

BUSH FIREbulletin

THE JOURNAL OF THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

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FOREWORD



If there's one thing that's a constant in the NSW RFS, it's change. Just as we've evolved over the past 100 years or so, the Service continues to develop and adapt to the times.

One of the most enduring changes in recent decades has been the growing role of women in the Service. Whereas only a few decades ago it may have been somewhat uncommon to see women on the frontline, the NSW RFS now has one of the highest rates of female participation in the emergency service sector, with close to a quarter of our membership being women. While there is still more to do, this is a major achievement which was recently celebrated in a new publication, *Making a Difference: Women in the NSW Rural Fire Service*.

From the Service's beginnings more than a hundred years ago, our role has also evolved, with a strong focus on protecting the community before the big events by working together to improve the level of protection.

Take for instance our adaptation of the Community Fire Unit program, which is seeing 120 units rolled out to communities across the State. This is another way we can engage with our communities and assist them in understanding and preparing for the threat of fire. Another example of this is our continued focus and investment in hazard reduction and in this edition of the *Bulletin*, you will see some of the great work achieved in this area by our members.

The evolution of the NSW RFS continues with the development of new technology. The Service is in a period of significant change with the establishment of the Computer Aided Dispatch System which will transform the way our brigades are dispatched to incidents. Also, a major upgrade of radio and paging networks is underway.

Just as our communication systems are changing, so too is the way we're communicating with our people and the broader community. We're making a more concerted effort to move into the online world, including the use of social media and online technologies, like Facebook and Twitter. I am even having a crack at it, with my own Facebook page at www.facebook.com/rfscommissioner, sharing some of my experiences as I travel around the State and meet members.

New technology also means a new opportunity for developing the skills of our members and Learning and Development have embraced online technology with the launch of e-learning programs such as online safety inductions for new members, allowing people to complete this training at their own pace at any time of the day. This is a significant step forward in making NSW RFS training more flexible and accessible to all members.

We're also establishing more opportunities for members to engage, with the development of new online forums in the coming months.

Finally, just as there is change in the NSW RFS, there's also been a change in government in NSW. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Honourable Michael Gallacher MLC to the portfolio of Police and Emergency Services. The Minister is no stranger to the Service and bush fires and has made it known quite clearly that he is a strong supporter of the NSW RFS and its members.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the *Bush Fire Bulletin*.

Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM
NSW RFS Commissioner



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



This year the Leukaemia Foundation's fund-raiser, the World's Greatest Shave attracted more support from the NSW RFS than ever.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons joined the Shave with the NSW RFS Lakes Team and together they raised nearly \$20,000 for the Leukaemia Foundation.

Just before he took the plunge the Commissioner wrote to all staff to encourage them to be involved citing the case of at least two NSW RFS members who are currently battling the disease.

"My thoughts turn to some of our team members that are fighting their own battle with a serious, life threatening or terminal medical diagnosis," he wrote.

Amy Blackwood, the Youth Development Officer, was last year diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia.

"It's fair to say," wrote the Commissioner, "she's having a tough time with treatment right now but her mum could not be more praiseworthy of the assistance being provided by the Leukaemia Foundation. With Amy's sick leave running out, they have provided expertise in managing financial arrangements."

More recently Superintendent Michael Brooks from the Namoi/ Gwydir team has been diagnosed with Multiple

Myeloma. Prognosis for Mick confirms a tough road ahead.

"Mick said he was 'blown away' with the support that is available from the Leukaemia Foundation from assistance with travel from the airport to hospital, through to subsidised accommodation for him and his family in Sydney while he is receiving treatment."

Thinking of these members, the Commissioner decided to join the Shave himself.

"My wife, Lisa, thinks I should be preserving what I have left!" the Commissioner joked, "but it's a most worthwhile cause!"

Riverina Zone Manager, Joe Knox, also took part in the World's Greatest Shave and he successfully raised around \$7,000.

Joe's goal started at \$200 but changed four times as donations came flooding in. Finally after much encouragement, Joe put out the challenge that if \$5,000 was raised he would shave off his 39-year-old moustache as well.

Joe had thought his beloved mo would be safe, however, the day before Shave Day the \$5,000 mark was breached.

A barbeque lunch was held to raise further funds with approximately 60 volunteers, media and community members turning up to see Joe's Mo Go.

