be awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal for his 50 years of service to the Rural Fire Service.
 photo: JUDE KEOGH 0205rfrmeda2

<http://www.centralwesterndaily.com.au/story/2867080/50-years-on-the-boot-lines-cfa-acknowledges-john-sturgeons-contribution/?cr=103> 16/04/2015

Canobolas Zones latest deserved AFSM recipient John Sturgeon

Group Captain John Sturgeon has been an integral part of the Canobolas Zone Senior Management Team and the Lidster Brigade for many years.



Grasslands Fire Behaviour Research Program with CSIRO, CFA, QFRS and NSWRFSS in Tamworth

3.2 Staff.

Permanent staff levels remained at 8, with no disruption through secondments or transfers.

The staff structure as at 1 July 2014 to the 30th June 2015 was:

Zone Manager	David Hoadley AFSM
Operational Services Co-ordinator	Brett Bowden AFSM
Assets and Infrastructure Co-ordinator	Arthur Sharp AFSM
Membership Services Co-ordinator	Nils Waite
Assets and Infrastructure Officer	Steve Smith
District Support Officer	Roy Ferguson
District Technical Officer	Geoff Selwood
Administration Officer	Liz Lewis

Canobolas Zone has successfully operated for the year on the new realigned management structure which was implemented in 2011/2012 and the following structure has proved to be very successful.

- Management
- Operational Services
- Membership Services &
- Infrastructure and Assets

3.3 Community Consultation.

The “Gum Tree” meeting brand is gradually being picked up by other districts across the State and the concept has been incorporated into other areas to develop the consultation process.

Meetings were held in the last week of October 2014 and from the 23rd to the 27th April 2015. A joint meeting was held with South West Zone staff and volunteers at Wyangala Dam.

The objectives of these meetings remain:

- ❖ To improve communication and understanding between our volunteers and staff.
- ❖ To build lasting and long term relationships and alliances with our volunteers and communities.
- ❖ To really engage with our volunteers by listening to their needs or concerns.
- ❖ The promotion of mutually beneficial results.
- ❖ Identify and build upon our common ground within the RFS.

Key activities included:

- Gum Tree Meetings.
- Community Protection Plan was completed for Cumnock.
- Open Day activities were conducted across the Zone.
- School visits were undertaken.
- Brigades have been active in their communities promoting the “Bush Fire Survival Plans”.

3.4 Cadets.

The RFS Secondary Schools Cadet Programme is run over ten weeks and is open to Year 9 and Year 10 students. This year the programme was conducted at Orange Christian School (20 students).

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

Students were given hands-on demonstrations of RFS vehicles and equipment, hand tools, communications, map reading, Structural/Bush/Vehicle fire fighting, Structural/Bush/Vehicle fire behaviour, Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus and casualty assistance. The students also visited the FRNSW Orange Station to see another emergency service organisation and what they do.

The programme is overseen by Canobolas Zone staff and the training is provided by several volunteer members.



Cadets learning about Fire Behaviour



RFS members undertaking Village Firefighter training

3.6 Learning and Development

Another busy year of training related activities conducted within the Zone and around the state by our staff and volunteers. During the year a total of 374 hours of tuition has been provided in various RFS qualifications. Volunteers also attended various local workshops during the year which provides the knowledge and skills our volunteers require, but without a formal qualification.

The Zone's volunteers and/or staff attended, trained or assessed in the following training activities locally or around the state:

- Advanced Structural Firefighting Courses
- Advanced Resuscitation Techniques Courses
- Advanced Firefighter Course
- Aviation Basic Knowledge Course
- Aviation Operations Courses and Workshops
- Breathing Apparatus Operator Course
- Bush Firefighter Courses
- Bush Firefighter Grasslands Course
- Bush Fire Awareness Courses
- Bush Fire Support Course
- Chainsaw Courses
- Communications Centre Assistant Course
- Command, Control and Communications Courses
- Community Safety Facilitator Course
- Crew Leader Courses
- First Aid Application Courses
- Fire Behaviour Analysis Course
- GPS Workshop
- Group Leader Courses
- Media Liaison Course
- Prescribed Burning Planning Course
- Prescribed Burning Supervisor Course
- Incident Management Workshop
- Incident Management Exercise
- Rural Fire Driving Courses
- Scribe Foundation Workshop
- TAE Upgrade Cert IV module Language, Literacy and Numeracy Workshops
- Village Firefighter Course
- Yeoval Hospital Exercise

