

# BUSH FIREbulletin

THE JOURNAL OF THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



# Interaction for action

SPECIAL FOCUS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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BUSH FIRE RESILIENCE IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

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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



As a community based volunteer organisation, our people are out in communities across the state every day. And whether you realise it or not, you're performing a critical role in engaging with the community.

This edition of the *Bush Fire Bulletin* celebrates the importance of community engagement and how it can help influence people in making better informed decisions and being more resilient in the event of disaster.

We don't have to cast our minds back too far to realise the effect a bush fire can have on a community. In recent years we have seen devastating fires in NSW such as in the Blue Mountains, Coonabarabran and Port Stephens, where homes have been destroyed. And we should never forget the tragic impact of 2009 Black Saturday bush fires in Victoria where 173 people died.

One of the consistent messages to come out of disasters like these is the need for all of us, emergency services and communities, to work more closely and cooperatively. Gone are the days of emergency services being the experts, trying to dictate what people should do.

It's true that there is no one single 'community' – indeed, community is a complex mix of people from different backgrounds, beliefs and levels of understanding. That means there is no 'one size fits all' approach that will work for all. Ideally, we need to have a solid understanding of our local communities, the issues and experiences, and develop responses which are tailored.

These days the Service employs a more collaborative approach such as the development of Community Protection Plans, where locals play a key role in identifying areas and assets at risk, and identifying ways of protecting them. This approach empowers people to make informed decisions and builds resilience in the community. A recent example of this from the Snowy Mountains in the Cooma-Monaro District has been featured in this issue.

There's no doubt that truly engaging with people in bush fire prone areas can be labour intensive, and the tangible results may take some time to see, as opposed to quick activities like pamphlets, brochures and one-off-displays. These more meaningful connections are more effective in the long run and are now just as important as the old adage of "putting the wet stuff on the hot stuff".

Featured in this issue of the *Bush Fire Bulletin* are some of the very successful programs which are making inroads in the area of community engagement.

The Bush Fire Resilience for Aboriginal Communities program has recently won an award for State Government sector in the NSW Resilient Australia Awards. At the National Resilient Australia Awards it was Highly Commended. A wrap up of its achievements over the past two years is included here.

Open Day continues to be a high profile and successful event and this year the Service introduced Get Ready weekend to further encourage people to prepare their homes for the fire season.

Community engagement is NSW RFS core business - just as important as our operational response, our information and warnings, and mitigation works.

I set everyone this simple challenge – raise the issue of community engagement in your brigade. Start a conversation about how you can work together with your community. And keep at it.

Regards

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM



@RFSCommissioner



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## Spelling bee



On International Volunteer Day, 5 December 2014, school students at the Warrimoo Public School decided it was time to make a statement. Staff and students gathered on the school oval to spell the words 'Thank You' while a NSW RFS helicopter flew overhead and snapped some photos. The gesture was in recognition of the support provided by emergency services during the Greens Rd, Warrimoo fire in November 2014. Warrimoo Brigade members were in attendance to liaise between the school and the Firebird 200 helicopter. On returning to their classrooms, students exchanged high fives with the crew and echoed their appreciation for all the volunteers efforts. Photo by Ben Shepherd

## Corner Country inundated with rain



Barrier Range Brigade member Ruth Sandow lives on Pimpara Lake Station in Corner Country 200 km north of Broken Hill, she took this photo on 10 January 2015: "Two years ago properties across the north west of the State were confronted with a series of wildfires as dry lightning storms passed over the Unincorporated Area. During that period tens of thousands of hectares of grazing land was burned. In some places the fire heat was intense and perennial grasses were destroyed, their butts burned deep into the soil. Recovery has been extremely slow with no real useful rain across these parts since that time. Until, that is, this week (January 2015), when exceptional rain fell. With some properties receiving up to 250mm across burned ground finally regeneration is guaranteed."

## Lunds Plantation Fire



On January 3 2015 more than 100 firefighters, supported by five aircraft, were working on a fire in Lunds Plantation in Bago State Forest, five kilometres north of Talbingo near Tumut. The fire burnt more than 100 hectares on the first day. NSW RFS crews worked with Forest Corporation and National Parks and Wildlife Service to control the fire for a further two days. The fire was declared out on 12 January 2015 after burning 640ha of plantation. Photo by Andrew Roberts

## Heavyweight champion



The firefighting Air-Cranes *Ichabod* and *Gypsy Lady* returned to Sydney on 4 October 2014 on board the massive Antonov An-124. The Antonov An-124 is the heaviest of heavy weight cargo lifters and has multiple winches, overhead cranes and the ability to load and unload from the front and the rear. It has a maximum payload of 120,000kgs and can 'kneel' to allow drive, roll and lift on/off. The Air-Cranes are dismantled for transportation but crews work around the clock to reassemble the helicopters on the tarmac within 24 hours of arrival. Australia contracted six Air-Cranes for the 2014/15 bush fire season in NSW, Victoria, SA and WA. The NSW RFS contracted Air-Cranes were deployed over 17 days in November and December 2014 there were also sent to assist in SA and Victoria. Photo by Top Notch

# Assistance in South Australia



In the first two weeks of January, while fire activity was quiet in NSW, NSW RFS members were busy in Victoria and South Australia. Between 3-6 January 91 firefighters were deployed to assist with bring bush fires under control in Victoria and from 3-9 January a further 414 firefighters and 49 specialists assisted in the damaging South Australian fires. The Service coordinated multi-agency personnel from Fire & Rescue NSW, National Parks and Wildlife and Ambulance NSW as well as providing NSW RFS Strike Teams and two aviation personnel. Significant resources accompanied the firefighters including linescan aircraft, waterbombing aircraft, liaison officers, incident management teams and fire trucks.

NSW RFS members began leaving South Australia on 9 January after good rain helped bring fires under control. Ten days later a further five NSW RFS Building Impact Analysis specialists flew to South Australia to conduct detailed damage assessments and surveys.

ABOVE RIGHT: NSW Ambulance paramedics on the fireground with NSW RFS crews 8 January 2015. Photo courtesy of Ambulance NSW.

ABOVE LEFT: Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons welcomed back the troops at Sydney Airport on 8 January. Photo by Ben Shepherd

## Welcome home



NSW RFS firefighters returning from out-of-area deployments in South Australia were surprised to find a special message on their boarding passes. Qantas staff had added messages such as: *Selfless firefighters, Our heroes, Benevolent firefighters* to the boarding passes. On 3 January the majority of commercial flights between the two states were fully booked due to the Christmas break. Qantas, was able to assist at extremely short notice with the charter of a 737 aircraft and crew to transport 120 personnel from Sydney to Adelaide. Qantas and Virgin Australia continued to provide assistance in the coming days providing a significant number of seats to assist in the transport of changeover crews.

## "I felt like I had won the lotto!"



This six-year-old South Australian boy touched the heart of dozens of firefighters when he donated his birthday cake to the firefighting effort. Jackson Newman had his birthday party cancelled when his family were forced to evacuate their home due to the bush fires in the area. Six NSW RFS crews from the Cumberland area in western Sydney, who were working with SA Country Fire Service, decided to visit Jackson and not only thank him, but wish him a happy birthday. "Little Jackson made me cry yesterday morning when I saw the cake!" wrote Michael El Khoury from Horsley Park Brigade on Facebook, "After meeting him and seeing his smile, I felt like I won the lotto!!!" Photo courtesy of Michael El Khoury



# November 2014 S44s, Total Fire Bans, fires, explosions and storms

The hot weather throughout November led to three section 44s, nine Total Fire Bans declarations, multiple requests for farmers to cease harvesting and an increased level of fire activity.

The warm weather was also accompanied by significant levels of lightning and NSW RFS provided strike teams to assist NSW SES in areas around Sydney due to the impact of storms.

During the month there were a number of new fire outbreaks including one in the Parkes area – the Peak Hill Tullamore Road fire – that burnt out more than 2,200 hectares of grass and scrub in a single afternoon. (see next page)

An explosion at a pyrotechnics facility on Condobolin Rd Bogan Gate on the same day also caused a fire in nearby scrub. (see page 6)

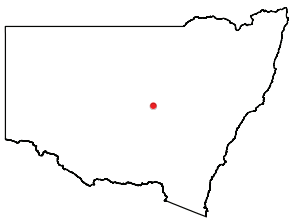
Earlier in November a section 44 was declared in the Blue Mountains prompted by the Cliff Drive Fire and unfortunately one property was lost. (see page 8)

Firefighters also worked in hot and difficult conditions with a fire burning around Warrimoo and Blaxland in the Blue Mountains where a second section 44 was declared. Nine helicopters, including one Air-Crane, assisted. Firefighters worked to strengthen containment lines and RAFT were deployed into hard to

access areas. Thankfully there were no reported property losses as a result of this fire. (see page 10)

There was also significant levels of activity throughout Region North. Many fires occurred in remote areas which saw NSW RFS firefighters working closely with NPWS and FRNSW. One of the Riverina's most iconic pubs, the Conargo Hotel, was sadly destroyed by fire. NSW RFS crews responded but when they arrived the pub was already lost to the blaze.

In Late November most welcome rain was experienced across many areas of NSW which provided respite for members.



## Tullamore fire

At 1130hrs on Sunday 23 November, Tullamore Brigade reported a fire approximately 10km east of Tullamore on the Peak Hill Tullamore Road.

The Fire Danger Rating for that day was Severe and the Forbes Fire Control Centre was stood up and staffed by the Duty Officer and the On Call Officer.

The blaze appeared to have been ignited by a front end loader constructing drainage systems in a grass paddock. In challenging conditions, the fire spread quickly into the nearby grass, croplands and undulating scrub country.

Weather conditions that day were intense with 44 degrees recorded at Parkes Airport at 1452hrs, a low 18 percent relative humidity and winds from the north west which then swung around to the south west at 78kph. The area where the fire started is used predominately for grazing and cropping and there had been no recent fire activity or hazard reduction in the area. The fire had the potential to increase in size rapidly.

Further fire crews were rushed to the area and multiple aircraft were deployed to the location. The fire was erratic and spreading quickly and proved difficult to contain at first.

A cease harvest request was issued by the NSW RFS on the recommendation of Group Officers and staff within the District to prevent any further ignitions.

A large number of resources were dedicated to the fire with 100 firefighters, 17 appliances, six heavy plant operators, five fixed wing bombers, one Helitak (helicopter) and one Firebird (helicopter) battling the blaze until it was contained.

NSW RFS Mid-Lachlan Valley Superintendent Ken Neville said volunteers did a "magnificent"

job in bad conditions - putting in a lot of hours to contain the fire.

There were three storage sheds destroyed and the laundry in one of the houses threatened caught fire however this was quickly brought under control by units protecting the property.

Three houses came under threat as the fire spread back into the grassland area but were successfully protected as the fire was extinguished close by. The occupants were evacuated to nearby Trundle.

An Air Attack Supervisor (AAS) arrived during the afternoon and with so many aircraft working this role was invaluable for safety and coordination.

At 1600hrs a section 44 declaration was made due to the potential of the fire to quickly spread to a size where significant out of area resources might be required.

The fire was brought under control by late afternoon however crews continued working throughout Sunday night to strengthen fire breaks and conduct back burns to make the area safe as possible.

Cooler weather conditions over the following days assisted in bringing the fire completely under control which was declared out on 26 November 2014 after burning 2,200ha.

Losses included 100ha of unharvested oats, three storage sheds, 70km of fencing and hundreds of hectares of stock feed. There were no injuries or loss of life.



OPPOSITE: Some of the houses that came under direct attack of the Tullamore fire. Photo by Troy Porter

LEFT: One of the storage sheds destroyed. Photo by Scott Baker

BELOW: Trees in this area were actually bent and frozen horizontal due to the force of the fire travelling through the area. Photo by Troy Porter



# A horrible day

Sunday 23 November, 2014, was a busy day for NSW RFS crews across many areas including the Lower Central West Plains, with three fires burning under Severe fire danger conditions throughout the afternoon, all of which reached Watch & Act alert status.

As well as contending with these three fires, crews were dealing with 20 lightning ignitions and other incidents in conditions so hot that a local cease harvest request was issued to landholders so as to further assist in minimising any further potential ignitions.

Incident Controller, Mid Lachlan Valley District Manager Superintendent Ken Neville, recalls it was a "horrible day".

"There was a Total Fire Ban, a Severe Fire Danger Rating, temperatures at Parkes Airport reached 43.9 degrees with nine per cent humidity and NW to SW winds gusting to 78kph," Superintendent Neville said.

A section 44 declaration was made at the request of the local Mid Lachlan Team Bush Fire Management Committee who were concerned about the potential of the fire becoming extremely fire in a short period of time due to the conditions. (See page 5)

With evening approaching and two of the three Watch and Act fires downgraded to Advice alert status, it seemed the day's workload may have finally been starting to ease back just a little. That is until reports came through of an explosion at the Howard & Sons Pyrotechnics storage facility west of Parkes. Matt Sun reports.



# Blast rocks Bogan Gate

At 1713hrs, a large blast rocked the small township of Bogan Gate with such force that several residents in Parkes, 40km away, felt the aftershock. Approximately 4.5 tonnes of prepared fireworks stored in one bunker had gone off simultaneously. (see left)

NSW RFS and Fire & Rescue NSW crews arrived to find thick pink smoke issuing from the exploded bunker. The first NSW RFS Group Officer on scene was astonished to find some very stunned bright pink cattle in the vicinity.

Eight people were evacuated from nearby homes as a precautionary measure.

Nothing remained of the storage shed itself however nearby buildings were untouched. Debris and fireworks casings were strewn for about 100 metres.

The event became a HAZMAT incident with both FRNSW and NSW RFS working together to contain the blaze. NSW RFS State Air Desk arranged for a specialist FRNSW HAZMAT team from Sydney to be quickly transported to the scene.

Burning debris from the explosion soon became firefighters' main concern. Embers from the explosion ignited a fire on a nearby timbered hill which had previously been used as an Army live fire range and possibly still contained unexploded ordnance.

The event was also declared a fire incident and a 1.5km exclusion zone was established due to the presence of unexploded fireworks and possible unexploded ordnance. As a result, the railway line south of Condobolin Rd was closed.

NSW RFS fixed-wing aircraft remained on duty throughout the afternoon to prevent the grass fire from spreading, however they could not be used and ground crews could not access the area.

"We had a fire in the range beside the hill but we were basically unable to do anything with it because of the exclusion zone," Mid Lachlan Valley District Manager Superintendent Ken Neville said.

"Fortunately at the time the winds were blowing in our favour from the south and the area to the north west of the fire had been burnt two years previously.

"The fire wasn't posing any immediate threat and therefore

it was observed from a distance overnight."

Around 2200hrs, the area was deemed safe enough to allow residents to return to their homes and to reopen the rail line.

## Monday 24 November

The exploding fireworks had destroyed the bunker in which they were stored but, aside from some minor damage to nearby structures, had not significantly impacted any other storage facilities.

This meant the day's firefighting effort was able to focus on containing the fire burning in the nearby wooded area previously used as a firing range.

Given the potential risk to ground crews from unexploded ordnance, the task of creating containment lines was left to waterbombing aircraft dropping retardant on the perimeter of the restricted area.

Firefighters on the ground were tasked with mopping up and blacking out the edge of the fire, in areas that had been declared safe.

Crews were reminded about the danger of unexploded ordnance likely to be present on the former army firing range.

By 1400hrs crews were controlling the fire and several hours later it was contained.

## Tuesday 25 November

With no active fire, the incident was downgraded to Patrol at 0833hrs. Over the course of several days, however, crews repeatedly returned to the fireground to douse minor flare ups in timber.

## Sunday 30 November

The fire was officially declared out at 1838hrs, one week and 87 minutes after it began with a bang.

Fortunately, the favourable wind direction on the first evening of the fire and use of aircraft to establish containment lines resulted in the fire burning only 20 hectares.

The cause of the fire is yet to be formally determined.

