



NSW Rural Fire Service

Mid Lachlan Valley Team



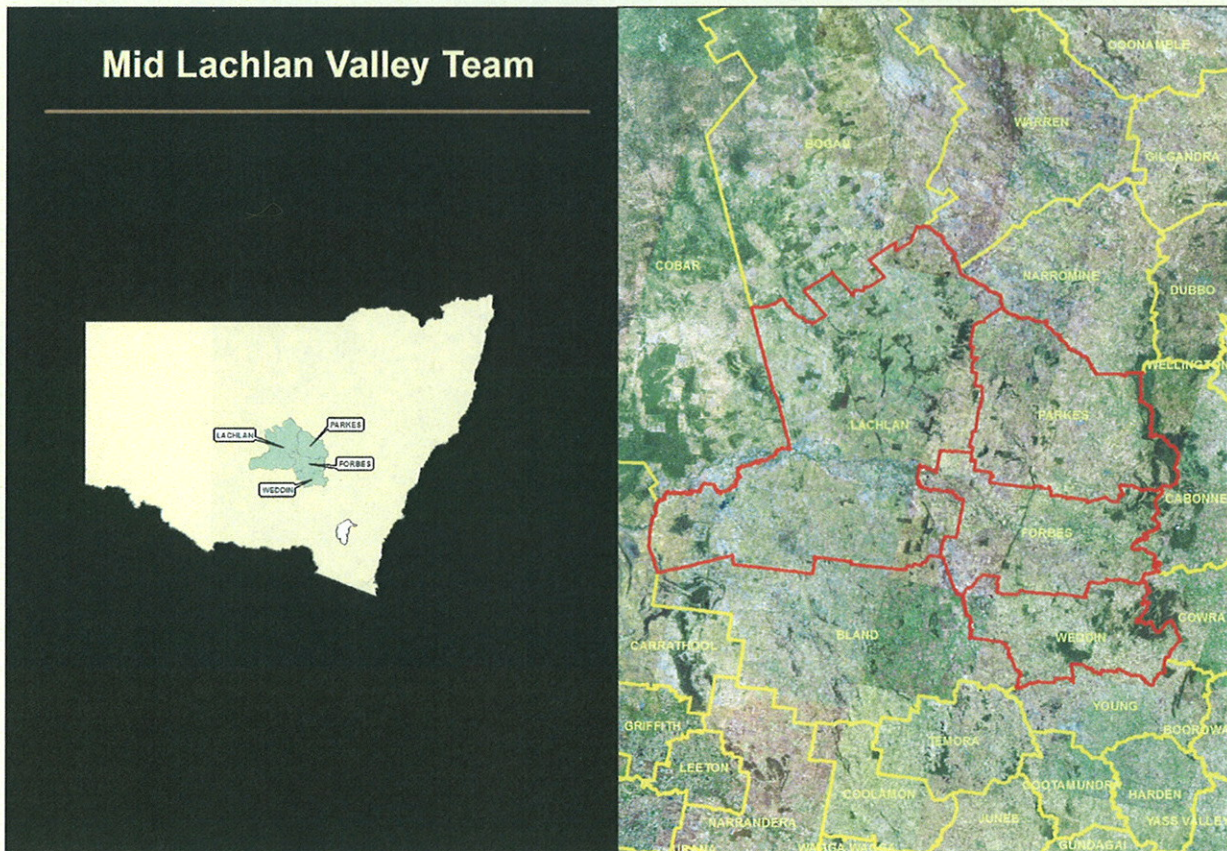
2009/2010 Annual Report

OUR VISION

A safer community.

OUR MISSION

To manage the impact of fire and other emergencies by providing the highest standards of safety, training, community awareness, prevention and operational capability.



Executive Overview

The 2009-10 year proved a busy one for the MLVT staff and volunteers. Although fire incidents were relatively below average we were all kept busy ensuring functional areas were addressed. This report gives an overview of the achievements and business for the year.