The Zone's volunteers and/or staff have also attended in the following activities:

- Cadia /Valley Mine - Wildland Firefighting Courses
- Canobolas Zone Conference
- Combined Agency Exercises
- Frost Fest
- Joint Training with FRNSW
- Police Anti-Terrorism Exercising
- RFS ANFD site stand
- RFS Conference
- State Championships Meetings
- Young Members Group



Cadets learning about hydraulics

This year the RFS upgrading the MyRFS web site and the Online learning component within it, so that the Safety and Volunteer Inductions being completed by new members over the internet directly inputting the qualification against the member's record.

The Region West Online learning option, through the Moodle network, has also been upgraded and expanded the number of courses available. This system still covers the theory components of courses that are adapted to online learning.

The training program maintains workshops that are held at brigades as requested while main stream courses are being held close to where the majority of the participants, for a particular course, reside.



Chainsaw Course Mandagery



Community Engagement Activity at Nargong Brigade Station

**“Where Risk Management is our Passion and Hazard Reduction is our Priority”
Annual Report 2014/2015**



Region West Instructor Professional Development Conducted at Dubbo



The Heritage Baldry Cat 1 vehicle on display at the RFSA Conference



The New Gas Prop being used at a Village Fire Fighter Course

3.7 Financial

The Canobolas Zone received a total allocation from the Rural Fire Fighting Fund of \$6,969,028 for the 2014/2015 year. Each Council received the allocation as shown in Table 3:

TABLE 3 – RFFF Allocation

		Percentage of Allocation
Blayney	\$1,613,537	24.09%
Cabonne	\$2,146,025	32.05%
Cowra	\$1,503,909	22.46%
Orange	\$1,432,557	21.40%
Total	\$6,696,028	

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

TABLE 4 – Council Contribution to the RFFF

Council	Actual Contribution
Blayney	\$127,207
Cabonne	\$151,566
Cowra	\$110,492
Orange	\$116,982

4. Activities

TABLE 5

Hazard Reduction Work Summary By Agency

The idealised annual benchmark for Canobolas Zone, across all fire management zones, is an annual treatment area of 13,974 ha.

Agency	Benchmark	Completed for 2015
NPWS	2,300 ha	79.27 ha
FNSW	657 ha	0 ha
Crown Lands	249 ha	14.74 ha
Private Property	6,427 ha	2,401.00 ha
State Rail	445 ha	0 ha
RMS	75 ha	0 ha
Local Government	3,814 ha	4,753.44 ha
TOTAL	13,974 ha	7,248.45 ha

4.1 Hazard Reduction Results

Autumn rains hampered hazard reduction activities. The season changed quickly in April with conditions too dry prior to Easter and then significant rain making it too wet to burn.

A small number of HR burns were undertaken along with the Council Roadside Vegetation works to ensure that we had a satisfactory level of strategic works completed prior to the Bushfire Danger Period.

TABLE 6 - 5 Year average & Wildfire:Hazard Reduction Ratio

Our Hazard Reduction Targets

	2014/2015	2013/2014	2012/2013
Hazard Reduction ha	12,298 Target	8,222	8,806
Av. HR last 5 yrs	12,344	12,403	14,687
Area Burnt by Wildfire	1,165	1,022	2,156
Ration HR to Wildfire over last 5yrs of HR	10.60 ha to 1	12.13 ha to 1	6.81 ha to 1
Properties Protected	9,490	18,065	15,631



The Canobolas Zone ratio for 2014/2015 was 10.60 hectares of hazard reduction for each hectare lost by wildfire compared to 12.13 in 2013/2014 and 6.812 in 2012/2013. The Zone benchmark target is set at 7:1 so we are equalling and surpassing this target.