The main inspiration for Joe's generosity was to support a local brigade member's son who, at four years of age is fighting cancer in a Melbourne Hospital.

Joe Knox retired from his position in April and considered this was a great way to give back to the community who has supported him over a long and successful career.

TOP: Thirty-nine years in the making – Joe Knox's Mo has to Go!
Photo courtesy of Wagga Daily Advertiser.
INSET: Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons taking the plunge.
Photo by Caroline Rembridge, Media Services



NEW MINISTER

Welcome to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon Michael Gallacher MLC.

Minister Gallacher has hit the ground running since his appointment as the new Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

He addressed over 150 managers and senior volunteers at the inaugural NSW Rural Fire Service Leadership Forum in Bathurst at the end of April.

The Minister expressed his respect and support for the NSW RFS, all of its members and the role they play in protecting communities throughout NSW.

He explained that as a young police officer on the Central Coast of NSW he witnessed first hand the devastation of the bush fire emergency over the Christmas and New Year period in 1993/94.

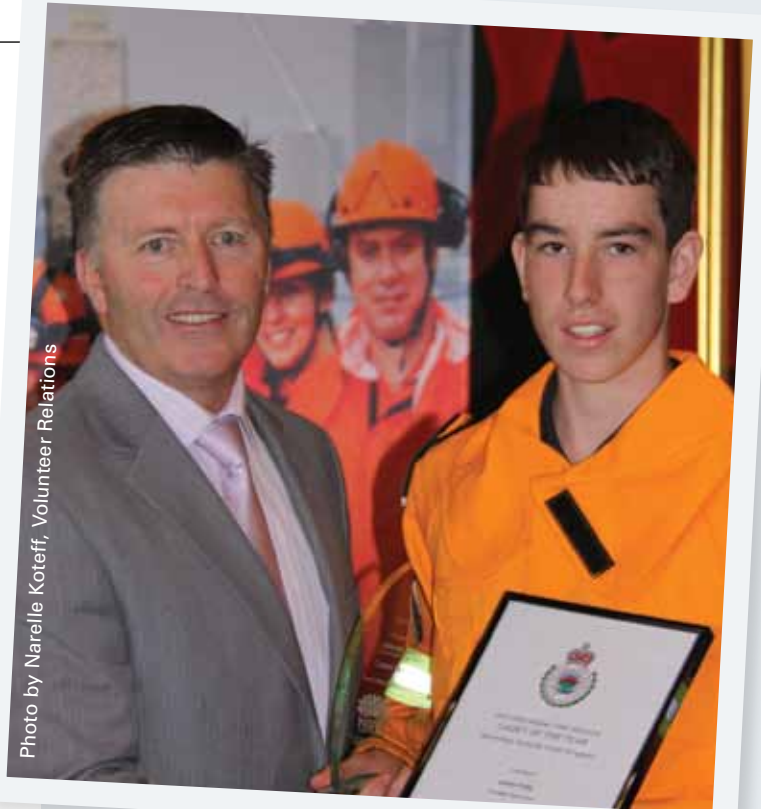
"I was so impressed by the bravery shown by volunteer rural firefighters," he said.

The Minister is also a regular volunteer with his local Surf Life Saving Club and has a genuine appreciation and respect for volunteering and volunteers.

Minister Gallacher takes a direct and proactive approach to his work saying: "What you see is what you get."

"I plan to drop in unexpectedly to brigades and fire control centres across NSW but there is no need for morning teas," he said. "I want to meet people doing what they do every day and hear about their concerns."

Photo by Narelle Kotereff, Volunteer Relations



GUNDAGAI STUDENT WINS CADET OF THE YEAR

Gundagai High School student James Petty is the 2011 NSW RFS Cadet of the Year.

The announcement was made by the new Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon Michael Gallacher in a special ceremony at NSW Parliament House in May 2011.

"It is my pleasure to announce that the 2011 NSW RFS Cadet of the Year is James Petty from Gundagai High School."

After presenting the award to James, the Minister escorted him to the floor of Parliament where it was announced formally to the other Members of Parliament.

James' parents Lynda and Ian were also present at the ceremony along with his siblings.

James Petty completed the Secondary Schools Cadet Program at Gundagai High, as a Year 8 student with an exceptional degree of energy and commitment.