**OPPOSITE:** Moments after the explosion of the Bogan Gate fireworks storage, pink clouds of smoke billowed into the atmosphere. Photo by Jonathan McDonald and courtesy of Parkes Champion Post



ABOVE: South Bogan Gate Brigade worked with FRNSW to contain the initial fire and the subsequent fires caused by burning debris. Photo by Barbara Reeves and courtesy of Parkes Champion Post



ABOVE: This is the site of the explosion it also shows the many spot fires started within the exclusion zone that crews eventually had to contend with. Photo by Jeff Oliver



ABOVE: The fireworks storage facility was obliterated by the explosion and impact of the blast on the surrounding area was extensive. Photo by Jeff Oliver



ABOVE: This photo shows the proximity of the explosion (lower left) to the wooded area. The burnt area and red brown retardant line are clearly visible in the forest. Inside these lines was a no go area due to unexploded ordnance. Photo by Jeff Oliver



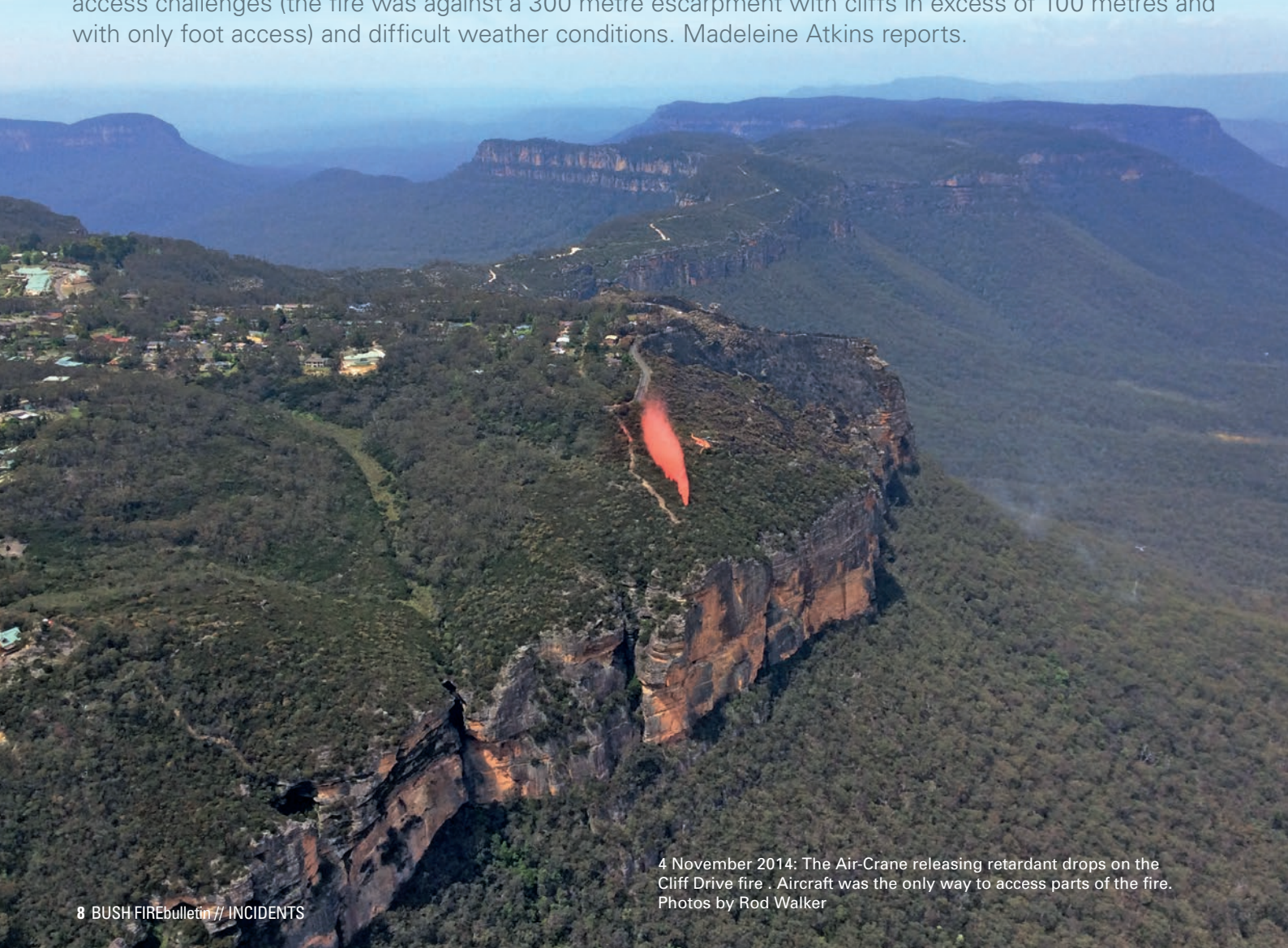
# Cliff edge

## Cliff Drive, Katoomba fire

The conditions leading into 1 November 2014 were not favourable. October had broken records for its unseasonably hot weather and 25 October was Australia's warmest October day ever. A Total Fire Ban was declared for 1 November in five fire weather districts, including the Greater Sydney region.

A fire on and below the famous cliffs near Katoomba in the Blue Mountains, threatened homes in early November 2014. It was the first of two significant fires to impact the Blue Mountains in November, just weeks after the community marked the destructive October 2013 fires.

After igniting early on Saturday 1 November 2014 morning, the Cliff Drive fire was contained quickly by ground and air crews, however under very challenging wind conditions in treacherous terrain crews found it difficult to deal with all pockets of fire and hours later the fire took another run.. One house was lost and while the size of the fire was relatively small at 20 hectares, its proximity to so many homes kept firefighters and residents alert throughout. Over the next 10 days firefighters were challenged by implementing strategies in the area due to the fire being in one of the most rugged areas of the District, access challenges (the fire was against a 300 metre escarpment with cliffs in excess of 100 metres and with only foot access) and difficult weather conditions. Madeleine Atkins reports.



4 November 2014: The Air-Crane releasing retardant drops on the Cliff Drive fire . Aircraft was the only way to access parts of the fire. Photos by Rod Walker

## Saturday 1 November

A fire began near Cliff Drive at Cahills Lookout in Katoomba at around 0820hrs.

NSW was experiencing heat wave conditions with strong winds predicted for later in the day and temperatures forecast to exceed 34 degrees in all areas. The Bureau of Meteorology had also issued a high wind warning for many areas of NSW.

Given these conditions, a large number of resources were sent to the area to quickly contain the fire before the bad fire weather set in. Ten appliances and nearly 50 firefighters were on the ground before 1000hrs. In the skies above, three helicopters and the Air-Crane were operating.

While the fire on the top of the escarpment was quickly contained, crews were unable to prevent the blaze from dropping over the escarpment and burning into inaccessible bushland.

"It has burnt along the escarpment under some homes in that area, but thankfully we haven't seen any homes under threat," Inspector Ben Shepherd told the media.

"But given today's weather we are trying to get this fire out as quickly as possible."

The fire had been identified as suspicious and fire investigators had been assigned.

By 1600hrs an s44 declaration had occurred. Houses in Cliff Drive, Brougham Street, Essendene Road and Moss Street were under ember attack. NSW RFS and FRNSW crews in the area focussed on property protection. Out-of-area crews from Cumberland and Macarthur were called in to assist.

Around 1740hrs an Emergency Warning was issued for this area, the fire was moving quickly and was uncontrolled with a number of homes coming under ember attack. At least two spot fires had been ignited in the gusty winds. There were now about 120 NSW RFS firefighters on the ground with support from a further 60 FRNSW personnel.

It was around this time that a house on Cliff Drive was destroyed by fire.

High winds in the area limited the use of aircraft.

By 1900hrs the fire had been downgraded to Watch and Act alert status, crews however continued to remain vigilant and closely monitor any further potential threat to property. The fire had continued to spread along the valley floor which would prove challenging for crews.

From Katoomba, Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons provided an update on the state's active fires to the community and media through a livestreamed press conference. Thousands tuned in.

"We've got a very serious fire that has burnt in rugged country," the Commissioner said. "This fire is not going to be contained tomorrow."

"It's burning in some very difficult country. Fortunately, we have got some more favourable weather ahead over the coming days, but it's going to be a long night for firefighters and it's going to be a long night for the communities to the south, south-west of Katoomba."

Crews did work through the night, with more than a hundred firefighters protecting properties and mopping up the fire edge to prevent flare ups. Due to the proximity of the cliff face, lighting towers were deployed and a special safety warning was issued at 2000hrs – no crews were to work within ten metres of a cliff edge or in an area with a slope greater than ten degrees. That day, the Service had been managing 72 bush or grass fires across the state with 37 uncontained and a total of 600 firefighters in the field.

## Sunday 2 November

Weather conditions eased overnight and the Bureau of Meteorology predicted a cooler day with gentle winds.

The fire continued to burn uncontained on the valley floor. By 1030hrs, 95 firefighters and eight aircraft were working to contain the fire. Remote Area Firefighting Teams cut handtool lines and mopped up edges, alternating with the aircraft bucketting in the Megalong Valley.

A significant public liaison campaign was underway. Thousands of people were looking for updates through social media (short videos from the aircraft were viewed tens of thousands of times). Information points were set up in the main street in Katoomba, The Cultural Centre Shopping Centre and on Cliff Drive. The State Emergency Service (SES) assisted with door knocking efforts. Two community meetings were held at the Katoomba RSL and Katoomba North Public School. The fire had spread to 17ha and aircraft were working hard to quash the fire in the valley.

## Monday 3 November

Even before the sun had risen, crews detected active fire on the north flank on the cliff edge. Throughout the day, ground crews and aircraft attacked the top edge of Peckmans Plateau and Megalong Valley.

Three RAFT crews were deployed onto the valley floor.

Community Liaison Officers visited Cliff Drive residences, the surrounding area, and the Katoomba train station and tourist destinations.

## Tuesday 4 November

Crews prepared for the fire to reach the containment lines. If the fire continued to spread up the Megalong Creek it did have the potential to reach properties in Nelson and Stuarts Roads in Katoomba. Firefighters were sent to prepare residents and properties in the vicinity.

Containment lines at Peckmans Plateau Lookout were bolstered with handtools and retardant drops.

## Wednesday 5 November

On Wednesday morning, fire was detected on the cliff top near Peckmans Trail. The risk of re-ignition was still existed, with adverse weather and an unfavourable wind change on the way. The Bureau of Meteorology issued a severe storm warning for the Blue Mountains, with winds expected to reach 70kph. A severe storm

would put RAFT at risk – they required at least 30 minutes for extraction. The Air-Crane was grounded.

Local tourist centres were briefed on forecast conditions. If the fire breached containment lines, patrons would need to shelter in place.

At 1300hrs crews were requested to return to their vehicles and all aircraft were grounded. Crews waited for the storm to pass.

By nightfall containment lines were completed, but hot spots were detected, including some in inaccessible areas.

## Thursday 6 November

On Thursday morning at around 0830hrs the Cliff Drive fire was declared contained. With worsening fire weather predicted later in the week, efforts were focussed on keeping it that way by bolstering containment lines.

National Parks and Wildlife Service deployed heavy plant to reinforce containment lines at Farnells and Stuarts Roads. Ground crews used handheld infrared cameras to identify hotspots. Aircraft were deployed to patrol inaccessible edges but were impaired by poor visibility.

At 1500hrs no hotspots were detected.

## Friday 7 November

Crews continued to patrol and heavy plant was deployed again. Temporary stabilisation works were completed on handtool lines. The Six Foot Track was reopened.

Public Liaison Officers and SES letterboxed the area, warning residents of the dangers posed by falling trees in the aftermath of fire.

## Thursday 13 November

After five days of patrolling and 12 days after ignition, the Cliff Drive fire was declared out on Thursday 13 November. The s44 declaration had been revoked on 10 November. The fire had destroyed one house, damaged others and burnt through 20 hectares.

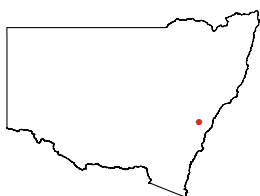


LEFT: Late on Saturday 1 November a house on Cliff Drive was engulfed in flames. Photo courtesy of SBS. RIGHT: Crews worked through the night on 1 November to mop up the fire edge and protect property. Photo courtesy of Channel 7.



# Working well together

## Greens Rd, Warrimoo fire



A fire located in a difficult-to-reach location near houses in Warrimoo in Lower Blue Mountains, had the community and firefighters concerned. Matt Sun reports.

### Friday 14 November, 2014

About 1330hrs a Triple Zero (000) call reported a smoke sighting in the vicinity of the Greens Road fire trail, near the Great Western Highway at Warrimoo, Blue Mountains.

Both the NSW RFS and Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) responded crews. Firefighters soon reported a fire burning in difficult to access bushland, near power lines between the fire trail and Florabella Street.

The alert level for the Greens Road fire was upgraded to Watch and Act due to its location, the level of fire activity and its proximity to homes.

Additional NSW RFS and FRNSW crews, as well as National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) resources

were quickly dispatched, along with an aircraft fitted with the latest surveillance camera technology and the Air-Crane.

NSW RFS Inspector Rob Vinzenz said winds started picking up as the first crews were responding.

"The initial reports were that crews could smell smoke but couldn't sight the fire, as at the time it was down out of the way in inaccessible bush land," Inspector Vinzenz said.

"Given the weather and the winds, we started responding more units, as did Fire Rescue, as well as getting intel aircraft early on to get up there and have a look."

Division Commander Deputy Group Captain Duncan Allan set up his command post on

the back veranda of a Florabella Street home, which gave him an excellent view of the fire throughout the afternoon. From his vantage point Deputy Group Captain Allan watched aircraft repeatedly making targeted waterbombing runs despite the challenges posed by nearby power lines.

"I'm standing there watching the Air-Crane zipping in and out. The work all the aircraft did, the air package from the Air Attack Supervisor, was absolutely top notch," Allan said.

"Air knocked it down a bit but for the first few hours, given the area was inaccessible on foot, it was a bit of a case of hurry up and wait."

Deputy Group Captain Allan said a containment strategy

was devised as the fire made its way to the south of Florabella Street.

"There was the potential for it to make a run towards Florabella Street but fortunately there was an area to the east of the fire which was hazard reduced 18 months ago," Allan said.

"We were going to do what we did during the 2001 Mount Hall fire and backburn from Greens Road, around Florabella and then along the highway to Bridge St.

"We got the okay but then a weather warning about a southerly change came through, which pretty much knocked that containment strategy on its head." At this time a significant focus was

placed on tasking aircraft to work on the northern side of the fire to limit the potential impact to the north under forecast southerly wind conditions.

While not under direct threat from the fire, two local schools - Warrimoo Public School and Blaxland School - implemented their standard lockdown procedure. Crews were assigned to attend the schools as a further precautionary measure. There were no evacuations.

Parents were given supervised access to Warrimoo Public School and remaining students travelled home on their regular afternoon school bus, which was escorted along its usual route by a fire truck.

North westerly winds picked up, pushing the fire in a south easterly direction towards Blaxland, blowing heavy smoke and embers towards Baden Place, Bridge Road, Boynton Street and Bourke Street.

"We started putting crews in place at locations we thought the fire might get to, pre-emptive placements for some and defensive for others," Inspector Vinzenz said.

At 1530hrs the alert level was raised to Emergency Warning and an Emergency Alert message was sent to phones in the area.

By this time there were approximately 250 firefighters from NSW RFS, FRNSW and NPWS on the fireground.

"There was a lot of concern from residents but fortunately at no stage were any homes directly impacted. There was the potential for them to be impacted, but fortunately we had a great amount of resources available," Deputy Group Captain Allan said.

Around 1700hrs the Great Western Highway was closed to traffic in both directions and train services were halted. Both thoroughfares were reopened at 1800hrs.

With conditions easing as evening approached, attention turned to the southerly change expected to reach Warrimoo about 2100hrs.

Warrimoo and Valley Heights residents, particularly those in Greens Road, Russell Avenue, Coolabah Road and Angophora Place, were warned to expect increased levels of smoke and burning embers when the 60kph gusts came through.

At 2127hrs the change arrived at the fireground, resulting in an increase in fire activity.

"As the change moved through it started pushing the fire towards Florabella Street and Greens Road, it jumped the trail in a few spots but we managed to round it up on the western side of the Greens Road trail," Deputy Group Captain Allan said.

At 2247hrs the winds began to ease and as a result, the fire was regraded to Watch and Act at 2312hrs.

Multiple crews remained overnight to deal with flare-ups and to undertake backburning as conditions allowed.

### Saturday 15 November

While weather conditions were somewhat calmer on day two, Saturday presented crews with a number of challenges.

More than 260 firefighters aided by eight aircraft (including the Air-Crane) continued to construct containment lines and deal with flare ups.

"We had a bit of an overnight slop over near the creek

and that had the potential to run back to the highway," Allan said.

"Macarthur, Southern Highlands and National Parks RAFT went in there on Saturday morning and they did a massive job down there, along with the air assets.

"There was also a lot of work done in terms of containment. One of the local National Parks guys came up with the idea to establish a dozer trail line.

"In very difficult areas it took a significant effort but we did that along with NPWS RAFT and we stopped the fire from going further south."

By mid-afternoon, fire activity was relatively low but residents were still concerned about the fire, which remained at Watch and Act.

Smoke from backburning had produced a large amount of smoke which by mid-afternoon had travelled some distance, causing concern amongst residents in other Blue Mountains areas.

An information point was set up at the Blaxland supermarket so firefighters could provide residents with the latest information and answer any questions.

At 1604hrs the fire was downgraded to Advice, due to the low level of fire activity.

### Sunday 16 November

Light rain fell on the fireground overnight but did not significantly impact fire activity.