Joint NSWRFs & FCNSW Hazard Reduction at Neville State Forest





Volunteers conducting a HR Burn in the Mandagery/Manildra area

4.2. Hazard Complaints & Permits

The hazard reduction component of Rural Fire Service activities is now undertaken expressly by the Canobolas Zone on behalf of the Councils and incorporates the four areas of

1. Issue of Fire Permits
2. Issue of Hazard Reduction Certificates
3. Management of Hazard Complaints
4. Advice on Compliance to “Planning for Bushfire Protection” in regard to Development Applications.

During the reporting period the Canobolas Zone carried out the works as listed in Table 7.

TABLE 7 – Community Safety Activities

	Blayney	Cabonne	Cowra	Orange	2014/2015	2013/2014	2012/13
Permits Section 87 & 88	51	187	181	53	472	205	363
Hazard Complaints	25	30	96	110	261	265	234

Fire Trails

Work has continued during 2014/15 working with validating of all nominated fire trails within our fire trail register.

TABLE 8 – Fire Trails by land tenure

Tenure	Number of Fire Trails	Distance
Councils	6	13.50km
Crown Land	5	13.13km
NPWS	117	341.00km
Forests NSW	160	395.05km
Private	118	452.03km
Wyangala State Waters	15	22.41km

4.3 Fire and Emergency Incidents

The Canobolas Fire Season 2014/15 commenced with the statutory date of 1 October 2014, again the Canobolas Zone Operational Response Code was the basis that specified triggers for stand by and response during fire danger ratings of Very High and above and set the ground rules for interaction at every level to ensure prompt response and proactive results for all operations.

The weather predictions for the season were pessimistic, with warnings of heatwave conditions and below average rainfall, the implementation of the Operational Response Code played a part in rapid containment of the vast majority of reported fires. A total of 138 Bush and Grass fires were recorded, down from 152 from the previous year, 128 of these were contained to 10ha or less.

The largest fire was the Millamolong event during November where 226ha were burned, and this was really the commencement of the fire responses across the Zone. Six other fires burned an area over 100ha with three others burning between 11 and 100ha.

There is clear evidence that a rapid heavy weighted, multi resource response to all reported fires on days of elevated fire danger results in significant improvements in rapid containment capability. The use of the Operational Response Code is now firmly entrenched within our culture.

The fires of significance were:-

- Millamolong (Blayney) 226ha November
- Yullundry (Cabonne) 158ha November
- Minnamurra (Cabonne) 120ha December
- Tantallon (Cabonne) 108ha December
- Nangar Road (Cabonne) 107ha November
- Darbys Falls Road (Cowra) 104ha December – Christmas Day
- Gallaghers Rd (Cowra) 65ha May



Tantallon Fire late afternoon Day 1

**“Where Risk Management is our Passion and Hazard Reduction is our Priority”
Annual Report 2014/2015**

Incidents

Brigades responded to a total of 449 incidents during the 2014/15 reporting period a significant reduction in the previous year and the lowest recorded figure for the past 7 years. The table below details the responses by Council area and the historic totals since 2007/08.

TABLE 9 – Incidents Totals 2014/15

	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09	2007/08
Blayney	74	54	88	55	58	62	47	46
Cabonne	194	159	199	173	151	152	155	139
Cowra	93	68	94	82	102	57	78	99
Orange	88	64	102	84	85	69	71	58
Totals	449	345	483	394	396	340	351	342

Other Incidents

Of those incidents listed in Table 9 above, other emergency support that Rural Fire Brigades provide across our community landscape are:

- 185 Bush and Grass fires
- 66 Motor Vehicle Accidents
- 21 Vehicle fires and
- 21 Structure fires.

Out of Area Assistance

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

During the reporting period local RFS resources were dispatched on a number of occasions to assist with the fire fighting effort outside of the Canobolas Zone. In January 10 personnel were dispatched as part of a Region West Strike team to assist with fires burning in the Central East of South Australia. Later in February 14 Canobolas Zone volunteers formed up with the Region West to man two five day rotations of fire fighting support to Central Victoria.

During March an Orange Crew of three fire fighters assisted the Region West Strike Team at the serious Pilliga Fire. During the Hunter Valley Storm Event in late April, and our Operations Officer was part of a 78 strong team of Australians sent to Canada to assist the British Columbia Forest Service with fires in the north of their Province. This was a 5 week deployment where an entire Australian IMT took charge of two major fire incidents.