James has also been involved in assisting the SES with flood notices and sandbagging during the recent floods in Gundagai and as well as fund raising for a local cancer assistance network.

The NSW RFS Cadet Program started at Gundagai High in 2010 largely thanks to the tireless work of Tumblong Captain Brian Lewin. So far over 50 students from Gundagai High have participated in the program.

The NSW RFS Cadet of the Year award is open to students who have completed the Secondary School Cadet Program. The presentation to James Petty was part of National Volunteers Week.



Photo by Jacqueline Murphy, Organisational Communications

NATIONAL FIRE CADET CHAMPIONSHIPS ARE BACK



Photo by Ben Shepherd, Media Services

The successful and hugely popular Australian National Fire Cadet Championships are coming back to NSW for the third time, to be co-hosted by the NSW Rural Fire Service and the Rural Fire Service Association.



Junior firefighters from around Australia will participate in two days of friendly competition showcasing their skills and teamwork - and having a lot of fun in the process. This year the Cadet Championships will be held at a new venue, Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation Camp on the shores of Lake Macquarie. The event will run from 4-7 October 2011, coinciding with the second week of the NSW school holidays.

The last Championships were held in Penrith in 2009 and saw enthusiastic young fire cadets from Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia join their NSW counterparts in learning new skills and making new friends. All the cadets were fantastic ambassadors for their States. The many NSW RFS members who helped organise the event (especially hosts from the Cumberland Zone) put in a lot of time and effort to make it the experience of a lifetime for the young competitors.

Nadine Blyth, a CFA Junior leader who accompanied the Victorian teams said: "It was wonderful to see about 300 cadets from around Australia proudly representing their States in friendly competition. At the presentation dinner, we cheered our new-found friends and each received a medal for participation."

The 2011 Australian National Fire Cadet Championships will build on the achievements of previous years, once again utilising the experience and support of staff and volunteers from across the NSW RFS.

The Lakes Team have generously agreed to be the host District, and Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons has pledged his personal support by urging all NSW RFS members to get behind the event.

Get involved - have fun

Young members of Australian fire services aged 12-16 are invited to compete at the 3rd

Australian National Fire Cadet Championships, co-hosted by the NSW Rural Fire Service and the Rural Fire Service Association.

All teams will compete in eight competition events and will also participate in training, team-building and leadership activities.

Myuna Bay is a 90-minute drive north of Sydney, on the shores of Lake Macquarie. www.dsr.nsw.gov.au/myunabay

How to enter

The Championships are open to teams of six cadets, with two adult leaders per team. Team nominations are coordinated by the relevant State fire service. To enter your team contact the cadet coordinator in your area or visit www.fire-cadets.org.au for more information.



New chair for the State Emergency Management Committee



Phil Koperberg speaking at the International Wildfire Conference in 2009

The former NSW RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg AO AFSM BEM has been appointed as the new Chair of the State Emergency Management Committee.

Premier Barry O'Farrell told the NSW Parliament in May that Mr Koperberg was a standout candidate, and would ensure NSW received the best advice in preparing for and responding to emergency situations across the State.

"We have seen this year - through the floods in Queensland and the earthquakes in Christchurch and Japan - the importance of having the best possible strategic advice on dealing with natural disasters," Mr O'Farrell said.

"When it comes to providing advice on the best way to deal with natural disasters and emergencies there is no better-credentialed candidate than Mr Koperberg."

The State Emergency Management Committee is responsible for advising government on the State's emergency response strategies and ensures that NSW has a robust system to cope with emergencies and hazards.

Mr Koperberg joined the NSW RFS in 1967 as a volunteer and progressed through the ranks to become the Service's first Commissioner in 1997. In his long career in the Service he had been the Director-General of the Department of Bush Fire Services and the Commissioner of Bush Fire Services.

COMMUNICATIONS' BACKBONE GETS ADJUSTMENT

NSW RFS Group Manager Mobile Assets and Infrastructure, Chief Superintendent Bruce McDonald recently announced two exciting projects to upgrade the paging and radio networks.

The reliability of communication systems, such as paging and radio networks, is critical for the effective operational activities of NSW RFS volunteers and staff. The systems cover 95 percent of geographic NSW and are used to minimise the impact of bush fires and emergency incidents on people, the environment and the economy.