Throughout the day NSW RFS, FRNSW and NPWS firefighters continued strengthening containment lines. NSW RFS and NPWS RAFT again worked on hot spots in difficult to access areas.

There were a number of minor flare ups detected within containment lines during the day but all were quickly dealt with.

At 2048hrs the fire was declared contained.

### Monday 17 November

Fifty firefighters spent the day mopping up and blacking out, a task which would continue for the next eight days that the fire remained at Patrol.

"Those days were all about consolidate, consolidate, consolidate," Deputy Group Captain Allan said.

"Conditions were still very dry and there were a number of small flare ups on subsequent days. Ground crews used recently donated handheld thermal imaging cameras to identify and deal with hotspots."

### Tuesday 25 November

At 1000hrs the fire was officially declared out, after burning 126.19 hectares. No homes were lost.

"Everything worked extremely well because of the good relationship between the NSW RFS, FRNSW, NPWS, NSW Police and NSW Ambulance, not to mention our air attack people too," Mr Allan said.

"I had direct conversations with all services and they were all well and truly entrenched with us," Deputy Group Captain Allan said.

"It was a very good example of what we can do with coordinated firefighting, from the ground up to the Incident Management Team level, we all worked very well together."



OPPOSITE: NSW RFS waterbombing aircraft filling up at Glenbrook Lagoon, 14 November 2014. Photo by Leanne Murray. ABOVE LEFT: The township of Warrimoo see from above. Photo by Mark Fitzsimmons. ABOVE RIGHT: Wentworth Falls Brigade putting in a backburn at the end of Greens Road overnight on 14 November 2014. Photo by Matthew Cooper

# A day in the life of the Rapid Aerial Response Team



Rapid Aerial Response Teams (RART) were deployed 22 times between October and December 2014 proving their value in nipping fires in the bud before trucks can arrive or providing vital reconnaissance information.

RART teams across the State were on standby a total of 28 times in the period.

RART attended 15 fires that were under 10ha in size on arrival, 14 of these were kept to 10ha or smaller – 93 percent success rate.

On 23 November 2014 three RART teams were stood up - RART 1 at Casino, RART 2 at Tamworth and RART 3 at Bankstown. Each RART covers an area of approximately 110km radius from their base which represents a 30 minute flight time.

RART 3, comprising a crew of four volunteers from the Macarthur Zone, Tony Mizzi, John Pisani, Vaughan Butler and Marten Sweeney (DC), was on standby at Bankstown Airport on 23 November. Here Macarthur RAFT Deputy Captain Marten Sweeney provides an overview of a productive day on duty.

## 23 November 2014

Today Tony Mizzi, John Pisani, Vaughan Butler and myself attended Bankstown Airport as RART 3 from 0900hrs.

Shortly after arrival we were advised we may have a call and to get on with our aircraft briefing and load preparation "ASAP".

We were subsequently called to Tallyan Point, Basin View, near Sussex Inlet and departed Bankstown at 0955hrs. The fire call came from Shoalhaven Fire Control Centre to a report of a smoke sighting.

After about half an hour's flight we contacted Shoalhaven on approach and were advised we were entering the zone and were given updated details, local ground crew channels and call signs.

When overhead at around 1030hrs we contacted Tallyan Fire Divisional Command who requested the support of the crew and aircraft in accessing and suppressing the fire.

Wind at this stage, was nil, flame height low with approximately 5ha burning in light timbered scrub/ forest behind mangroves but there were concerns a wind change could threaten property nearby.

Local resources already on hand consisted of three Cat 1 crews and a Group Officer although there was no truck access and crews had to walk in on foot.

We elected to 'hover exit' adjacent to the water edge close to the fire, as there was nowhere close by to land. Hover exit involves disembarking out the door of the helicopter while it maintains a low hover. This manoeuvre is undertaken when there is not enough flat ground to land the aircraft. (see right)

Our aircraft was Helitack 201. Once we had been dropped off with our equipment Helitack 201 returned and began water bucketing support at approximately 1050hrs.

Initial air attack was focussed on the south eastern edge to mop up the remaining fire edge burning towards property, although it was still some distance away. Our team secured the eastern edge using rake hoes and a blower and worked down to the water's edge to the north while local crews worked on the remaining edges. We directed bucketing on fallen logs in conjunction with local crews who also used Helitack 201 to bucket hot spots and timber.

The fire was contained within 20 minutes after insertion and the aircraft applied close to 40 buckets of water to the fire during the deployment. The crew was extracted by 'hover entry' at approximately 1320hrs.

The crew worked well and the operation went smoothly. The aircraft refuelled shortly after insertion and again on departure with the crew on board. Crew arrived back at Bankstown at approximately 1450hrs for lunch and restock.

By 1730hrs we started to pack up our radios when we

received a new tasking to a smoke sighting 6km north of Colo in Hawkesbury. We were airborne at 1745hrs and by the time we were at Richmond we could see a good smoke column toward the north.

We had to be skids down at Bankstown by 1930hrs according to NSW RFS rules. There was not enough daylight to insert the team however RART 3 undertook reconnaissance of the fire and provided a SitRep, photos and identified water sources in the area which we relayed to Hawkesbury Fire Control Centre. This fire was a lightning

strike most likely and was burning very well uphill at about 2ha. We identified three good dams which were 3km west and suitable for waterbombing aircraft tomorrow if needed. This fire became known as the Pierces Valley fire.

On our run home we came back over the fire. It had more than doubled in size and was at least 5ha and was starting to crown as it made the peak. The ambient air temperature out there was 40 degrees. To be honest it was like flying in a clothes dryer! We were back at Bankstown by 1845hrs and on the way home by 1900hrs.



OPPOSITE PAGE: This is the Tallyan Point Fire looking from the south. The crew were inserted right on the edge of the lake near the mangroves. The image was taken on an iPad which RART teams are using. The information overlay shows the team location, time and in which direction the picture is taken. Photo by Marten Sweeney

ABOVE: A sequence of photos from the 'hover exit' executed by RART 3 on the Tallyan Point Fire. Hover exit involves disembarking out the door of the helicopter while it maintains a low hover. This manoeuvre is undertaken when there is not enough flat ground to land the aircraft. Photos by Marten Sweeney

# Heat, stress, firefighting and its effect on your body

**The internal structural firefighting environment**

By Matthew Reeves,  
Learning and Development Officer





Firefighters undertaking internal structural firefighting are required to work efficiently and effectively in thermal environments that are in excess of normal body core temperature, i.e. a range of 36.5°C to 37.5°C. As a result of working in such environments, firefighters often experience significant changes in their physiology and heat-related illnesses may occur.

Without intervention, fires in modern structures where high energy (synthetic) fuels are common, can exceed 1,000°C at or near ceiling height and over 800°C at approximately 1m above floor level. ([http://newscience.ul.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2014/04/Analysis\\_of\\_Changing\\_Residential\\_Fire\\_Dynamics\\_and\\_Its\\_Implications\\_on\\_Firefighter\\_Operational\\_Timeframes.pdf](http://newscience.ul.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2014/04/Analysis_of_Changing_Residential_Fire_Dynamics_and_Its_Implications_on_Firefighter_Operational_Timeframes.pdf))

In NSW RFS Advanced Structural Firefighting (ASF) training environments, where conditions are controlled by fuel load and appropriate water application, temperatures measured 3m away from the seat of the fire and 1.5m off the floor, average over 50°C.

The body's response to such environments and its ability to handle an increased metabolic heat load depends on a number of environmental factors, such as air temperature, radiant heat and humidity and individual factors such as the level of physical activity, fitness levels, anxiety levels, hydration state and the condition of protective clothing and equipment.

All of these factors individually affect the body's physiology and when these factors are combined there may be an adverse effect and significant physiological strain may be induced.

Our modern PPC is designed to provide a high standard of protection from high temperatures, radiant heat and flame, however with this protection comes a number of risks that must be identified and controlled. The layering effect of our current structural fire PPC provides protection from radiant heat by absorbing energy; however this layering effect also limits the ability of

a firefighter to shed body heat, causing an increase in core body temperature.

This example of the "second law of thermodynamics" (where heat flows from the hotter object to the cooler object until equilibrium is established) also means that firefighters PPC can become heat soaked. An issue with PPC being heat soaked is that when a firefighter has inadequate rest between rotations their PPC upon re-immersion into the interior heated environment takes less time to reach its maximum energy absorption load and therefore the firefighter will likely experience an increase in body temperature much more quickly than they did during their first entry into the environment.

These environmental factors and the necessary risk controls for firefighters working in interior fire environments leads to an increased risk in heat-related illnesses.

### Effects on our body

"It is important that a person's body temperature stays in the range of 36.1°C and 37.8°C. If the body temperature rises above this, a person may develop heat-related illness" (<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/heat-related-illness.aspx>). The first stage of heat stress is heat exhaustion and if the body temperature continues to increase to over 40.5°C then the onset of heat stroke can occur.

High thermal conditions combined with strenuous workloads in stressful environments can lead to rapid core body temperature increases. Not only can high temperatures influence body temperature; "... during dynamic exercise, metabolic rate increases rapidly by 5-15 fold with 70-90% of metabolic rate released as heat...." (Cisar, Craig J. Professor, Accute Physiological Responses to Heat Stress). This can theoretically increase core temperature by about 1°C every five minutes, therefore the failure to regulate your body temperature within the stated safe limits may be fatal.

### Symptoms and treatment of heat related illness: heat exhaustion

Symptoms	Treatment
Heavy sweating	Move to a cool place and lie down
Pale skin	
Fast and weak pulse	Remove excess clothing
Breathing fast and shallow	Small sips of cool fluids
Heat cramps	Radial cooling and/or sponge bath
Dizziness and fainting	Cool packs under armpits, groin or back of the neck to reduce body heat
Headache	
Nausea and vomiting	If these symptom persists seek urgent medical advice

### Symptoms of heat related illness: heat stroke

Symptom	Treatment
Sudden rise in body temperature	Call Triple Zero (000) immediately
Red hot dry skin (sweating has stopped)	Remove excess clothing Radial cooling or cool by any means possible
Rapid pulse	
Rapid shallow breathing	Cool packs under armpits, groin or back of the neck to reduce body heat
Intense thirst	
Headache	Small sips of cool fluids if conscious
Dry swollen tongue	DO NOT GIVE ASPRIN OR PARACETAMOL
Nausea and vomiting	
Dizziness	
Confusion, poor coordination or slurred speech	If unconscious lay in recovery position and perform CPR if needed
Aggressive or bizarre behaviour	
Loss of consciousness	
Seizures or coma	



OPPOSITE: Rest and re-hydration after extinguishment is vital to reduce the risk of heat related illness. Photo by Richard J Thorek

RIGHT: Arduous workloads and stressful environments increase core body temperatures. Photo by Matthew Reeves



ABOVE: Structural firefighting can expose firefighters to environments in excess of normal body core temperature causing significant changes in their physiology. Photo by Richard J Thorek

## How to prevent heat-related illness

Realising the potential health effects of extended BA (Breathing Apparatus) operations on firefighters in conditions where high environmental temperatures are present, Incident Controllers and BA operators should be aware of a number of options available, to reduce the risk of heat-related illness.

Incident controllers can consider strategies and whether or not they have sufficient resources (including human) to implement the required tactics safely. Decisions could be made on resting teams for longer periods to allow for rehabilitation and re-hydration. This does not necessarily mean that more BA qualified members are required but it may however mean that the time from extinguishment to overhaul takes longer.

BA support teams should ensure that the BA control area is set up in a clean, shady area and that sufficient drinking water is available. The BACO (Breathing Apparatus Control Officer) should also monitor the work load of teams and

check for signs of excessive fatigue or heat-related illness. They should also ensure that where required, BA teams 'dress down' between rotations to assist with fatigue management and the cooling of firefighters.

BA operators can give consideration to their own health by ensuring that they utilise the relevant IMSAFE principles (Illness, Medication, Stress, Alcohol, Fatigue, Expertise) on an on-going basis and communicate with the IC about rest periods and workload.

Crews should also consider the level of PPC required, based on the conditions being faced. For internal structural firefighting, structural PPC including pants, jacket, gloves, flash hood and helmet must be worn with BA as they will help protect you from the known and potential hazards.

If BA operations are necessary in a non-structural environment such as in an open environment like a tip/refuse fire a BA operator in consultation with the IC may choose to wear bush fire PPC or a combination of bush fire and structural

PPC without a flash hood. This is because in an open environment radiant, convected or conducted heat may not be as higher risk as ambient temperatures. A combination bush fire and structural PPC could help manage the risk of heat-related illness and excessive fatigue.

Each item of PPC is designed to protect firefighters from a particular hazard, therefore if the relevant hazard is not present nor likely to occur, the risk is low. Consider the example of a vehicle fire in an open environment on a day of 35°C where the IC has decided that BA is required due to the toxic smoke hazard. In this case wearing BA with bush fire PPC will protect the user from the toxic atmosphere.

By knocking the fire down from a distance and isolating the radiant heat risk, not only will the crew have achieved the task, they will have managed the environmental hazard (high ambient temperature), managed the hazard of radiant heat and mitigated the risk of heat-related illness.

Any decision to control a risk and reduce the likelihood of

the hazard creating harm must be made in consultation with the IC, crew and other relevant emergency services present. Introducing one risk control measure could introduce another risk. So think through your options and the possible consequences before you make a final decision, then continue your risk assessment using dynamic risk assessment principles. Be certain of the environment and associated hazards, consider the advantages and disadvantages and where possible and safe to do so, learn how effective your risk control measures are by using them in a controlled environment such as training.

The impact of heat on the body must be monitored regardless of the activity. BA operations are only one facet of our work as firefighters and heat-related illness can affect everyone. Look for the signs and treat accordingly, but prevention is always the best cure.

## PPC Review

A review of Bush Fire Personal Protective Clothing is currently underway. Structural PPC will be reviewed later in 2015.

Structural PPC is layered to protect the wearer. This can also trap heat in. Dress down to cool down whenever possible. Photo by Tony Longa



# Interaction for action

This issue of the *Bush Fire Bulletin* has a special focus on Community Engagement in NSW RFS.

As Commissioner Fitzsimmons says: “Community engagement is core business.” It falls not just to people with specialist training but to every firefighter who interacts with the community; every interaction is an opportunity to save a life.

This issue highlights a range of the great work being done by NSW RFS members across the State to connect with their local community and empower them to Prepare.Act.Survive. Every NSW district has a staff member with community engagement expertise. Many brigades have a position, elected annually, to develop a community engagement strategy and coordinate activities and others have Community Engagement Committees.

To support the many community safety volunteers within brigades is the NSW RFS Community Engagement Team. They provide technical advice, training, support and advocacy, developing and supporting grants, research and policy, influencing the state and national agenda and developing partnerships among the emergency services and other sectors.

Here, Manager Community Engagement, Sunara Fernando, points out the key principles behind community engagement at the Service.



Photo by Anthony Clark

What is Community Engagement? Put simply it is interaction for action.

Engaging a community in how it can prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies is more likely to result in decisions and outcomes the community is confident about and will act upon, and this in turn will support the work of emergency management organisations.