In total the Canobolas Zone deployed 31 personnel over 56 days manning 171 shifts for a total of 2,114 man hours.

Table 12 - Deployment statistics

Volunteers	Tasked DTZ	Location	Task	Days	Total man/shifts	Man Hours
2	Staff	Mid Lachlan Valley	IMT	3	6	72
10	All	South Aust	Fire fighting	5	50	600
14	All	Cent Victoria	Fire fighting	5	70	840
3	Orange	Pilliga	Fire fighting	3	9	108
1	Orange	Hunter Valley	Storm Recovery	5	5	60
1	Staff	British Columbia	IMT	35	31	434
31				56	171	2114

5. Infrastructure and Assets

5.1 Tanker Replacement Plan

Funding of \$302,870 was allocated for new fire fighting vehicles during 2014/15.

This was a new Category 1 tanker that was allocated to the Carcoar Brigade in Blayney Shire. The second hand Carcoar tanker was transferred to the Panuara Burnt Yards Brigade. The Panuara Tanker was then used to upgrade the Toogong Brigade.

5.2 Maintenance

A total of \$522,764 was allocated to the Canobolas Zone for maintenance funding across the fleet, stations, communications and ancillary equipment.

All fire fighting vehicles were treated to either a Service simultaneous with a roadworthy inspection and an inspection of the carried fire fighting equipment. These works commenced from July 2014 and concluded during December 2014.

The Service centres for these works are decentralised to limit the amount of travelling required by volunteers, as well as constrain the fuel expenditure. These centres have all been selected for their capability and expertise in providing the required maintenance for heavy vehicles and have all gained the certification required to perform the RTA HVIS (Heavy Vehicle Inspection Scheme).

The approved service centres are:

- Central West Mechanical
- Cowra Truck Wreckers
- Molong Tyre & Mechanical
- BK & BS Burn Canowindra
- Hamilton's Mobile Mechanical Repairs Cudal

5.3 Station Upgrade Program

There was an allocation of \$515,000 for new Fire Station builds and upgrades along with improvements to the FCC kitchen.

The following projects were funded:

- Stage 2 at Rivers, Gooloogong, Mount McDonald, Porters Mount / Holmwood, Merriganowry and Barryrenie Stations to include meeting room, toilets and kitchen.
- North West extension.
- Springside Station.
- FCC kitchen.

5.4 Fire Control Centre Usage

The Canobolas Zone continues to be used on a regular basis for State, Regional and Zone meetings and training events. Several Government Departments and private businesses also hire our rooms for activities and training sessions.

This additional use assists in maintaining a very high visual presence in the eyes of our community with flow on effects to aid our aim and vision.

Highlights this year have been the:

- RFS Media Courses
- Canobolas Zone Conference.
- GIS Training.
- Region West Incident Management Workshop
- NSWRFSS Command Control and Communications
- NSWRFSS State Mitigation Crews Training and Induction
- Greater Western Area Health Service
- Rescue and Response Training
- District Emergency Management Training
- RTA

6. Planned Projects for 2015 - 2016

- Implement the 2015/2016 Milestones for the Canobolas Zone Strategic Plan.
- Continued enhancement and implementation of the Canobolas Zone Operational Response Code.
- Identify and implement opportunities to achieve our hazard reduction targets.
- Pilot and trial smart phone applications to test the emergency services benefits for volunteer and resource management within Canobolas Zone.
- Continue the “Gum Tree Meeting” process for Brigade and community consultation.
- Complete Group Captain elections to facilitate the next generation of leadership and to entrench the Canobolas Zone culture in our volunteer leadership.
- Develop appropriate governance with our Councils to continue the successful station building program.
- Construction of the new Standard Design Station at Springside and Cudal.
- Complete extensions and upgrades at North West Station, Kings Plains, Mullion Creek, Eulimore, Merriganowry, Rivers, Barryrennie, Gooloogong, Holmwood, Mount McDonald, Lyndhurst, Billimari, Wyangala, The Ponds and SMSS shed.
- Confirm land for 2016/2017 Station Program at Wattamondara, Chaucer, Mandurama, Springhill, Lidster and Moorbel.
- Completion of the technology upgrade to the Canobolas Operations room.
- Extension to the Canobolas FCC kitchen.