"It is essential for the NSW RFS to upgrade these networks as they approach the end of their practical life," he said, "So we are launching the

Statewide Emergency Paging Network Upgrade and the Radio Networks Upgrade."

The projects are collectively referred to as the Communications Systems Upgrade Program and they will run for just over three financial years from 2010/11 to 2013/14 with infrastructure replaced progressively.

"Paging systems will be upgraded to replace 'single broadcast technology' with the latest simulcast technology and operating systems will be standardised across NSW.

"Radio systems will move to a newer digital P25 technology, providing added capabilities and resilience and enabling us to adapt the system to the changing and developing needs of the organisation," he said.



Radio technology assessments to determine the most appropriate product for a Statewide solution will be completed by June 2011 and then a detailed implementation program will be developed.

"It is important to point out that the Program is about upgrading the backbone communications infrastructure, not the

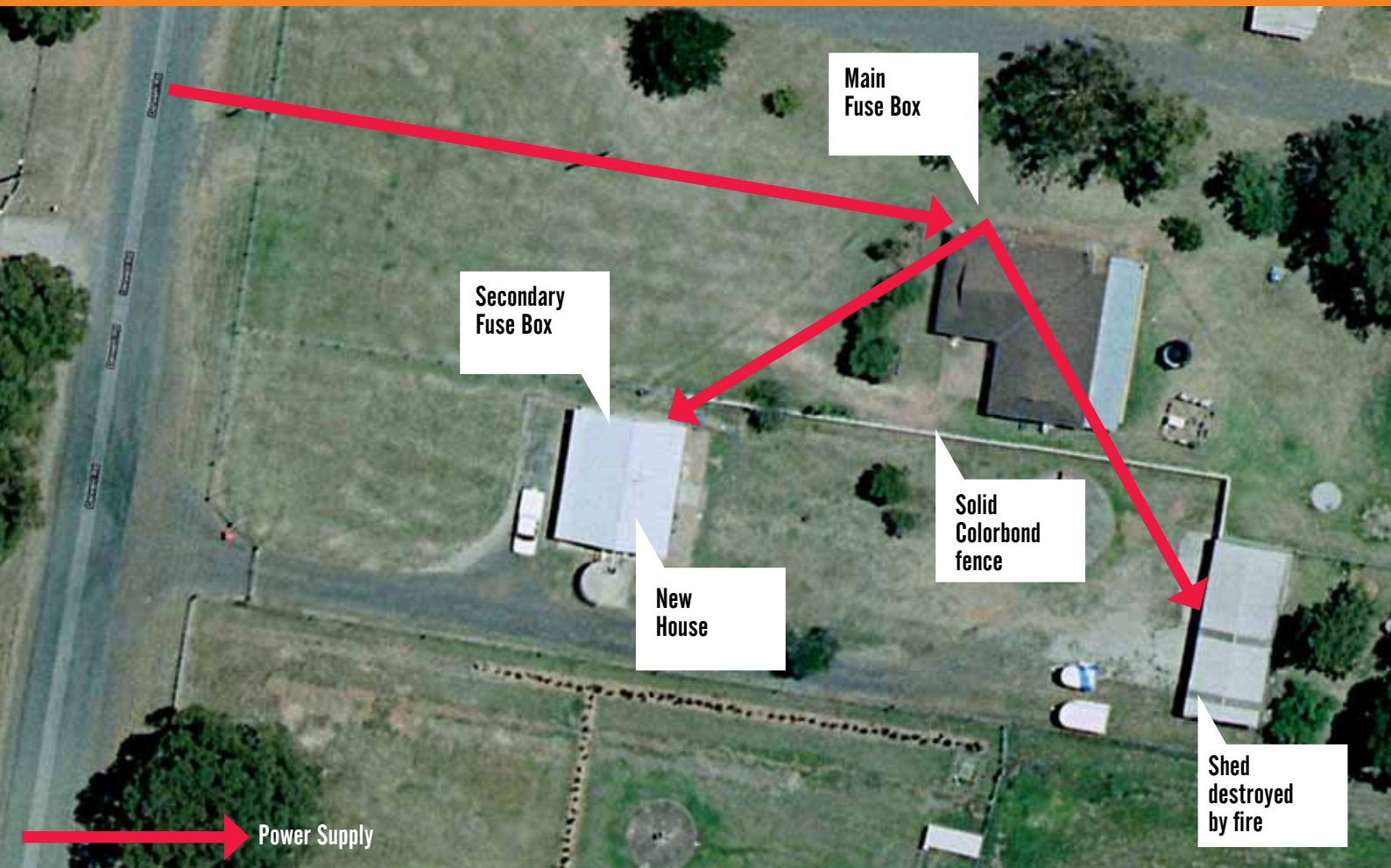
radio handsets or pagers themselves, and planned maintenance will continue as normal," Chief Superintendent McDonald said.