The foundation of the work of the NSW RFS Community Engagement unit is the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience: Community Engagement Framework. It a must-read document for those working with communities, providing guidance for effective community engagement across the emergency management sector and uses the definition:

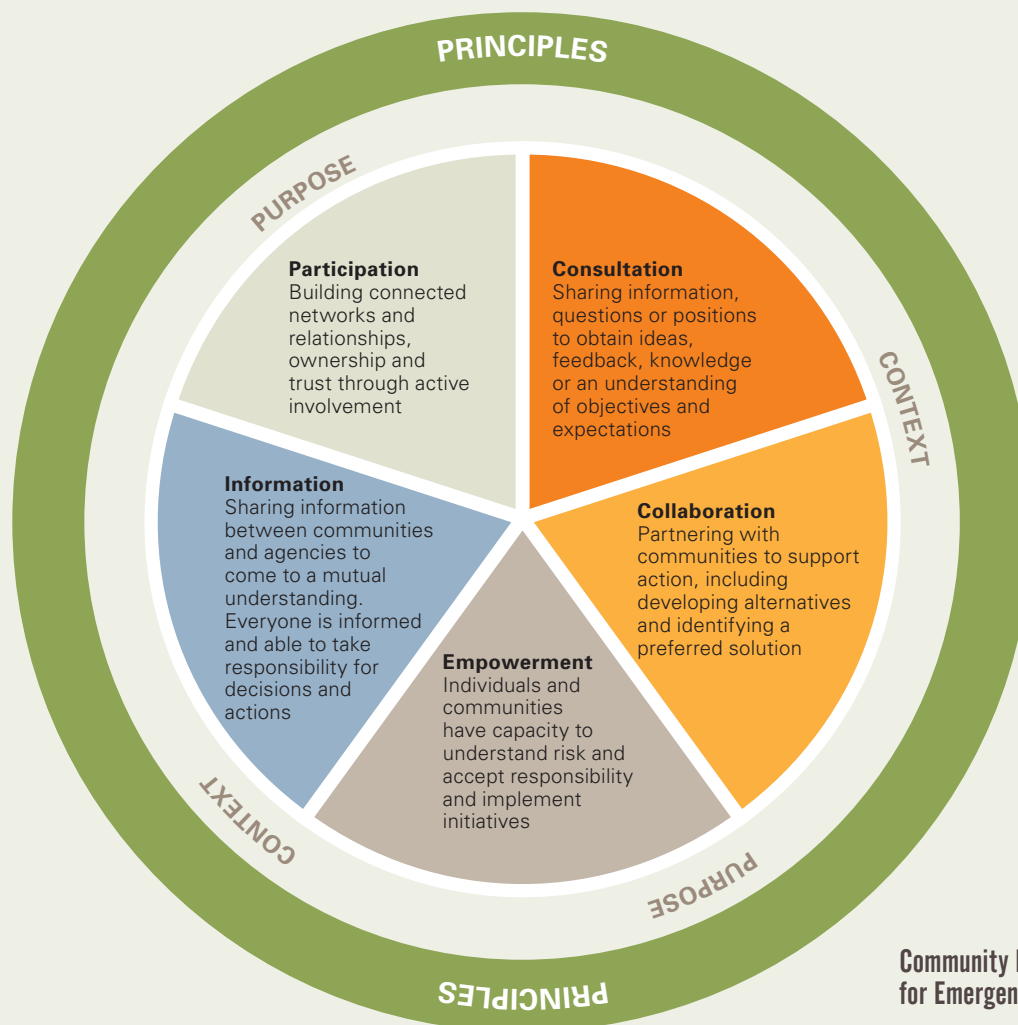
*Community engagement is the process of stakeholders working together to build resilience through collaborative action, shared capacity building and the development of strong relationships built on mutual trust and respect.*

## A changing approach to emergency management

Across the board, emergency management agencies are moving toward the community development approach, which focuses on active engagement with and empowerment of the community.

Some of the key elements of community engagement are:

- 1. Working with communities** in partnership, building on existing networks, resources and strengths, identifying and supporting the development of



**Community Engagement Model for Emergency Management**  
 from National Strategy for Disaster Resilience

community leaders and empowering the community to exercise choice and take responsibility.

**2. Engagement as core business**, embedding engagement within the culture and practice of organisations requiring sustained resourcing, commitment and cross-sectoral partnerships, as well as new ways of measuring and evaluating success. This includes developing and embedding new ways of doing things that enhance arrangements with the not-for-profit sector and the community more broadly and building their capacity and capability to undertake community engagement activities. Sustainable engagement requires substantial resources, requires time to identify and develop different skills,

bring existing know-how to the process and build partnerships and networks.

- 3. Effective engagement across the emergency management spectrum**  
 Effective community engagement should be part of day-to-day business in the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery phases of emergency management. Communities need to be engaged before, during and after major emergency events.
- 4. Interaction not just information**  
 Provision of information has a useful role but is rarely effective in isolation from more interactive strategies. Different types of engagement and levels of community involvement are required for different phases of an

emergency. For example, a collaborative approach incorporating community experience works for planning; a command-and-control approach providing clear information for the community is likely to be necessary; and relief and recovery are most effective when led by an empowered community.

- 5. Trust and relationships**  
 Effective engagement is complex and requires a long-term commitment to build and maintain relationships and trust with the community.

ABOVE: The Community Engagement Model for Emergency Management is circular to show that one engagement approach is not necessarily better than any other, and that different approaches are legitimate depending on the purpose and context of a particular situation. The model makes clear that for all types of engagement it is essential to be guided by community engagement principles, to understand the broader context of the engagement, and have a clear purpose for engaging the community in the first place. Good engagement practice relies on choosing the right approach or combination of approaches for engagement in different situations.



# Firefighters forging connections

By Brydie Burrows,  
Community Engagement Coordinator

There is nothing like smoke in the air to get people listening to their local firefighters.

Have you ever been at a hazard reduction and find you spend as much time talking with community members as you do lighting up? Or been cleaning up the local fire trails and find campers, cyclists, fishermen and residents in the area are very interested in what you're up to?

These everyday operational activities are also valuable opportunities to connect with community members. Deputy Captain of the Chittaway Brigade and Fire Mitigation Officer for the Lakes Team, Matt Horwood calls it 'operational community engagement'.

"What members don't realise is that they're doing it, they're effectively engaging the community everyday and they're doing it well," he said, "Whether it's called community engagement or fire awareness, it's an important part of our role as firefighters."

## Hazard reduction

Hazard reduction burns provide a valuable opportunity to connect with local community members.

For some residents their primary concern will be avoiding the washing getting 'smoked out', for others it might be a worry about a family member with asthma or it could be about the risk posed by the flames on the

day. Whatever their motivation, people in the vicinity of a hazard reduction burn, or the smoke from a burn, are a captive audience.

## Before the burn:

Keep your message concise and easy to understand. People want to know why the burn is being done, how many homes will be protected, how much smoke should be expected, general health and safety and road access advice and where they can find out more.

If it's a particularly large or high profile burn, target the wider community. Local shops, social media, community centres and, if relevant, local media can all be used to explain why it's happening and what action

people can take to prepare for bush fire.

## On the day:

It's a great idea to set up an information point close to the burn to give people a chance to ask questions. It can be as simple or elaborate as you choose. A hazard reduction burn undertaken this year in Warragamba is a great example of a brigade thinking ahead about the impact their burn would have on the community.

For example, earlier this year NSW RFS was assisting National Parks and Wildlife Service with a large burn to be located in the same area where the devastating Christmas Day fires took place in 2001. Around 30 homes and businesses were



ABOVE AND RIGHT: A hazard reduction burn on the Central Coast provides an opportunity to talk with residents in the area about bush fire safety. Photo by Justin Wilson



What members don't realise is that they're engaging the community everyday and they're doing it well...



destroyed on 25 December 2001 and the scars still run deep in this community.

Deputy Captain Matt Gould, Silverdale Brigade, recalls the lead up.

"The people likely to see plumes of smoke on the day of this burn were those same residents affected by the 2001 bush fire," Matt said, "We knew the smoke would bring back memories of that day 13 years ago and potentially stir up some strong emotions. Therefore we were expecting a lot of interest in the burn and we felt it was our responsibility to keep the community informed throughout.

"We decided the best bet was to communicate with our semi-

rural community through broad distribution of information in the lead-up. In coordination with National Parks and the Southern Highlands District Office we ensured that pamphlets were put in the local shops, and numerous posts were put on our local community Facebook page."

"By the time we were ready to burn, awareness in the community was quite high, but we still organised for the Southern Highlands FACT (Fire Awareness Community Team) to bring the community engagement trailer into the centre of Warragamba during the burn to provide information and talk to any concerned people. The job of the FACT team was to explain:

- Why we were there and why we were burning
- Wind direction and likely smoke impacts
- What assets we were protecting
- We also explained the burn would reduce the risk; it would not remove the risk.

"Overall, people were very receptive to what we were doing. I believe the positive reaction was due to people genuinely feeling a part of the process through involving them early and taking the time on the day to be available to answer people's questions," he said, "Some call it community engagement, we call it part and parcel of running a hazard reduction burn."

### Incident Response

When you encounter community members at incidents, whether they're landholders at bush or grass fires, or people affected by car fires or structure fires; you can be assured you won't be met with someone sporting a relaxed attitude to fire. Your words will have an impact, you just have to choose them carefully.

Members' report they have to use their common sense when trying to engage people directly affected by fire, sometimes they won't be in the right headspace to heed advice, and others are desperate for information and want to know how they can do better.

Often people are receptive to entering into conversations with members when fires are in the 'patrol' stage or after the fire has safely passed them by. Conversation starters like: "that was a close call today, have you thought about slashing the boundaries of your paddock?" or "there's a lot of dense bush right around your property, it's a good idea to move your gas cylinders and firewood away from the home."

Stuart O'Keefe, Fire Mitigation Officer for the Lakes Team said it's also important to point out the impact on the whole community of not attending to the bush fire safety of your home.

"We explain to people that if they manage their vegetation properly it will give firefighters a better chance of getting to the seat of a fire and are more likely to be able to stop the fire from spreading onto their property and their neighbours," he said.

When explaining the importance of this engagement to newer members Matt Horwood tells them it's like "fighting a future fire without actually having to fight that fire." He explains that by taking the time to have the conversation weeks of work fighting a bush fire that's escaped from a landowner's property could be avoided.

Remember that if the incident is caused by someone's behaviour, it may happen again unless steps are taken

to change that behaviour. This may be as simple as responding to a pile burn and then explaining the rules around pile burns and the fines for not following these. This is also a prime time to point out risks around the property, how it might have gone wrong if the fire had gotten out of control and talk about preparedness and planning.

Matt Horwood says this engagement is second nature to members and influencing people's behaviour happens "on every occasion".

"Most people have good intentions and are not out to upset the fire service or authorities," Matt said, "they've just fallen short somewhere. In fact most people are apologetic for having caused a fuss. For whatever reasons they're just not familiar with the rules, and it's our job to explain the rules and why the rules are in place."

"It's important to understand the resident's intent, no matter what you say or do, you need to listen to their rationale and what they were hoping to achieve ... It's important to explain what our responsibilities as a fire service are and persuade people that it's in their best interest to follow the rules.

### During an emergency

Even while fighting a fire, members can be called upon to be community 'engagers'.

Rolf Poole, Deputy Fire Control Officer in Gosford who acted as a Public Liaison Officer during the October 2013 fires in the Blue Mountains said he is very interested in the role of firefighters on the ground.

"They are also doing community liaison," he said, "They might be in the truck and focusing on putting out the fire but inevitably they will get a knock on the window by a frightened resident asking them what to do. In those moments the firefighters are community engagement volunteers by default."

"For this reason the NSW RFS supplies fire trucks with the tools such as the Community Engagement key message cards which include key talking points and the Smartphone apps so they can check the Alert status and tell people what is being advised. In this way we develop consistent messaging which is an important element of keeping the community safe."

### Issuing permits

Landholders who have requested a permit to burn are usually taking the threat of bush or grass fire seriously. Each brigade has a Permit Issuing Officer specifically trained for the job.

When a member is visiting a property to issue a permit the opportunity to talk to the landholder about the fire risks on

their property should be seized. It is valuable to have a discussion about what they plan to do with their family and animals in the event of a bush fire.

The consequences of not obtaining a permit during the Bush Fire Danger Period can be serious and potentially draining on resources. Matt Horwood said his brigade recently had an example of a landowner inadvertently causing mild panic after failing to contact his neighbours and his local NSW RFS about a burn.

"The M1 Pacific motorway cuts straight through this LGA and people on the motorway are from all over the State, many of whom panic at the sight of smoke," Matt said, "We got a call to a small fire on the M1, north of the twin service stations, around seven kilometres from where this gentleman was burning off. Three brigades from the north and south were called and we all thoroughly searched the area and couldn't find the burn. Eight Triple Zero (000) calls had been logged, so we knew there was a fire somewhere.

"Eventually we tracked it down to this man's property. We made him aware of his obligations and explained that if the NSW RFS had known about his burn the search area could have been instantly narrowed down and callers to Triple Zero (000) could have been placated. We also let him know about the requirement to follow council



ABOVE: Hazard reduction burns are better received if the local community understand why the burn is happening and have prior warning of smoke impacts. Photo by Justin Wilson

ABOVE: Minutes matter in a fire and SWS signs helps firefighters identify Static Water Supply locations when the chips are down.



rules, even though the burn was happening just outside of the Bush Fire Danger period. The man was apologetic and didn't understand the implications of smoke on the busy motorway. On leaving the man's property we were confident we wouldn't have a repeat performance and that he had learnt some serious lessons about responsible burning and how to be better prepared for bush fire."

### Pre-Incident Planning (PIP)

A Pre-Incident Planning (PIP) document can be as detailed, or simple, as required. In order to develop a useful PIP brigades need to talk to their local community members and understand their circumstances – in other words, engage with their community.

Geoff Selwood, president of the Clifton Grove-Ophir Brigade and District Technical Officer of the Canobolas Zone, said that brigade members often have information from the public stored in their heads!

"So writing it down is really valuable," he said, "It's a two-way street; we provide bush fire preparation information to the public and in return we gather important information about their property and assets. This means we know what's out there before we arrive at an incident. Spending time to pre-plan and get to know people is so useful when you're faced with a fire in the area."

"Street meetings don't work well in our area," Geoff admits. "We have learnt that what does work is door-knocking people at their homes and walking around their properties talking about potential risks. We learnt this the hard way."

"We recently attended a fire burning in a pine plantation that was heading directly for homes in the Spring Glen area. We thought we had done a good job engaging the community in this area by handing out Bush Fire Survival Plans and talking to people particularly at Open Day. During the fire we door-knocked the homes close by to advise residents of the fire activity and talk to them about their plans."

"Eighty percent of the residents we spoke to hadn't even given the prospect of bush fire any thought," Geoff recalls, "Most had no means of moving their livestock, which is telling, given their animals were like family to them."

This led to a re-think in the way the brigade communicated with people in their area - they knew they had to visit people in their homes and provide tailored advice.

"Our members get a clear picture of the community and conditions and at the same time it gives us a chance to change the level of risk at people's property by simply by pointing out what owners need to do," Geoff said.

Geoff believes each brigade needs someone to drive community engagement before fires. His brigade has seen benefits in pairing older members with younger members so local knowledge can be shared between generations.

Key hazards Geoff and his fellow members point out to landowners include:

- Access to the property for fire trucks
- Stored petrol and gas
- Long grass growing around sheds and out-buildings
- Grass clippings
- Hay bales and hay bales treated with preservatives (can let off cyanide if they do burn).

Geoff and his team also pay particular attention to discovering Static Water Supplies (SWS) people may have on their property including dams, water tanks or pools – and if a fire truck can access them. If they are accessible, a SWS sign at the property entrance will help firefighters.

Throughout the course of their community engagement to inform the PIP, Geoff and his brigade discovered a number of disabled people living in the area. They then helped the residents and their carers to formulate an appropriate Bush Fire Survival Plan.

Geoff recalls a recent incident where the PIP was put to good use.

"We attended a grass fire recently and en-route to the incident the crew leader was able to tell members about what we should expect on arrival due to our pre-incident planning," he said, "He told us there were was a house on the property as well as two sheds, a 200 kilo gas bottle, power lines coming in from road and over house, where the Static Water Supplies were and that there was a tank on the eastern side of building. This information puts us at a distinct advantage."

Geoff suggests brigades set aside time on the weekend to door knock residents. From his experience taking the time to get to know people, pays dividends when it really counts.

As NSW RFS firefighters we have specialised knowledge and nothing beats sharing that knowledge by taking the time to maximise every opportunity we have to talk to people. Take the time to talk to locals in your community. You certainly don't need to be at a street meeting, crewing a stand at a community day or handing out Bush Fire Survival Plans to make a real difference to people's lives. You never know, that extra five minutes you take to chat to someone at the next incident you attend could save their life.



ABOVE: Hazard Reduction burn at Kariong in 2014. Letting residents know about the likelihood of smoke in the area before the HR burn can alleviate fears and reduce unnecessary calls to Triple Zero (000). Photo by Rolf Poole.



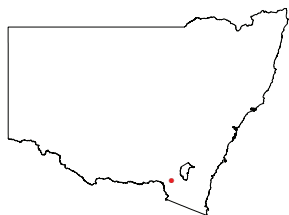
ABOVE: Effective pre-incident planning includes visiting people in their homes and providing tailored advice

# Snowy Mountains high

Developing a Community Protection Plan  
in a remote mountain village



The Kosciuszko North Complex fire approaching the town of Cabramurra in 2003. To be able to advise people on how a fire may impact their property it helps to understand the fire history and relate that to how future possible fire may impact the locality.



The remote township of Cabramurra, within the Kosciuszko National Park, has recently begun developing a Community Protection Plan involving both the local Customer Service Centre staff and Community Engagement staff from NSW RFS Headquarters. Community Engagement Coordinator, Terry Jackson and Community Protection Plan Officer, Andrew Nicholls explain the unique approach that was taken for this unique community.

Cabramurra is an isolated village of about 100 people located within the Kosciuszko National Park. Sitting at 1,500m Cabramurra is the highest altitude town in NSW. One hour away from the closest NSW RFS brigade, surrounded by Alpine forests, the town is rated at high risk in the local Bush Fire Risk Management Plan.

In terms of being trapped by bush fire in Cabramurra, the occurrence may be rare and the summer in this area is short, yet a going bush fire could be hugely intense and the options for evacuating are limited. Mountain roads in the area could be easily blocked by fallen trees or inundated by smoke or debris produced by a bush fire.