Management

Staff

Permanent staffing levels remained steady at six, incorporating The Team Manager, Administration Officer, two Operations Officers, Learning and Development Officer and a Community Safety Officer. Four of these positions are based at Forbes and one in both Grenfell and Condobolin.

The Rural Fire Service is currently undergoing some structural reform to align with the Government's capability framework and to align District staff with Head Office functional areas. There is also an opportunity to look at structures in each Team or Zone to ensure the community is properly protected and being serviced by the RFS.

All four Council's have agreed to fund two additional staff for the Mid Lachlan Valley Team however to date no overall funding has been provided to allow this to happen. This option will again be included in the 10/11 estimates process.

During the year we received support for some short term and temporary staff members.

Financial

The Mid Lachlan Valley Team received a total allocation from the Rural Fire Fighting Fund of \$4,088,995 for the 2009/2010 year.

Each Council received the following allocation:

	Allocation for Council	Total Cost including program charges	Net Cost to Council less program charges 11.7%
			Council's 11.7%
Forbes	\$1,028,522	\$1,712,284	\$140,337
Lachlan	\$1,245,261	\$2,089,400	\$169,460
Parkes	\$1,167,061	\$1,927,367	\$160,502
Weddin	\$648,151	\$1,027,663	\$88,237
Total	\$4,088,995	\$6,756,714	\$558,536

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

The actual Councils' contribution for the year was \$558,536.

Maintenance and Repair Budgets

Below is the expenditure report compared to the allocation for each Council area.

	Forbes	Lachlan	Parkes	Weddin	Total
M&R Budget 09/10	\$96,330	\$95,305	\$98,325	\$68,569	\$358,529
Actual Expenditure 09/10	\$79,525	\$99,674	\$69,539	\$67,871	\$316,609
Surplus to Budget	\$16,905	-\$4,369	\$28,786	\$698	\$42,020

Brigade Stations

The Rural Fire Service is committed to providing safe housing for fire fighting resources across the Team area. In many areas Rural Fire Stations already exist and these vary in size and facilities, however, there are many brigades without such facilities and the Team aims to progressively make available fire Stations for all of those communities.

During 2009/10 new Fire Stations were completed to house tankers for the Ootha, Garema, Gunning Gap, Vychan and Weelong Rural Fire Brigades in the Forbes Council area and also for the Eualdrie and Piney Range RFB's in the Weddin Shire. Extensions were completed at Derriwong and Albert Stations with work to commence shortly on the new Fifield Station in the Lachlan Shire. Extensions to the Alectown Station and a new storage shed at Parkes HQ Station were completed and construction should also begin on new Stations for Bogan Gate and Trundle in the Parkes Shire in early 2011.



Completed extensions at Derriwong



Ootha Station in the final stage of construction



Garema Station



Ooma North Station

Brigade Consultation

The MLVT covers approximately 30,000 sq klm with 99 Brigades and over 3,000 registered volunteers. The total population is approximately 36,000 people.

Volunteers are consulted and informed by various forums and media, these include:-

- Six Captains and brigade members meetings held annually at various locations including outlying areas
- Volunteer representation on the Bush Fire Management Committee and Service Agreement Liaison Committees
- Eight Senior Management Team Committee meetings involving Group and Deputy Group Captains, Council representatives and RFS staff
- A quarterly newsletter, "Glowing Embers", which is delivered to over 3,000 rural landholders
- A local web site, <http://mlvt.nsw.gov.au>, which is growing in popularity
- The State run MyRFS
- The attendance by staff at Brigade AGM's
- Combined Biennial Senior Management Conference
- Long Service Awards



Jed Nowlan and Joe Jones receive Long Service Awards for their efforts at Bimbi RFB



Members of Melrose Plains RFB receive Long Service Awards



Volunteer members from Weddin inspect fire trails on Weddin Mountain



Long serving members of Forbes Brigades received awards from FSC



Rex Fuge receives the National Medal from Dawn Fardell and Shane Fitzimmons

Operations

The 2009/10 fire Season again proved very challenging and busy for volunteers and staff with a number of incidents reported and responded to across the area.