More information and schedules will be provided as the upgrades progress. To request additional information please email comms.upgrade@rfs.nsw.gov.au

ASSUME THE POWER IS ON: EVEN IF YOU HAVE TURNED IT OFF

A cautionary tale

By Andrew Macdonald, Deputy Group Captain,
Macarthur Zone



At approximately 0930hrs on 18 May 2010 the NSW RFS received a call to a structure alight at Bringelly, south west of Sydney. A number of NSW RFS brigades were responded and together with the assistance of FRNSW the fire was extinguished. The shed and its contents were substantially damaged.

No one was at home during the initial stages of the incident, however, it was obvious that the shed had power supplied to it due to what appeared to be melted electrical fittings on the walls and melted light fittings on the underside of the shed roof.

As there was no fuse box attached to the shed, the Officer In Charge correctly decided to turn off all power to the house located on the same block as the shed. (Refer to in the attached diagram as New House and Secondary Fuse Box).

There was a solid 1.8m high fence running between the property affected by fire and the neighbouring property. The two blocks of land did not appear to be related to each

other and both had separate entrances and mailboxes.

After the fire was extinguished, the next door neighbour turned up and informed us that he owned both blocks of land. He said that the power supply for the shed which had caught fire came from his house through a direct underground supply. In fact his house had two separate underground supplies – one to the new house and one to the shed.

The fuse box at the New House which the Officer In Charge so diligently turned off, did *not* control or supply power to the shed affected by fire. While we all thought that we had isolated the power to the shed, it turned out that we hadn't! Luckily, no one was injured.

a purrfect RESCUE

By Leigh Pilkington, Captain, Avoca Beach Brigade

For me it is one more validation as to exactly why I am a firefighter and why I dedicate my time to the Avoca Beach Brigade and to the NSW RFS.

It was a cold night on 3 April 2011 when a call came through to assist NSW Police 'with a ladder' at an address in Avoca Beach.

Without any further details to go on, Avoca 1, Copacabana Pumper and Group 8 were all dispatched to the incident. Avoca 1 arrived on scene and soon found out that our assistance was required to rescue a cat that was stuck ten metres up a large eucalyptus. There were some very worried owners waiting below as the cat had been up there for 36 hours. After seeing just how high up the cat was, I requested that Copacabana Pumper continue proceeding to the scene - their long ladder was definitely needed on this one!

After crews worked quickly in the dark to erect and safely foot the ladder, Chris Douglas and Christian Yanni, from Copacabana Brigade, worked together to secure the ladder to the tree in a number of places. The two then worked as a team, Chris on the high side working to remove the cat and Christian, a rung below him, providing support and safety. The cat was frightened and exhausted and made some rigorous noise but put up little resistance when Chris picked him up and started

the slow descent down the ladder with the support of Christian. It was a great display of teamwork and safety with Christian bringing Chris down to the bottom supporting his weight under his armpits to allow the cat to be held all the way down.

With the cat safely back on the ground and in the care of its relieved owners, we all returned to our stations.

The following day, an email from Porridge, the cat, arrived in Avoca's inbox:

Thank you for saving me last night. I am very tired and my legs are a bit sore but I am so happy to be back with my brother and family (minus the dog).

You have given my family lots to talk about at school as it seems many friends heard or saw you passing by their houses. Great fun for them, but lifesaving for me.

Purr purr purr

Lots of love

Porridge (sister of Pawl and baby of Annabelle) xoxoxo

These are the sorts of praise that come few and far between to volunteers, but when they do, they truly remind you of why you became a firefighter. Avoca and Copacabana brigades now know they have another fan amongst their community – and Porridge's human family are no doubt thankful as well.



ABOVE: This is me with my brother. I am the one with a pink nose. :) x thanku.