In the summer of 2002/3 a large bush fire moved through the Kosciuszko National Park. After four and half years of drought the National Park was rich with dry fuel and when a fire took off in Victoria, it subsequently burned 330,000 hectares in the Park, part of a fire complex covering 1.7 million hectares and burning across three states. The residents and firefighters in Cabramurra had at least 10 days notice of the fire's

progress allowing them time to prepare the township and for emergency services to provide the right resources. When the town of Cabramurra was surrounded by the fire it was successfully defended thanks to well-planned efforts of Snowy Hydro Ltd employees and their families in the village and the NSW RFS.

Today the scars of those fires remain on the landscape. The intensity of the fire saw alpine gums entirely burned but still standing even 11 years later.

Snowy Hydro Ltd own and operate all the Snowy Mountains Scheme assets, including the village of Cabramurra which is largely populated by employees of the Scheme. Many of the residents are either part-time or short-term residents and are also charged with protecting the Snowy Hydro Mountains Scheme world heritage assets.

In summer the Cabramurra area also attracts a growing number of outdoors enthusiasts – fishers, bushwalkers, international tourists and motor-tourers. The combination of an industrial workforce, large value assets that control the hydro electricity generated

from the Scheme and the influx of day trippers seeking a wilderness experience, means that pre-season bush fire planning is vital.

The Community Protection Planning process in Cabramurra began in early 2014 after the town was identified as high risk in the local Bush Fire Risk Management Plan. Andrew Nicholls from Customer Service Centre has led the project.

Community Protection Plans are an important tool used by the NSW RFS to help the community better understand the bush fire risk in their area and how to prepare for it. Community Protection Plans cover things such as:

- the level of bush fire threat to a community, such as a town or village
- options available to the community prior to and during the impact of bush fire
- access to the area, as well as ways people can leave in the event of a bush fire
- the current and proposed works, such as community engagement and hazard reduction, to help deal with the bush fire risk

- identifying important or 'at-risk' facilities such as schools, hospitals, nursing homes and child care centres
- community engagement and education about bush fire, how fires burn and what the public can do to better prepare themselves and their houses.

The people in a community play a vital part in developing a Community Protection Plan. Community meetings and workshops help explain the process, and give local community members a say in prioritising work. But the real connection comes when people get that 'light bulb moment' on how fires behave. When they start to understand how fires burn, how embers create spot fires ahead of the fire and how people can get caught by fire, that's when they become very engaged.

In a community protection planning meeting in November 2014, NSW RFS, Coordinator, Terry Jackson, met with Snowy Hydro Ltd staff. While emergency plans and risk management was in place, the unique dangers posed by a bush fire were discussed and clarified. The draft Bush

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 32)



LEFT: A basic architectural design of all the buildings in the town to cater for effects from the winter snow added several benefits to managing property hazards for bush fire protection. For example buildings do not have guttering, the angle of roof pitch is very steep and resists embers and ash settling on roofs, and the roofing iron is continuous from top to bottom with no gaps. The landscaped area around the houses complex is minimal and consists mainly of well maintained lawns, paths and featured rock walls.

BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLAN

# Quick Tips

## Handing out Bush Fire Survival Plans

THE FOLLOWING IS A BUSH FIRE BULLETIN LIFTOUT. IT CAN BE USED AS A HANDOUT OR A POSTER AT COMMUNITY EVENTS.



Photo by Adam Streichler

- 1 The BFSP comes with a conversation attached**  
 Ask questions and find out more about the person you are handing the Bush Fire Survival Plan to. **Listen to their needs.** Target your advice and conversation toward their needs and life situation.
- 2 Knock, don't drop**  
 Letter-box drops are an efficient way to distribute Bush Fire Survival Plans across a large area and in a short time frame. The take-up of the Bush Fire Survival Plan can be significantly increased if you knock on the door and **spend one minute** with a resident.
- 3 Add extras**  
 Other relevant NSW RFS resources can help make the Bush Fire Survival Plan more useful. Depending on the area, you could include Fact Sheets, Property Preparation Checklists or brochures from the Farm Firewise program.
- 4 Ask for more time**  
 After handing over the Bush Fire Survival Plan, it's a good idea to ask for a follow-up conversation. This could be a home visit which could include advice about property protection. By offering to meet the residents again, we are also highlighting the importance we place on their safety, such that we are willing to spend more time with them.
- 5 Encourage home owners to have a chat**  
 Talking about bush fire safety among the family and amongst neighbours is good way to increase awareness and capacity. Invite home owners to talk about their Bush Fire Survival Plan with others. Useful questions are: "If there is only one thing you do this summer to prepare for bush fire, what would it be?" or "What you will do if a bush fire threatens your home?"
- 6 What if?**  
 You can never have too many 'What ifs'. In your conversations with home owners, get very specific about different possible scenarios such as fires at different times of day, types of fires, locations of family members, timing etc Emphasise the need to consider the specific need and circumstances of the household and each of the individuals in it.

# PREPARE YOUR PROPERTY

## BUSH FIRE SAFETY



# Are you prepared to keep your family safe?



**A well prepared home is more likely to survive a bush fire even if you leave early.**

# Prepare your property

- 1 Cut back any overhanging trees or shrubs and dispose of cuttings appropriately.
- 2 Check the condition of your roof and replace any damaged or missing tiles.
- 3 Non-combustible fences are the most effective at withstanding the intense heat generated by a bush fire.
- 4 Clean leaves from the roof, gutters and downpipes and fit quality metal leaf guards.
- 5 Plant trees and shrubs that are less likely to ignite due to their low oil content.
- 6 If you have a water tank, dam or swimming pool, consider installing a Static Water Supply sign (SWS).
- 7 Have a non-combustible doormat.
- 8 Install metal flywire or solid screens to the outside windows and doors.
- 9 Check the condition of external walls, cladding and seal any gaps.
- 10 Remove and store any flammable items away from the house.
- 11 Ensure you have a hose which is long enough to reach every part of the home.
- 12 Make sure the pressure relief valves on LPG cylinders face outwards (so flame is not directed towards the house).
- 13 Keep garden mulch away from the house and keep grass short.
- 14 Store wood piles well away from the house and keep covered.
- 15 Enclose underfloor areas.



BUSH FIRE INFORMATION LINE  
**1800 NSW RFS**  
1800 679 737  
[www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

PREPARE.

ACT.

SURVIVE.

# BUSH FIRE AND YOUR HOME

## BUSH FIRE SAFETY

Regardless of your decision to Leave Early or Stay and Defend, you still need to prepare your property against the threat of a bush fire and ember attack.

A well prepared home:

- Is more likely to survive a bush fire. Even if your plan is to Leave Early, the more you prepare your home, the more likely it will survive bush fire and/or ember attack.
- Can be easier for you and firefighters to defend.
- Is less likely to put your neighbours' properties at risk.
- Will give you more protection if a fire threatens suddenly and you cannot leave and have to take shelter.

### Property preparation checklist:

- Complete a Bush Fire Survival Plan.
- Keep lawns short and gardens well maintained, removing things like mulch away from your property.
- Trim any trees or shrubs that are close to your property.
- Remove dead leaves from the roof, gutters and downpipes.
- Clean up fallen leaves, twigs and debris around the property.
- Install metal gutter guards.
- Check the condition of your roof and replace any damaged or missing tiles.
- Install fine metal mesh screens on windows and doors.
- Fit seals around doors and windows to eliminate gaps.
- If you have a water tank, dam or swimming pool contact your local brigade to have a **Static Water Supply (SWS)** sign installed.
- Install a fire sprinkler system to your roof and gutters.
- Check your home and contents insurance is adequate and up-to-date.



**It is your responsibility to prepare your property for bush fires.**

For further property preparation tips refer to the **Australian Bush Fire Standard AS3959**.

Download and complete your **BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLAN** today at [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) or 'MyFirePlan' app for smartphones and tablets.



BUSH FIRE INFORMATION LINE  
**1800 NSW RFS**  
1800 679 737  
[www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

**PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.**



# Quick Tips

## When providing property protection advice



Photo by Anthony Clark

- 1 Learn about the fire history in the area**  
 Identify the bush fire history which will tell you the frequency of fires, when previous fire or hazard reduction occurred and the common fire approach direction. Also check the local area for topographical features such as up or down slope. Check the local bush fire fuel species to understand the type of embers that would be produced by a fire in the area.
- 2 What is the threat?**  
 Identify the fuel types, structure and loadings near to or adjoining the property

to work out the likely intensity of the fire impact, likely direction the fire will approach and if there will be direct flame, radiant heat or ember attack or a combination of these.

- 3 What are the hazards?**  
 Identify the flammable hazards and features on or around the buildings. As each hazard is identified it is important that the resident knows what the hazard is. Homeowners will benefit from having the hazard pointed out and also an explanation on why it is a hazard and how it needs to be managed in the event of a fire.

- 4 Identify Static Water Supply**  
 Explain to homeowners that swimming pools, dams, tanks and ponds can be used by firefighters or themselves to fight fires.
- 5 What is the exposure threat?**  
 Check the condition of out-buildings and neighbouring property. Are they an exposure fire threat?
- 6 What is the overall risk category?**  
 A basic fire assessment tool can be used to establish a risk rating for each individual property.

- 7 Manage the risk**  
 Help homeowners work out how to manage the risks around their home. By managing the fire hazards identified it is possible to lower the risk of the property being damaged as a result of bush fire impact. The four main options for managing hazards around the property are: a) remove the hazard altogether, b) alter or change the hazard, c) protect the hazard and d) manage the hazard.

# Snowy Mountains high

(FROM PAGE 25)

Fire Risk Map was adjusted according to the discussion – this included listing assets, egress options, communication systems, media outlets, water points and fire path and history.

The NSW RFS also met with staff at Cabramurra Public School including an explanation of the school's exposures to bush fire and the tasks that would easily enhance the school's capacity to withstand a bush fire. Discussion points included where embers could lodge, maintenance of vegetation adjoining the buildings, understanding how to isolate the large LPG gas cylinder and the use of sprinklers for dampening down vegetation when preparing for an approaching fire front. Naturally, preparations also included identifying logical evacuation procedures for school students and establishing notification protocols for the parents.

The next steps in the development of the Community Protection Plan will be a forum for stakeholders in recreation in the high country such as local Shires, NPWS, Roads & Maritime Service, NSW Ambulance Service and Selwyn Snowfields. Throughout the discussions it was identified a coordinated approach to the dissemination of bush fire information to tourists in the area was required. It is highly likely that, as part of the CPP, a joint arrangement between RFS, NPWS and Snowy Hydro will lead to up-to-date fire safety and threat information being posted on a noticeboard in the centre of the village.

## Including Community Engagement in the CPP process

While the whole process of developing Community Protection Plans is a matter of engaging with local communities, in Cabramurra the inclusion of a specialised community engagement officer was very helpful.

Bringing together differing viewpoints and being able to include all approaches is an important skill in the planning process. In Cabramurra, stakeholders in the town come from a range of social and workplace related demographics including a number part-time or short-term residents, stakeholders from Snowy Hydro Ltd and their contractors who do not

live in the town and another group who live in the town with families. The roles and history of the major stakeholders needed to be understood and their impact on the general community needed to be considered in the planning process.

Researching the fire history and geography of the Cabramurra area also assisted in the planning and engagement process. Knowledge about geographical location and surrounding features, weather patterns, fuel type and structures, as well as the fire history, paths and regimes are important elements of the CPP planning and discussion. Information gained from the inspection of the built assets and the identification of hazards also adds to the depth of the discussion and the generation of a shared and relevant CPP.

To conduct any meeting in a community setting requires a range of facilitation skills so that maximum value is gained from the interaction. The capacity to identify the issues, assess the venue dynamics, understand community interactions and be aware of people factors, such as body language, all directly benefit the planning process and the engagement of the participants.

Additional to these skills is something called instinct - far more unfathomable, yet critical to the beneficial interaction between players – which comes through experience in community engagement.

Community Engagement staff and volunteers also assist with developing a roadmap for CPP meetings. This can make the difference between a community protection plan that is on paper and a community protection plan that the community connects with, a plan that is easily understood, adds value to the locals and saves lives in the event of a bush fire emergency.

NSW RFS Community Engagement members can help capitalise on community meetings and glean the most out of any interaction between members and the public authorities and land managers.

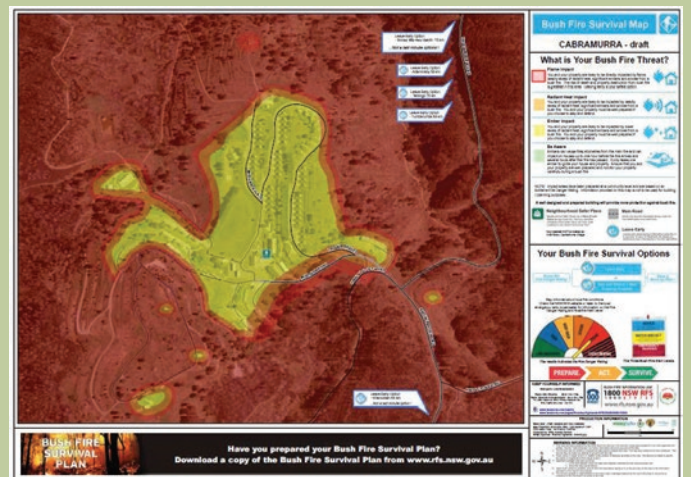
Any questions about the process should be directed to Andrew Nicholls, at the NSW RFS Customer Service Centre on (02) 4472 0600.




ABOVE: The unique building design and several days preparation time enabled sound defence and safety of the town. Photo courtesy of Snowy Hydro



ABOVE: Andrew Nicholls Community Protection Planner & NSP Officer, Terry Jackson Coordinator Program Development Community Engagement, School Principal Denise Cherry, staff and students at Cabramurra Primary School. Photo courtesy of Andrew Nicholls



ABOVE: The first draft copy of the Bush Fire Survival Map presented at the Cabramurra meeting



"The app is brilliant. It is really easy to navigate and the info is great."

Clint Pressley (Captain, Copacabana Brigade)

"An amazing resource for RFS volunteers."

Nicholas Wilde (Mudgee HQ Brigade)

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[www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au/MyRfsContent/Pocketbook](http://www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au/MyRfsContent/Pocketbook)

A printed version of the information Pocketbook app will be available in the very near future.

Email: [pocket.book@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:pocket.book@rfs.nsw.gov.au)



# Mission Possible

By Troy Gersback,  
Community Engagement Coordinator

## Community Engagement Conference exceeds expectations

On Thursday 22-Saturday 24 May the 2014 Australian Community Engagement and Fire Awareness (ACEFA) Conference was held at the Novotel Northbeach Wollongong. The 2014 ACEFA Conference was the 17th Conference held.

The event is designed to bring together Community Engagement practitioners from the NSW RFS and other emergency services to share knowledge, experiences and best practice in engaging with our communities to improve community safety and assist to building community resilience. The conference is one of only two such conferences held in Australia and attracts interest from around the country.

The theme for the 2014 Conference was 'Mission Possible'. Guided by the Master of Ceremonies, Brian Nankervis, delegates were exposed to a variety of presentations not only from NSW RFS personnel but from interstate agencies and private organisations. Of notable mention were the presentations from our keynote speakers, Nigel Marsh (Co-Founder Earth Hour and Founder Skinny Sydney) and Peter Kenyon (Director Bank

of I.D.E.A.S). The quality and breadth of the content presented met the approval of the many community engagement practitioners who attended.

Over 380 delegates attended the 2014 Conference. Of these delegates, NSW RFS staff (96 delegates) and volunteers (222 delegates) represented 45 of 48 NSW RFS Districts, including State Headquarters and Customer Service Centres. There were 65 delegates in attendance from the emergency, government and private sectors.

Accompanying the conference itself was an exhibition where several fire management companies and NSW RFS units showcased their current products and services. The NSW RFS Corporate Communications team, for example, assisted people with MyRFS questions and

introduced the recently produced One NSW RFS Tool Kit.

The 2014 also saw a number of 'firsts' for the ACEFA Conference. For the first time in 2014 the plenary sessions, along with selected breakout sessions, were streamed live, enabling those who couldn't attend the Conference in person to tune in from the comfort of their own home. Even the Chief Officer from the South Australian Country Fire Service (CFS) was watching. A smartphone/tablet application was also developed for the 2014 Conference. The application enabled delegates to select sessions they wished to attend in advance and create a personalised Conference program. The application also contained information about the presenters and enable delegates to make notes on each presentation for future reference.

Once again, feedback from the Conference was overwhelming positive, with 91 percent of delegates rating the Conference overall Excellent or Very Good.

Conference presentations are available to download from the Community Engagement section on MyRFS. Videos of the Conference presentations can be viewed by visiting [new.livestream.com/nswrfs](http://new.livestream.com/nswrfs)

On behalf of the Conference Organising Team, thank you to everyone who attended the Conference and who contributed to this amazing event. Planning for the 2016 Conference is well underway, with a new venue currently being sought. Further details about the 2016 Conference will be released mid-2015.