The new fire danger ratings were introduced following the disastrous Victorian fires and one catastrophic day was forecast during November with a pre-emptive Section 44 declared for the MLVT area by the Commissioner.

A fire, which started on this day, was quickly controlled by Brigades with the help of water bombing aircraft.

Although total incident numbers were down on the average brigades still responded to a significant amount of motor vehicle accidents and some structural fires as well as the normal bush and grass fires.

In addition to our local incidents, Mid Lachlan Valley Team Brigades and staff also participated in Out Of Area Strike Teams assisting the following areas.

- Young/Cootamundra
- Glenn Innes
- Narrabri
- Tamworth
- Grafton

Incidents

Across our area Brigades responded to a total of 179 Incidents during the 2009/10 reporting period. The table below details the type of responses per Council area.

Council	Fires	MVA's	Others Good intent & False Alarms	Totals	Previous Year Incidents
Forbes	39	5	8	52	67
Lachlan	10	4	3	17	42
Parkes	41	16	22	79	79
Weddin	19	8	4	31	39
Totals	109	33	37	179	227

It is significant to note that the drought played a significant role in reducing the total fires however when fires did start the fire behaviour was very erratic.

Staff and crews also assisted with major incidents at Young/Cootamundra, Glenn Innes, Narrabri, Tamworth, and Grafton and contributed significantly to the fire fighting effort over the summer.

Maintenance

2009/10 saw the MLVT continue a regular maintenance program across the Fire Fighting Fleet. The entire fleet was subject to an annual roadworthy inspection and any repairs carried out plus the normal annual maintenance routine.

Annual maintenance is ongoing and will continue in subsequent years.

Tanker Upgrading

The 2009/10 year saw \$1,669,633 allocated for new fire fighting appliances, \$214,200 allocated for second hand appliances and \$80,000 for support vehicles across the MLVT. As a result the following brigades received the replacement vehicles, which were procured as either new or refurbished tankers. In addition Group Officer / Volunteer vehicles were purchased to assist with coordination activities at larger incidents as well as provision of transport for volunteers to attend training and meeting activities. During 2009/10 we also received tankers allocated from the 2008/09 financial year which had been delayed due to contractual arrangements. The table below includes all of the tankers received during 2009/10.



COUNCIL	BRIGADE	TANKER
Forbes	Lake	Cat 1 New
	Weelong	Cat 1 New
	Ootha	Cat 1 New
	Warroo	Cat 1 New
Lachlan	Borambil	Cat 1 New
	Brewer/Bootawa	Cat 1 New
	Manna Mount	Cat 1 New
	Top Woodlands	Cat 1 New
	Yelkin	Cat 1 New
Parkes	South Gipps	Cat 1 Second Hand
	Alectown	Cat 1 New
	Parkes HQ	Cat 1 New
	Sandy Creek	Cat 1 New
	The Troffs	Cat 1 New
Weddin	Backwater	Cat 1 Second Hand
	Brundah	Cat 1 New
	Piney Range	Cat 1 New
Group Vehicles	Parkes 16 B	Ford Ranger New
	Parkes 16 C	Ford Ranger New
	Forbes 16 B	Ford Ranger New
	Lachlan 16 B	Toyota Hilux S/H
	Weddin 16	Toyota Hilux S/H

All Brigade frontline tankers are diesel powered and the new design tankers offer the latest in crew protection equipment.



Volunteer members extinguish a header fire in Parkes



Warroo members inspecting their new Cat 1 Tanker



Clr John Magill hands over the keys to the new Alectown Cat 1 Tanker

Aviation

There are two contracted fixed wing bombing aircraft based at Orange and Cowra. These aircraft, whilst available by State Operations to be tasked to any location across the State, are well placed to provide fast initial attack to fires reported across the area. On days of extreme or above fire danger they are relocated to locations away from their normal base. On several occasions they have been deployed to airports in our area.

The contract providers have additional "Call When Needed" aircraft stationed at the above locations, which have the same capability and componentry as the contract aircraft available to us as required that add to our strike power when requiring additional aviation resources.