Good luck in your Community Engagement endeavours throughout 2014/15 and we look forward to seeing you in 2016.

*"We both enjoyed the conference very much and thought it was the best yet."*

*"It was really fantastic in every way. Well done! You have all done a brilliant job. An innovative conference that made me think."*

*"Great experience, felt very privileged to have attended. It was very inspiring and gave a sense of pride in firefighting. Took away lots of ideas for improvements within my own brigade."*

*"This was my very first conference I have attended through the RFS. It totally exceeded all my expectations and would recommend others to attend future conferences."*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Nigel Marsh (Co-founder of Earth Hour) gave a Keynote Address; Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons in the audience; Along with the Conference was an Expo including suppliers and some NSW RFS department including, seen here, RAFT; CFA volunteer April Himmelreich spoke about her brigade's success in using music to teach children bush fire safety; 380 delegates attended the conference; Brian Nankervis, of Rockwiz fame, was a funny and thoughtful MC; Former NSW RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg spoke about the Blue Mountains Recovery Project; Volunteers from Warrandyte in Victoria presented their successful Be Ready Warrandyte project. Photos by Sharon Quandt



# If I could achieve one thing...

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons on his personal commitment to Community Engagement

*The following is a precis of the keynote speech presented by Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons at the 2014 Australian Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Conference.*

In NSW we have a long history of fires. No matter where you choose in the State, at some time that place would have experienced a disastrous fire event.

This January just past (2014) marked 20 years since the 1994 fires. For NSW, and for the fire industry, it was a watershed moment. It was the first time that we saw fires on a grand scale getting national and international attention right across the globe. Then there was February 2009: 173 people killed in Australia's worst ever bush fire disaster in Victoria. It is fair to say that since the 1994 watershed event and the horrible events of the 2009 disaster in Victoria, the fire industry has sought to transform itself.

We have tried to increase the survivability of people in the

path of fires and to protect the infrastructure, the homes and the valuables of all those affected. What we can say in our industry, over a hundred years or more of learnings, is that we are constantly exploring and seeking to do new things.

When I first became Commissioner I wanted to make sure that we, as an agency, were absolutely and legitimately seeing community engagement as core business.

In an organisation like ours we have had to make sure that our operational people understand that they are in the business of community engagement as well. As a matter of fact, if I could achieve one thing, it would be to get everyone to realise that no matter the role they have in our organisation they are a 'community engager'. Community engagement is central, it is part of the fire management jigsaw puzzle. We need to continue to highlight it and to invest accordingly.

This was certainly highlighted in 2013. We had January which was an awful time particularly up around Coonabarabran: 53 homes were destroyed in one afternoon out of a total of 57 homes destroyed across the state within a fortnight of intense activity. There were more than 10,000 stock losses down around Bookham near Yass and we had fires out through the Central Ranges and down near the South Coast. In September 2013 the NSW RFS was dealing with more than 1,000 significant fires across NSW and, as we moved into October, we had more than 1,500 fires running concurrently. The worst period was October 13-26 when we saw devastating and destructive fires across the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Lithgow regions, parts of the Central Coast, Port Stephens and down through the Southern Highlands. In one afternoon we saw just under 200 homes destroyed at Winmalee in the lower Blue Mountains. On that day, 17 October 2013, the weather was

awful. The conditions were awful and as things would turn out we saw one fire take off near Lithgow at the back of the Blue Mountains, within about an hour or so another fire started at the southern end of the western side of the Blue Mountains, and as we were starting to respond to that, almost an hour to the minute, we saw another fire start in the lower Blue Mountains.

So we had a number of concurrent fires. It was a considerable challenge for everyone involved particularly for those in the path of the fires.

What emerged out of this season for me was the need to link all that we are doing in the community engagement space.

Bush Fire Survival Plans are supposed to be done well ahead of the fire. I have got to tell you that the research shows there is nothing like fire at the back door to motivate people to say: 'Wow I gotta do something!' It's probably not the way we want it, but there is a message in that. Despite our best efforts, there



“...people want information, they want to be engaged with, they want to know what the latest is ...”

is still a massive proportion of the population who are going to wait until the threat is perceived to be real before they do something.

During that busy period in the Blue Mountains in 2013, 12,500 people attended public meetings and calls to the Bush Fire Information Line hit 46,544.

The research is reinforcing that people want more Emergency Alert and social media messaging as well. We cannot ignore the societal expectation for information. We have got to do what we can to provide access to the right information, even if they *are* looking for it at the last minute. For our part, we are already doing work on this and we are shifting access and visibility of the key information that people are searching for in an emergency.

The take up of electronic tools has outstripped all our expectations. In January of 2013 we saw our Fires Near Me application being the number one free app

downloaded that month and we saw an extraordinary number of Bush Fire Survival Plans being downloaded. The smartphone app was busy with 80,000 searches per hour back in January but during the October fires it was just under 220,000 searches per hour.

So people want information, they want to be engaged with, they want to know what the latest is so that they can be confident they are making the right decisions.

This is the work of the community engagers and it is so critical. There are other sorts of Community Engagement initiatives going on in NSW and the NSW RFS is getting recognition right across the country for wonderful, innovative, positive programs that are making a difference in local communities.

Yet consistent messaging is a challenge for the entire organisation. Engaging at the outset and then delivering clear warning and alerts when people find themselves

in trouble. Within our own organisation we still find it difficult to consistently convey the difference between the alert levels and between the different Fire Danger Ratings. We do have to invest more in consistent messaging.

Our history is evidence of the fact that we do learn and change. Whilst there might be a very command and control authoritative arrangement when it comes to fighting fires, it's inversed when comes to everything else we do – such as policy, development or community engagement.

We have invested in making sure that community engagement gets profiled and treated equally in the brigade structure. In the last few years I have seen our membership numbers grow and, anecdotally at least, the growth is in non-traditional brigade roles. In fact, since March 2014 we have processed over 6,500 new membership applications and it appears that a number of

those will be interested in non-traditional firefighting roles.

There is nothing like a lot of fire around to energeise people to want to make a difference and join the organisation!

There is a nice quote from Nelson Mandela: *It always seem impossible until it is done.*

If we cast our minds back a little way we can see we have done a hell of a lot. *You've done a hell of a lot.* Your communities are much better for the investment you have made. Our challenge is to keep going on with 'mission possible' and seeking to make a difference.

**ABOVE:** Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons presented this speech at the 2014 Australian Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Conference.

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# COMING SOON

## 2015 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FORUMS



### **Community Engagement Forums will be returning in 2015.**

Forums are an opportunity for volunteers and staff to come together to share experiences, ideas and best practice on engaging with communities to prepare for bush and grass fire.

Forums are driven by localised content to ensure relevance to participants. They also promote and encourage networking opportunities with neighbouring Districts.



**Check MyRFS for more information early 2015**

or by checking out the Community Engagement Facebook and Twitter pages.



[facebook.com/nswrfscommunityengagers](https://facebook.com/nswrfscommunityengagers)



[twitter.com/RFSCommEngage](https://twitter.com/RFSCommEngage)



BUSH FIRE BULLETIN • BUSH FIRE BULLETIN • BUSH FIRE BULLETIN  
**FOCUS ON  
 COMMUNITY  
 ENGAGEMENT**

# Awards for building resilience

In 2014 the Resilient Australia Awards has featured the NSW RFS with wins in both the State and National awards.

The National Resilient Australia Awards were presented at the National War Memorial in Canberra on 24 November 2014. Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Brigade won the Not-For-Profit section and the Bush Fire Resilience in Aboriginal Communities (BRAC II) Project received a Highly Commended for State Government projects.

Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine had also won the State award for their Community Engagement Plan. The brigade's community engagement plan had been tested during the October 2013 fires when these isolated communities were forced to defend their towns against the State Mine fire. Despite the loss of some houses, sheds, equipment and kilometres of fences, local residents and the brigade kept the community safe. Their catchcry is 'Everyone has a role play in an emergency' and during the October 2013 fires two out of three residents were part of the firefighting effort.

Highly Commended in the State Government sector

was the NSW RFS and the Aboriginal Land Council of NSW Bush Fire Resilience for Aboriginal Communities (BRAC II). This program is focussed on improving the resilience of remote Aboriginal communities across NSW. More information about BRAC is featured on page 32.

BRAC II had been the State winner for the State Government section which had been presented in October. At the State level another two NSW RFS programs were Highly Commended. One was the Community Engagement Unit's program to produce MyFirePlan: The Bush Fire Survival Plan app. The app is a complement to the existing Bush Fire Survival Plan and encourages more people to be prepared for bush fire giving them an alternate way to keep their plan close at hand.

The second was the Kenthurst Rural Fire Brigade's Project: Firewise Rural Residents Property Protection Program which has trained nearly 600 local residents over the past five years.

Bill Duncan from the Kenthurst Brigade wrote: "We should all be very proud of our colleagues. I certainly am. The Awards were presented in front of Commissioners and other senior officers from all Services, including the NSW Police Force. I think our Commissioner was very pleased that his Service was the recipient of nearly half of all awards presented on the day!"

**ABOVE:** Kenthurst Brigade: (left): Chris and Sue Talbert, Ray and Jenny Hancock and Bill and Pat Duncan From BRAC (back row): Insp Dave Curry and Paul Smith From Corporate Communications (right back row): Anthony Clark and Brydie Burrows Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Brigade (right front row): Kathleen Oakes and Captain Beth Raines Far right: Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons. Photo by Ann-Marie Calilhanna, courtesy of MPES

**National Winner/ State Winner  
Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine  
Community Engagement Plan**



Community Safety Officer Kathleen Oakes, Captain Beth Raines and Kim Gow from Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Brigade receiving the National Resilient Australian award for the Not-For-Profit sector at the National War Memorial in Canberra, November 2014. The Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Community Engagement Plan involved neighbours working together in survival planning and asked the community to assist in response to an emergency and recovery. A full feature article on the Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Community Engagement Plan appeared in the *Bush Fire Bulletin* Volume 36 No 2, page 20. Photo courtesy of Emergency Management Australia

**National Highly Commended/ State Winner  
NSW RFS and the Aboriginal Land Council of  
NSW Bush Fire Resilience for Aboriginal Communities  
(BRAC II)**



Region West Manager Paul Smith, BRAC II Project Officer Inspector David Curry and Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons at the State Resilient Australia Awards where they were winners of the NSW State Government sector.

BRAC II is run jointly by the NSW RFS and Aboriginal Lands Council of NSW. It is featured on page 36 as well as in *Bush Fire Bulletin* Volume 35 No 1 page 36. Photo by Ann-Marie Calilhanna, courtesy of MPES

**State Highly Commended  
MyFirePlan**



Community Engagement Coordinator Brydie Burrows and Group Manager Corporate Communications Anthony Clark with Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons at the State award ceremony. The MyFirePlan app is available through the Apple App store or Google Play by searching for Bush Fire Survival Plan or MyFirePlan. It was High Commended at the State Resilient Australia Awards in the State Government sector. Photo by Ann-Marie Calilhanna, courtesy of MPES

**State Highly Commended  
Kenthurst Rural Fire Brigade: Firewise Rural Residents  
Property Protection Program**



The three couples who have been central to Kenthurst Firewise Rural Residents Property Protection Program since its inception in 2008 Chris and Sue Talbert; Ray ("Biggles") and Jenny Hancock and Bill and Pat Duncan with Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Stuart Ayres (far left). This project was featured in the *Bush Fire Bulletin* Volume 33 No 3 page 42. Photo by Ann-Marie Calilhanna, courtesy of MPES



# Turnaround

A NSW RFS project working to protect remote Aboriginal communities from bush fire has not only won a major award it is also dramatically improving rapport between the NSW RFS and the Aboriginal community in rural areas.



The NSW RFS Bush Fire Resilience in Aboriginal Communities (BRAC) project has been running since 2011. After a successful first stage, the NSW RFS again joined forces with the State Aboriginal Land Council to launch BRAC II. The project was announced in late 2012 by the State Government in partnership with the State Aboriginal Lands Council accompanied by a grant of \$600,000 provided by the Natural Disaster Resilience Program for the employment of Aboriginal Liaison Officers through the State Lands Council and a Project Officer with the NSW RFS.

The Senior Project Officer for NSW RFS is Inspector David Curry who has been in the NSW RFS as staff member for four years and volunteer since 1978.

“Over the past 18 months there has been a vast turn around in the attitudes of the Aboriginal communities and the NSW RFS staff towards each other,” he said, “It is very rewarding to see the rapport between both entities growing and the success we have had in handing the ownership of the fire resilience back to the communities involved.”

Thirty-four communities around NSW, which were once Aboriginal missions and located just outside of townships, had been identified as being at risk from bush fire. Throughout 2011 the NSW RFS worked with these communities to create a report which outlined the risk and possible treatments that would improve the communities’ resilience to the impact of bush fire. Detailed risk assessment

reports were generated with priority actions to mitigate bush fire and structure fire hazards to assist the Local Aboriginal Land Councils prioritise their works programs.

Although the Project dealt primarily with the risk of bush fire, it also took other types of fires into account within Aboriginal communities and addressed such issues as illegal burning and household fires.

One of the aims of the Project was to seek involvement and advice from the local Aboriginal community on what they saw as the hazards and risks to their community and what they would like to see happen to lessen those risks. Over time the BRAC Project saw the development of a strong partnership between the NSW RFS and the State Aboriginal Lands Council.

Through 2013/14 the aim of BRAC II has been to implement the risk management plans identified in the first stage. In BRAC II has extended its influence and impact including providing bush fire safety and firefighter training to Aboriginal communities, supporting related programs such as Firesticks and training up Local Aboriginal Land Councils to be engaged in Bush Fire Management Committees.

The Project is gaining momentum but it has been a two-way street says Phil Duncan, Senior Policy and Research Officer with the NSW Aboriginal Lands Council. “I am happy to say that I think we are on a precipice of some major major changes.”

“There has been a great shift in how we (Aboriginal people)



ABOVE: The Bellbrook Community Fire Unit in the Lower North Coast Zone, invited the NSW RFS to hold a Bush Firefighter course in November 2013. Photo by Vicky Kinna

LEFT: Mid North Coast Community Safety Officer, Jamie Bertram and Craig Trindall, from the NSW Aboriginal Lands Council who are both Aboriginal, have been assisting the BRAC Project by liaising between the communities and the NSW RFS. Photo by David Curry

## Firesticks



In June 2014 a training for 30 Indigenous Rangers from the Firesticks Project of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW was conducted by the NSW RFS at Yarrawarra, North of Coffs Harbour. Concurrently, the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council offered a Cultural Awareness training to 12 local NSW RFS Community Safety Officers and State Mitigation Support Staff who operate in the North Coast and Northern Tablelands. By living side by side for a week, everyone got a better idea of what each agency and cultural group has to contend with in everyday life and workplaces. These two trainings have helped build a great relationship between the Rangers, who are members of Aboriginal Communities across the north east of NSW, and the NSW RFS staff who service these areas.

Since June 2014, the BRAC II Project and Corporate & International Relations Unit have trained another 40 Indigenous people in Bush Firefighter at Kyogle (Githabul Rangers) and at Wagga Wagga (Local Land Services employees). Most of the recipients of this training are from the Indigenous communities identified as part of the BRAC II Project. This kind of training enhances the resilience of the communities by having a greater number of people who have a greater knowledge of fire behaviour. Photo by David Curry

## Bush Firefighter training in Bellbrook



Bush Firefighter training in Bellbrook: Participation from the Bellbrook community has been very high and in November 2013 the NSW RFS Lower North Coast Zone held a Bush Firefighter course for the Bellbrook community. Here Wayne Leader is teaching new members hose skills during a Bush Firefighter course. Photo courtesy of Vicky Kinna

## BFMC training at Headquarters



Around 30 Local Aboriginal Land Councils gathered at NSW RFS Headquarters in October 2014 for Bush Fire Management Committee training. The Commissioner addressed the group praising the participants for making the long trip to Sydney and acknowledging their commitment to the safety of their own communities. Also attending were members of Fire and Rescue NSW, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Commonwealth Government Infrastructure (Jervis Bay) and NSW Aboriginal Land Council. The training provided the Local Aboriginal Land Council members with a much greater understanding of the purpose of the BFMCs and the direct safety benefits of participating in their local BFMC. Photo by Jacqueline Murphy

## Community Fire Unit in Bellbrook



On NAIDOC Day on 25 September 2013 the Bellbrook Aboriginal Community commissioned their Community Fire Unit (CFU). The CFU was part of the recommendations from the initial BRAC inspection in 2012 as a way of protecting the community from the impact of fire. Here the community got together to helping to load the new firefighting gear into the CFU unit. Engagement and participation in the Bellbrook community is at an all time high. Photo by Vicky Kinna



... there is now a greater appreciation (among firefighters) that Aboriginal people manage the land and manage our cultural landscapes.

look at fire management," he said, "And there is now a greater appreciation (among firefighters) that Aboriginal people manage the land and manage our cultural landscapes. I think that the capacity and desire of Aboriginal people to open their doors is now at another level. No longer do we want to sit back, we want to get in and be a part of it."

Some of the initiatives within BRAC II have included the confirmation of Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs) for each community, appropriate fire mitigation activities to protect the community, the delivery of Community Fire Units (CFUs) with training for community members and Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) representation on local BFMCS.

In 2013/14, 25 NSPs for the 34 identified Indigenous communities were confirmed by Districts and all relevant Districts have commenced work on the appropriate risk and hazard treatments. Any area that were rated as being at an elevated risk in the audit conducted in BRAC I has been prioritised and treated, with the result that 90 percent were reduced. The remaining areas have planned works scheduled to be completed during the first quarter of 2014/15.

The needs of each of the Indigenous communities determines the role that BRAC plays so there have been a variety of faces to the BRAC Project. In 2013 Bellbrook Community, west of Kempsey, had a Community Fire Unit commissioned with training provided by the NSW RFS. This led to six members of the Aboriginal community joining the local NSW RFS brigade. Consequently, Lower North Coast District of the NSW RFS

ran a Bush Firefighter course at the Aboriginal Community Centre in November 2013 for Bellbrook and the surrounding brigades.

During the initial inspections in 2012 it was identified that Loftus Road Aboriginal Community at Crescent Head was in extreme risk status. The BRAC Project, with the help of the Lower North Coast Community Safety Officer, Belinda Devine, has put into action a large hazard reduction within an Asset Protection Zone involving the removal of undergrowth and a substantial amount of fuel. This is a substantial jump forward in helping and engaging the community who has agreed to maintain the APZ once the hazard reduction is complete.

Namatjira Avenue Aboriginal Community at Dareton has had a history of regular grass fires, however the relationship with the NSW RFS has been tentative at best. Through community meetings held throughout 2013 and the ongoing work of Scott Connor, Community Safety Officer for Lower Western Zone, the relationships are improving significantly. Hazard reduction burns have been implemented and community education regarding the lighting of fires has been undertaken, producing a dramatic effect on the rapport between the community and the Service. The LALC has attended the local Bush Fire Management Committee meetings and are taking ownership of the resilience for their community. The capacity of local Aboriginal communities to mitigate their own risks is revealed by the statistics. In the 2012/13 fire season there were 23 separate callouts by the local brigade into the community. The following year,

however, because of better communication and greater shared understanding, there was a total of two callouts.

Hazard reduction has been identified as a requirement in the communities of Wilcannia and with consultation and communication from local NSW RFS District staff, Aboriginal community members were employed by the local shire council to conduct this clean up and hazard reduction. This was then funded by the BRAC Project.

Another sign of the increasing trust and confidence in the NSW RFS and BRAC, the Senior Project Officer of the BRAC Project, Dave Curry was invited to the Wagonga LALC meeting in April 2014 to explain what the NSW RFS can do for their communities and how they can become involved in the NSW RFS.

Hazard reductions have taken place in the Walgett community of Gingie using the SMSS crews to clear away fuel near to dwellings. This was done in consultation with the local North West Zone District and the Walgett LALC, who are now also attending BFMC meetings. The communities have asked for training in Bush Fire Awareness and these sessions are being planned by the Membership Services Officer from Coonamble.

Wellington LALC has also asked for Bush Fire Awareness training after meeting with the BRAC Project. Water pressure, which had already been identified as a problem, is being rectified by the Wellington Shire Council and NSW Water with the assistance of the BRAC Project.

The BRAC Project also now sit on the Panel of Service Providers for the Department

Of Aboriginal Affairs. This gives them the opportunity to show what the NSW RFS can provide the Aboriginal community, right across NSW, who partake in the Local Decision Making process and gives the Services access to other agencies who might also become involved.

BRAC II is also making a significant contribution to the Cultural Burning Project run by the Central Tablelands Local Land Services by providing training and fire protection for low intensity cultural burns on Aboriginal land.

In October 2014 BRAC II was named the winner of the State Government sector of the NSW Resilient Australia Awards. In November 2014 it was Highly Commended in the National Resilient Australia Awards. It was a recognition of the Project's contribution to capacity building within Indigenous communities.

"The Project is about giving Aboriginal people the opportunity to be involved," Phil Duncan said, "Instead of waiting for 'the big red truck' to arrive, they are able to combat that fire and when the trained staff come along, we are all working together."

"The relationships are in place now and you can't put a price on that," he said, "You have got guys walking down the street, or running into one another at a club and saying: 'How you going?' Now, that wouldn't have happened five years ago. It's a great recognition of the RFS, but it is also a recognition of the Land Council and the local aboriginal land council networks. Together we can achieve, standing alone I think it's a lot harder."

# OPEN DAY 2014: Know your bush fire risk

'Know your Risk' was the theme for the 2014 NSW RFS Open Day, which saw 336 brigades from across the State engage with their local community.

For the first time many brigades were supplied with a Bush Fire Prone Land Map of their local area. The maps were to be a 'talking point' between members and the local residents and it proved very successful.

The aim was for residents to make a personal connection to the bush fire risk in their area by viewing their home on the map.

"It was helpful," reported one brigade, "as residents could see their house and the potential threats."

Another member wrote: "Due to the nature and topography of our area, all properties are bush fire prone and the old and new residents had no idea of how extensive this was and the potential impact a fire may have on their property."

The map of bush fire prone land was accompanied by an aerial photo of the area and was an excellent tool for entering into a discussion on risk and survival plans.

Many brigades also offered a range of fun, interactive activities, such as fire truck and hose demonstrations, sausage sizzles, jumping castles, trash and treasure, live fire demonstrations and joint emergency service displays.

A number of brigades had a special visit from Minister for Police and Emergency

Services the Hon. Stuart Ayres and our Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons who were both out and about on Open Day.

Feedback about Open Day 2014 has been overwhelmingly positive, with a number of improvements to be taken on board for 2015.

## Photo competition

The Community Engagement Team once again held the popular Open Day photo competition. Photos were judged on the moment in time that best captured this year's Open Day theme 'Know Your

Risk'. Thank you to everyone who entered, the quality of submissions this year was great. Congratulations to the winners. We hope you enjoy your Bunnings Warehouse vouchers. See the winner on the next page.



ABOVE: Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons visited the Berowra Brigade on Open Day. Photo by Adam Streichler



# Open Day photo competition



**Competition Winner**

Dan O'Shea,  
Rouse Hill Brigade



**Second prize**

Jennie Curtin,  
Blackheath Mt Victoria Brigade



**Third prize**

Kristie Barnes,  
Currabubula Brigade



**Highly Commended**

Michelle Clarke,  
Valley Heights Brigade



Open Day at Menai Brigade Station. Photo by Melissa Baker

### Liston Brigade, Northern Tablelands

With a shiny new station and three years since holding their last Open Day event, Liston Brigade excitedly opened their station doors to welcome their local community to this year's Open Day.

Their Open Day was well attended and held in conjunction with Liston Community Hall 'trash and treasure' extravaganza across the road from the Station.

A jumping castle was a big hit with the children along with the interactive hose demonstrations, which the children eagerly participated in, rolling the 44 gallon drums along the ground with the fire hose.

While the children were entertained with exciting activities, the adults were engaged with the Brigade Bush Fire Prone Land Map on display, which resulted in over 24 residents participating in the mapping activity competition and learning about risk in their community.

In addition to the maps on display, the NSW RFS website and a range of smart phone applications were on show on a big screen. These allowed residents to see and learn more about what social media platforms are available and how it will assist them to be better prepared this fire season.

### Sussex Inlet, Shoalhaven

Another successful Open Day was held at Sussex Inlet Brigade this year with around 1,000 residents visiting their station. The brigade invited a range of local organisations such as Lions Club, Red Cross, Police, Ambulance, Marine Rescue and the local Men's Shed to be a part of Open Day and to promote a cohesive community working together.

With a range of activities and displays on offer for adults and children, the brigade's Bush Fire Prone Land map and mapping activity competition was a huge hit with over 90 residents participating in the competition and around 200 residents taking a Bush Fire Survival Plan to complete.

One of the main attractions for both adults and children alike was the NSW RFS 'smoke house' which gives people a realistic idea of how dark, noisy and chaotic it is to be caught in the path of a fire.

### iPad competition

In line with the 'Know Your Risk' theme, an iPad competition was launched at Open Day, with the aim to increase the community's perception of risk. Congratulations to Liam Gordon who is the winner of the iPad competition after he participated in the mapping exercise at the Currabubula Brigade (Liverpool Range) Open Day.



Residents checking the Local Bush Fire Prone Map at Berowra Brigade. Photo by Adam Streichler



Open Day at Regentville Brigade. Photo by Melissa Baker



Minister for Police and Emergency Services the Hon. Stuart Ayres visited several brigades in the Cumberland Zone on Open Day including Regentville Brigade. Photo by Melissa Baker

# 335 BRIGADES

IN THE STATE PARTICIPATED

NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST



19% 62% 15% 4%

OPEN DAY  
PHOTO  
COMPETITIONS  
89  
SUBMITTED

# OPEN DAY

# 335 LOCATIONS

10  
SHOPPING CENTRE

29  
PARK/RESERVE

38  
OTHERS

247  
FIRE STATION

11  
FIRE CONTROL CENTRES

## OPEN DAY RESOURCES

21,000  
BUMPER STICKERS

68,000  
FACT SHEETS

SAUSAGE SIZZLE/BBQ

STATIC DISPLAY

FIRE TRUCK DEMONSTRATION

FIRE HOSE DEMONSTRATION

KIDS ACTIVITIES

## TOP FIVE OPEN DAY ACTIVITIES

1,000  
KIDS TATTOOS

26,000  
BALLOONS

10,000  
BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLANS

# Get ready on Get Ready Weekend

The Prepare Act Survive public awareness has been expanded to include a State-wide event which helps people to prepare their homes (and their heads) for the bush fire season ahead.



Research suggests people are more likely to act when faced with an urgent situation - such as a bush fire closing in on their back door! The purpose of Get Ready Weekend held on 18/19 October 2014, was to encourage people to act now, not next week, or on a 30+ day, but on the weekend itself.

The goal? To create a sense of urgency to compel people to take immediate action to prepare themselves and their family in the event of a bush fire in their area.

The message was simple, yet hard hitting, to compete against the myriad of organisations vying for people's attention.

This clear call to action resonated well with brigade members. Scott Dellar, Community Safety Officer from Sutherland said: "the Get Ready messaging was really clear and easy to get behind. We had a clear sense of direction when communicating with the community."

### Getting the word out

What better way to amplify a message quickly and effectively than social media?

In the lead up to the event brigade members literally flooded their brigade, personal and community Facebook pages with Get Ready messaging. This was made possible by a digital kit stuffed with ready-to-post images, text graphics, posts and tips. It made creating a groundswell through social media simple.

Through the social media campaign members encouraged people in their communities to get outside and do simple jobs around their property and talk to their families about what they'd do if there was a fire near their home.

Residents were also encouraged to connect with their neighbours when and where it suited them. Whether that be while they're taking the bins out, over a BBQ or just a simple chat over the fence. Strong community connections during emergencies set people in great stead therefore encouraging people to discuss their Bush Fire Survival Plan with neighbours was one of the key drivers of Get Ready Weekend.

Get Ready Weekend also featured heavily on TV, radio,

MAJOR EVENTS AT  
**7** BUNNINGS  
WAREHOUSES

**1,000**  
NEW USERS OF THE  
MYFIREPLAN APP

**8 LIVE CROSSES**  
ON CHANNEL 7'S SUNRISE





OPPOSITE PAGE: A feature of the Get Ready weekend initiative was the abundance of hands-on help to promote the event and make eye-catching displays including this Social Media Kit. LEFT: Belrose Bunnings. Photo by Pip Baume. RIGHT: Mark Blunden, Glenhaven Brigade at Castle Hill Bunnings Warehouse

press and online in the lead up to the weekend, and during the weekend itself. High profile features on Better Homes and Gardens and Channel Seven's Sunrise program helped raise the profile of the weekend, and encouraged people to download the Bush Fire Survival Plan or get the free Myfireplan app for their phone.

**Saturday 18-Sunday 19 October 2014**

On Get Ready Weekend itself, numerous events occurred right around the State ranging from interactive information sessions, street meetings, school visits, family fun days and expos. Bunnings also jumped on board by providing seven stores in bush fire prone areas for the NSW RFS to hold major events and members were present at 37 further stores in bush fire prone areas to offer property preparation tips.

If people tuned into Nova FM or Triple M, or if they follow the NSW RFS on social media on Saturday 18 October, they would have been encouraged to get down to their local Bunnings to

learn about the simple things they can do to get their property prepared for bush fire.

Brydie Burrows had a chat to Steve Urquhart from the Camden West Brigade about his experience encouraging the public to 'get ready' at the Narellan Bunnings in the Macarthur area.

**Why was the Get Ready Weekend beneficial for your community?**

People were targeted in a nice way for the right reasons and this provided us with real opportunities to have meaningful conversations.

When you walk the pavement or knock on doors you're always wondering: "I wonder how many people will get to speak to today?" Whereas having an eye catching set up at Narellan Bunnings was an opportunity to work with a captive audience.

Some people approached us because they had specific questions and wanted to chat, others were attracted by the sausage sizzle, balloons, bouncy castle or the chance to get a branded 'Get Ready' polaroid

of themselves. However, once we engaged those people in conversation they quickly realised they were in a bush fire zone and our message was relevant for them too.

**Why was Get Ready Weekend different?**

It was new and a new approach! The publicity around the weekend in the media and the lead time to plan were a blessing. We knew it was going to be a huge day and that made the event a bit different and special. Our members were very keen to be involved.

The busy Bunnings location attracted people from a broad area, indeed some people we may usually find difficult to engage. It was personally rewarding seeing my team enjoy speaking to community members on a subject they knew well, with a sense of authority people could trust.

**How was your event made to stand out and attract the public?**

We had a new Cat One tanker on display, the Community

Engagement Trailer featuring video and audio clips as well as a relevant display for locals.

As for the BBQ, well it was hard work, but it was mostly run by people wearing yellow, so it was like a little army camping directly at Bunnings front door. We had impact.

We had a lot of fun with members jumping into family photos with Batman and other superheroes without invitation. It was a real family fun day that provided the perfect opportunity for discussion with our community members.

**How did the public respond to your message about the threat posed by bush fire in the Macarthur area?**

People were generally shocked when we spoke to them about ember attack and the devastation that can be caused so far from the fire front. We were pleased with how many people were in fact prepared, but most still believed that living in a residential suburb was totally safe and free from any impact of bush fire. I'm sure we changed a few beliefs that day!



## BRIGADE IN PROFILE

# 70th anniversary

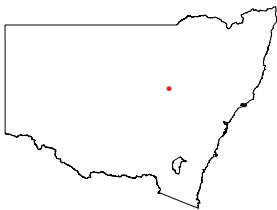
**Name of Brigade:** Eumungerie

**Year brigade formed:** 1944

**Current Captain:** Brian Lesslie

**Current President:** Tim Parsley

**D/T/Z:** Region West



### What kind of community is Eumungerie and what is its history?

The Eumungerie Rural Fire Brigade will celebrate its 70th birthday in 2014.

The village of Eumungerie is situated on the Newell Highway 40km north of Dubbo and 27km south of Gilgandra.

The area is home to about 260 residents with many travelling daily to the major centres for work.

Eumungerie is said to be an Aboriginal word for a clump of Quandong trees. The village was surveyed and gazetted in 1903 with the help of Mr Ewen McMillan, who was the manager of the saw mill that was contracted to supply the Iron Bark sleepers for the then proposed railway line from Dubbo to Coonamble.

Although passenger services have not run for many years, it is still a very busy grain line today.

Eumungerie was a thriving village in the early years, boasting shops, fuel depots, rural produce dealers and even its own police station.

As with most other smaller townships and villages, there has been a decline in local shops and services over the years but there is still the well-known Drover's Dog Hotel, a very progressive Post Office and recently campers have been welcomed at the recreation grounds.

Although Eumungerie is predominantly a rural community the area also is home to a great cross section of people with a variety of careers and interests including furniture making and restoration, leather work and musical instrument making.

The Eumungerie Bush Fire Brigade was formed as the result of the amalgamation of the Maiala and Caledonia district brigades on 18 November 1944.

### Who are some of the outstanding characters in the history of the brigade?

The first Captain to take the helm was John Griffith with Albert Reichelt as Senior Deputy and Alan Thompson as Secretary/ Treasurer who remained in that position until 1965.

Over the years the brigade has boasted of a number of dedicated executive and field officers each giving many years voluntary service.

Reg Cashel was the longest serving Captain who held that position from 1951 to 1978 before his son John took over.