Air Support Infrastructure

There have been a number of strategically located airstrips identified across the MLVT area that will enhance the aerial fire fighting effort into the future. Large water tanks have also been installed at Forbes, Parkes, Condobolin, Lake Cargellico and Tottenham airports.

A Fast Fill Trailer unit with foam mixing capability has been positioned at Forbes by State Operations for use within the area and surrounding local government localities.

Community Safety

Hazard Reduction

The hazard reduction component of Rural Fire Service activities is now undertaken expressly by the MLVT on behalf of the Councils and entails the following areas:-

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

Since 1 July 2009 and up to 30 June 2010 the Community Safety Staff of the MLVT carried out the following works.

	Forbes	Lachlan	Parkes	Weddin
Development Applications 79BA / 100B	0	0	0	0
Permits Section 87 & 88	7	22	4	7
Hazard Reduction Complaints	1	0	31	0

The drought reduced the amount of permits required for agricultural burns and the number of hazard complaints received.

Burning Activities

During the period the NPWS have undertaken several hazard reduction burns in areas of high risk identified through Bush Fire Risk Management Plan. These burns have been supported by volunteers within the MLVT.



A second hand bus purchased for the MLVT from a grant received from the Rural Fire Service Association

Learning and Development

Another successful year of training has been conducted within the Team and externally by staff and volunteers. Members of staff and volunteers completed the required components of Incident Management areas that they fill during major campaign fires.

Chainsaw courses were conducted by the Region within the MLVT area.

We had 2 people attend the course that allows them to fell trees on the fire line. This is called a problem tree felling course.

An exercise type scenario was held at Tullibigeal this year with another planned for the Parkes area although this had to be postponed due to the ongoing wet weather. This type of "training" is proving very popular and members are learning new skills in a hand's on environment. More of these exercises are planned for future years.

The following training has been attended by the Team's volunteers or staff:

- Aviation Operations
- Bush Firefighter grasslands x 2 courses
- Vehicle Structure Grasslands
- Bush Firefighter X 3 courses
- Village Firefighter
- Advanced Firefighter
- Crew Leader Grasslands
- First Aid Assistance X 4 courses
- Local exercise
- Business Management
- Parkes High School Cadets Program
- Incident Management Workshop
- Incident Management Exercise
- MVA information afternoon
- Combined Agency Exercises (NSWFB, NSW Police) X 2 courses
- Bush Fire Awareness
- Chainsaw Operations
- Brigade familiarisation afternoon x 4
- Tanker handover training
- Group Leader Grasslands
- Condobolin High Cadets Program



Weddin Exercise Smoke House



Tullibigeal Exercise Car fire



Condobolin High School Cadets

BF Training & Assessment

The Team is working towards meeting Service Standard 6.1.2 which provides details on the required qualifications for all levels of the organisation, volunteer or staff.

We are using the local exercises to assess the participants that don't have formal qualifications to the level of Bush Firefighter Grasslands

All training carried out in the Mid Lachlan Valley Team area is conducted by accredited trainers and assessors

A committee comprising staff and volunteers has been formed to oversee all aspects of training within the MLVT and they have met on two occasions over the past 12 months and will continue to do so. They discuss the training needs for the next 12 months and set dates and advise when they are available to assist with the assessment and delivery of the training. We also validate the training that has been conducted by looking at the personnel that have undergone training and their performance on the fire ground, also seeing that the training meets our needs. We also try to deliver the training in the appropriate time of year where we can maximise the participation of the trainees.

Some of the planned courses for the year were cancelled because of wet weather and some were cancelled because of lack of nominations. We have learnt to be flexible and move some of the scheduled courses for the participants and trainers.



Advanced Firefighter Training

Conclusion

2009/2010 was again a challenge for the Mid Lachlan Valley Team and significant achievements were made during the period.

Council's support of the Rural Fire Service and its members is vitally important to our continual improvement and we look forward to continuing our good relationship to ensure we provide quality service to our communities.