The current Secretary/ Treasurer, John MacKenzie took over the reins in 1974.

He has served in many capacities over the years including Group Captain (1985-2007) during some pretty tricky fire seasons. Who can forget the 60,000 hectare loss of bushland when fire ravaged the



Goonoo National Park in 2007? He was also there at the previous major outbreak in 1957.

John has been the well-deserved recipient of a number of awards including the National Medal of Australia (NMO) in 1991, the 50 Year Long Service Medal in 2010, the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 2007 and the Fire Services Medal (FSM) in 2012. These older members are of course invaluable to a brigade in the rural areas as they have a great local knowledge of the people and property locations.

### What vehicles do you have?

The brigade has a Cat 1 and a Cat 2 in its arsenal and boasts a quick incident response time as a number of members live close to the fire shed. It can also count on the other brigades in the Orana District for support at short notice.

Eumungerie is the most northern of the 59 brigades in the Orana District. Orana covers the local government areas of Dubbo, Wellington and Narromine manned by about 1,500 volunteers and around 900 active firefighters.

### What types of incidents does your brigade attend?

The brigade's broad activities include structure fires, motor vehicle accidents and of course grass fires. In addition it is involved in a number of community services throughout the year. These can vary from attending local market days to watering the village trees during drought times as well as Community Education at the local school.

The fire shed is located within the village boundary.

As with most other rural brigades, many of our volunteers are farmers and others who need to work out-of-area during the week.

Over the 70 years we have been called to many serious motor vehicle accidents on the Newell Highway. A lot of the fatal MVAs were around the old Coolbaggie Creek Bridge, on a bend with narrow approaches about 5km south of the village. Some members remember one particularly testing day in the 1970s, attending a fatal in the morning only to be called out for another multiple in the afternoon.

Since the construction of a new bridge in 1997 that area has certainly improved - real proof that better roads and conditions save lives.

One of the more unusual occurrences was in the 1960s when one hot day, one of the mighty Garratt locomotives pulling a big load of wheat from Coonamble began discharging burning embers through its smoke stack as it strained up some of the inclines enroute to Dubbo. The result caused truckloads of farmers, landholders and village residents to join brigade volunteers as they raced around putting out 13 fires before the train was stopped at Troy Siding. That was a busy day with lots of discussion at the Drovers Dog that evening.

In January 2010 one of the more devastating events occurred when the 107-year-old Eumungerie School burned down. Even though crews were quickly on the scene the original building could not be saved. A lot of members and their children had been educated at the school over the years. The community rallied, raised funds and put a lot of pressure on the government to rebuild. Thankfully they have.

### Any final thoughts or comments you would like to add?

Time brings changes and everything changes with time, and so it must. The RFS is no exception.

The days of having 44 gallon water-filled drums stacked on slip rails to be rolled onto any one's ute or truck to attend a fire along with knapsacks and hessian bags have given way to climbing on a shiny truck.

As younger members take over the reins and can just ring Fire Com when they require a new storz fitting, a hose or maybe a new truck, spare a thought, it wasn't always that easy.

It was constant raffles, BBQs and dances to raise funds to establish and keep the brigades running.

Thank you to all the dedicated Eumungerie volunteers and community members for making it all happen over the last 70 years.

Any past members or indeed anyone with a story to tell are invited to contact the Secretary John MacKenzie 6888 1021 or Captain Brian Lesslie on 6888 1013 or 0456627573.

Written by Leo deKroo, ex-President and long-time brigade member



ABOVE: The Eumungerie School fire in January 2010. Photo by Daily Liberal Dubbo

LEFT: All the pupils fitted into the truck at one of the Community Engagement sessions at the local school. Photo by Leo de Kroo



ABOVE: Some of the team with Secretary/Treasurer John MacKenzie, Senior Deputy Mandii Lesslie and Captain Brian Lesslie in front row. Photo by Leo de Kroo



# NSW RFS State Training

Month	Date	Program	Location	Contact
February	7	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Lake George	RAFSO
	10-11	Multiagency Leadership Program	Bankstown	L&D-HQ
	14-15	Community Liaison Officer	Coffs Harbour	CommEng
	28-1/3	Working with Young People (Block 1)	Region East	Vol Rel
March	6-8	Brigade Leadership (LDR - TAFE Riverina)	Cumberland	L&D-HQ
	9-13	Command Control and Communication For ICMI	Sutherland	L&D-HQ
	10- 1	Multiagency Leadership Program	Cumberland	L&D-HQ
	21-22	Down the Wire	Sydney	RAFSO
	21-22	Community Safety Facilitator	Mittagon	CommEng
	20-22	Command Control and Communication Weekend 1	Lake Macquarie	L&D-HQ
	23-25	Logistics Officer	Hornsby	L&D-HQ
	27-29	Command Control and Communication Weekend 2	Lake Macquarie	L&D-HQ
April	7-8	Multiagency Leadership Program	Queanbeyan	L&D-HQ
	10	Crew Leader Leadership 1 day Workshop	Region North	L&D-HQ
	11	Group Leader & CCO Assessment 1/2 day Workshops	Region North	L&D-HQ
	11-12	Instructor Workshop - Operate in Remote Environments	Sydney	RAFSO
	11-12	Community Safety Facilitator	Katoomba	CommEng
	13-15	Planning Officer	Cumberland	L&D-HQ
	14-15	Working with Young People (Block 2)	Region East	Vol Rel
	17-19	Operate in Remote Environments - Course	Cooma	RAFSO
	18-19	Advanced Structural Firefighting Trainee Instructor Workshop	Mogo	L&D-HQ
	20-24	Incident Management Workshop For ICMI	Sutherland	L&D-HQ
	21-23	Prescribed Burn Planner	Coffs Harbour	ComPlan
	28-29	Safety Advisor Training	Hornsby	L&D-HQ
	28-29	Working with Young People (Block 3)	Region East	Vol Rel
	30-3/5	Monitor Brigade Safety (SAF - TAFE Riverina)	Cumberland	L&D-HQ
May	2-3	VF Instructor Workshop	Tamworth	L&D-HQ
	8-10	Operate in Remote Environments - Course	Cataract	RAFSO
	12-13	Multiagency Leadership Program	Tweed Heads	L&D-HQ
	15	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Taree	Aviation
	16	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Taree	Aviation
	16	Operate in Remote Environments - Assessment	Lake George	RAFSO
	17-24	Advanced Structural Firefighting Instructor Training	South Australia	L&D-HQ
	16-17	Community Liaison Officer	Forbes	CommEng
	19-21	Prescribed Burn Planner	Batemans Bay	ComPlan
	22-24	Logistics Officer	Grafton	L&D-HQ
	23-24	Remote Area First Aid	Sydney	RAFSO
	25-29	Incident Management Workshop	Armidale	L&D-HQ
	29-31	Aviation Radio Operator	Murwillumbah	Aviation
	29-31	Air Base Operator	Murwillumbah	Aviation
	29	Crew Leader Leadership 1 day Workshop	Region East	L&D-HQ
	30	Group Leader & CCO Assessment 1/2 day Workshops	Region East	L&D-HQ
30	Operate in Remote Environments - Assessment	Sydney	RAFSO	





# 2015

# Calendar

Month	Date	Program	Location	Contact
June	2-3	Multiagency Leadership Program	Armidale	L&D-HQ
	12-14	Advanced Structural Firefighting	Lake Macquarie	L&D-HQ
	12-14	Command Control and Communication weekend 1	Armidale	L&D-HQ
	12-14	Aviation Radio Operator	Nowra	Aviation
	12-14	Air Base Operator	Nowra	Aviation
	12-14	Planning Officer	Grafton	L&D-HQ
	19-21	Advanced Structural Firefighting	Mogo	L&D-HQ
	19-21	Command Control and Communication weekend 2	Armidale	L&D-HQ
	20-21	Remote Area First Aid	Goulburn	RAFSO
	20-21	Community Safety Facilitator	Mudgee	CommEng
	20-21	BAO Instructor workshop	Murwillumbah	L&D-HQ
	26-28	Advanced Structural Firefighting	ACT ESA	L&D-HQ
	26	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Nowra	L&D-HQ
	27	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Nowra	L&D-HQ
	27-28	BAO Instructor Workshop	Westleigh	L&D-HQ
	27-28	VF Instructor Workshop	Casino	L&D-HQ
29-3/7	Fire Behaviour Analysis	RFQ HQ	CommPlan	
July	7-8	Multiagency Leadership Program	TBA	L&D-HQ
	11-12	Community Safety Facilitator	Wagga Wagga	CommEng
	11-12	Safety Advisor Training	Armidale	L&D-HQ
	13-14	Safety Advisor Training	Orange	L&D-HQ
	17-19	Advanced Structural Firefighting	Mogo	L&D-HQ
	17-19	Command Control and Communication weekend 1	Orange	L&D-HQ
	17	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Forbes	Aviation
	18	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Forbes	Aviation
	18-19	VF Instructor workshop	Dubbo	L&D-HQ
	20-22	Planning Officer	Orange	L&D-HQ
	25-26	Command Control and Communication weekend 2	Orange	L&D-HQ
	25-26	VF Instructor Workshop	Wauchope	L&D-HQ
	25-26	VF Instructor Workshop	Young	L&D-HQ
	24-26	Aviation Radio Operator	Inverell	Aviation
	24-26	Air Base Operator	Inverell	Aviation
	28-29	Plant Supervisor	Armidale	RAFSO
30-31	Plant Operations Manager	Armidale	RAFSO	
31-2/8	Logistics Officer	Orange	L&D-HQ	
August	1-2	BAO Instructor Workshop	Wagga Wagga	L&D-HQ
	1-2	Community Safety Facilitator	Maitland	CommEng
	7-9	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Full Course	Sydney	RAFSO
	7	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	The Hills	Aviation
	7	Crew Leader Leadership 1 day Workshop	Region South	L&D-HQ
	8	Group Leader & CCO Assessment 1/2 day Workshops	Region South	L&D-HQ
	8	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	The Hills	Aviation
	8-9	VF Instructor Workshop	Wagga Wagga	L&D-HQ
	10-14	Incident Management Workshop	Orange	L&D-HQ
11-12	Multi-agency Leadership Program	TBA	TBA	

# NSW RFS State Training Calendar 2015

Month	Date	Program	Location	Contact
August	11-12	Plant Supervisor	Maitland	RAFSO
	13-14	Plant Operations Manager	Maitland	L&D-HQ
	14	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Young	Aviation
	15	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Young	Aviation
	15-16	VF Instructors Workshop	Hawkesbury	L&D-HQ
	22-23	BAO Instructor Workshop	Orange	L&D-HQ
	22-23	Community Liaison Officer	Mittagong	CommEng
	25-26	Plant Supervisor	Orange	RAFSO
	27-28	Plant Operations Manager	Orange	RAFSO
	28-30	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Full Course	Sydney	RAFSO
	28-30	Advanced Structural Firefighting	Orange	L&D-HQ
	28	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Gunnedah	Aviation
	29	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Gunnedah	Aviation
	29-30	BAO Instructor Workshop	Gloucester	L&D-HQ
September	5	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Casino	RAFSO
	5	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Glenbrook	RAFSO
	6	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Tamworth	RAFSO
	6	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Glenbrook	RAFSO
	8-9	Plant Supervisor	Queanbeyan	RAFSO
	8-9	Multiagency Leadership Program	TBA	L&D-HQ
	10-11	Plant Operations Manager	Queanbeyan	RAFSO
	11-13	Advanced Structural Firefighting	ACT ESA	L&D-HQ
	11-13	Aviation Radio Operator	Bathurst	Aviation
	11-13	Air Base Operator	Bathurst	Aviation
	12	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Taree	RAFSO
	12	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Cataract	RAFSO
	12-13	VF Instructor Workshop	Yass	L&D-HQ
	13	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Hornsby	RAFSO
	13	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Cataract	RAFSO
	18	Crew Leader Leadership 1 day Workshop	Lower Hunter	L&D-HQ
	19	Group Leader & CCO Assessment 1/2 day Workshops	Lower Hunter	L&D-HQ
	19	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Mudgee	RAFSO
	19	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Glenbrook	RAFSO
	19-20	BAO Instructor workshop	Mogo	L&D-HQ
	20	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Tumut	RAFSO
	20	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Glenbrook	RAFSO
	23-25	Logistics Officer	Wagga Wagga	L&D-HQ
	25-27	Planning Officer	Wagga Wagga	L&D-HQ
25	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Goulburn/Crookwell	Aviation	
26	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Goulburn/Crookwell	Aviation	
26	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Lake George	RAFSO	
27	Helicopter Insertion Techniques - Recertification	Mogo	RAFSO	
October	9-11	Command Control & Communication Weekend 1	Queanbeyan	L&D-HQ
	10-11	Safety Advisor	Yass	L&D-HQ
	10-11	Down The Wire Technician	Sydney	RAFSO
	10	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Comma	Aviation
	11	Aviation Communication and Evaluation Workshop	Comma	Aviation
	13-14	Multiagency Leadership Program	TBA	L&D-HQ
	16-18	Command Control & Communication Weekend 2	Queanbeyan	L&D-HQ
	17	Rapid Aerial Response Team - Crew Leader	Taree	RAFSO
	18	Rapid Aerial Response Team - Dispatcher	Taree	RAFSO
	24	Rapid Aerial Response Team - Crew Leader	Camden	RAFSO
	25	Rapid Aerial Response Team - Dispatcher	Camden	RAFSO
	26-30	Incident Management Workshop	Queanbeyan	L&D-HQ
	31	Rapid Aerial Response Team - Crew Leader	Lake George	RAFSO
November	1	Rapid Aerial Response Team - Dispatcher	Lake George	RAFSO
	10-11	Multiagency Leadership Program	TBA	L&D-HQ

- Dates and details for local level training are available from your Brigade Training Officer and/or DTZ Membership Services Officer
- Nominations for state level courses can be submitted online via SAP LSO. Nominations are subject to approval at the local and regional level before they are received by L&D HQ
- Nominations close four weeks prior to the scheduled start date of the course
- Dates and locations may change subject to venue availability
- Programs may be postponed or cancelled subject to nomination numbers

NB: Command Control and Communication courses are split over two weekends at the same location. Participants are required to attend both weekends of the course.

Dates and locations may change subject to venue availability. Programs may be postponed and/or cancelled subject to nomination numbers and demand.

## Contacts

L&D-HQ - Debbie Byrnes 02 8741 5134  
 Aviation - A/Supt Sam Crothers 02 8741 5237  
 Remote Area Firefighting and Specialised Operations (RAFSO)  
 - Brett Hagan 02 8867 7916  
 Community Engagement (CommEng) - Supt Terry Jackson 02 8741 5419  
 Community Planning (CommPlan) - Andrew Jones 02 8741 4931

# Bush Fire Bulletin Survey

## About you

### Are you a:

- Volunteer
- Volunteer and staff
- Staff
- Member of the general public

### What is your primary location?

- Regional NSW - North
- Regional NSW - South
- Regional NSW - West
- Regional NSW - East
- Sydney

### For NSW RFS volunteers:

Are you a:

- Junior member
- Bush Firefighter?
- Officebearer in the Brigade?
- Group Captain?
- Community Safety Officer?
- Other:

### How often do you attend NSW RFS events, meetings or training sessions?

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Several times a year
- Once a year

## Communications from the NSW RFS

### How do you currently source news about the NSW RFS? (Please select all that apply)

- Your local brigade
- Your local Fire Control Centre
- Bush Fire Bulletin
- MyRFS
- Ebulletin
- NSW RFS Intranet
- Facebook
- The general media

### How would you prefer to receive communication about the NSW RFS?

- Email
- Website
- MyRFS
- Social media
- Post

### Would you prefer to receive more or less information from the NSW RFS?

- More
- Less
- Same

### How do you rate the quality of information from the NSW RFS?

- Excellent
- Good
- Could be improved

### Do you consider online communication more effective than printed material?

- Yes
- No

### Would you read the Bush Fire Bulletin if it were presented as an online magazine or website?

- Yes
- No

### For the Bush Fire Bulletin, what kind of information interests you?

Choose all those that apply.

- Incidents
- Operational Liftouts with 'how to' information
- Messages from the Commissioner
- Good news – successful programs
- Profiles of specific brigades and volunteers
- History
- Awards and Events
- Training information
- Community Engagement tips for volunteers
- Fire Safety messages for the general public
- Information suitable for children
- Innovations and research in firefighting
- Other – please indicate or make suggestions:

.....

.....

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# BUSH FIRE BULLETIN

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE BUSH FIRE BULLETIN DIRECT TO YOUR HOME OR UPDATE YOUR DETAILS



Cut out and mail to:

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NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE**

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

or email your details to:

Bush.Fire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Name:.....

(Please include any post-nominals)

Address:.....

Postcode:..... Phone: Home and/or mobile:.....

Email address:.....

Update

eBulletin (email required)

New Subscription

NSW RFS Member



[www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)



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