TOP: Chris Douglas (above) and Christian Yanni 10 metres up to rescue Porridge. Photo by Leigh Pilkington



NINE BURNS IN FOUR DAYS — WARIALDA GETS TREATED

Inspector Brett Loughlin,
Community Safety Officer,
Namoi Gwydir Team

In early February 2011 firefighters from the Namoi Gwydir Team undertook an intensive four-day hazard reduction program around the township of Warialda.



The town of Warialda is rated as Extreme in the Gwydir Bush Fire Risk Management Plan as it is surrounded by dry sclerophyll forest and has a large amount of urban interface. The soil around Warialda is also very sandy, which means that moisture dries off much more quickly than in other parts of the Gwydir Shire. To manage the risk of bush fire the NSW Rural Fire Service developed a Village Protection Strategy which has been implemented without fail for many years. The wetter than average conditions over the past few years, however, has meant that several planned hazard reductions had not been conducted.

Therefore, to catch up and then get ahead of the program, the four-day hazard reduction campaign was launched.

In the month leading up to the burns, staff from the Namoi/ Gwydir Team finalised existing burn plans, and wrote several new ones, to have a total of 14 low intensity hazard reductions planned and ready to go.

Many of these burns would not have been possible without the tireless work of the State Mitigation Support Service (SMSS) who established control lines, fire trails, and asset protection zones. This allowed firefighters to show up to each burn and start lighting up without the need to spend any time on preparation.

The weeks leading up to the burns were also spent organising volunteers and vehicles to ensure that enough people-power and equipment would be present to achieve the goals of each burn. The volunteers of the Namoi/ Gwydir Team were, as always, amazing. We had large numbers of volunteers present on each of the four days. Personnel numbers were further supplemented with SMSS crews, who crewed vehicles alongside local volunteers to help make up the numbers. There was an average of 43 firefighters on the fireground each day and six Cat 1s, one bulk water carrier, two Cat 9s, and two Support Vehicles each and every day.

A fortnight before the burns, the long range weather forecast was perfect for hazard reduction burning: it was going to be a week of warm days, high humidity and rainfall predicted for the weekend. And the forecast did not disappoint. Temperatures were 38-40 degrees each day, and the relative humidity never dropped below 30 percent. So while other parts of the State suffered through TOBANs (Total Fire Bans), the Namoi/ Gwydir Team was busy conducting hazard reductions!

Day One

Day One saw the resources split into two strike teams, with each strike team conducting a separate burn on opposite sides of the town. Both burns were 15ha in size and both were textbook low intensity burns. Assets protected by these two burns included the local swimming pool, motel and more than 20 homes.

Both strike teams met back at the Warialda Fire Control Centre for lunch before going

their separate ways again to conduct another two burns. Despite the high afternoon temperature, and one patch in particular of excessive fire behaviour, these two burns were also completed and all crews stood down by 1830hrs. Although it had been a long and hot day, and there had been a minor injury, four burns had been completed without any major problems.

Day Two

Day Two started with a briefing at 0830hrs, and all the resources were brought together to spend the day working on the 42ha Archery Club hazard reduction burn. This burn, on the north west side of the town had not been burnt for 10 years and some patches had very high fuel loading.

As the briefing was being conducted, two personnel from SMSS went ahead and to ensure the containment line was ready. Crews arrived shortly thereafter and were split into their sectors and began lighting the fire.

During the morning Prime News stopped in for a couple of hours, and turned several of our firefighters into TV celebrities on the 6pm News. While the news crew were in attendance everything was going perfectly, however, after they left, some variable winds arrived. There was some 'excitement' with a spot over into an area to be burnt that afternoon. The spot over was fought head on and after 15 minutes of hard work and intense activity the spot over was extinguished and crews were able to pause to have lunch. Prime News was very

disappointed that they missed all the excitement!

During efforts to extinguish the spot over, the danger of burning embers was highlighted. A Cat 1 very briefly caught fire due to embers landing in the crew area and igniting a short length of 65mm canvas hose. The crew of the truck, who were having a well-earned drink at the time, turned around to find smoke coming from the crew area. The fire was quickly extinguished without any damage to the vehicle - the 65mm hose, however, was a write-off.

After lunch the remaining area of the Archery Club was burnt without issue, despite a section of tricky slope and high grass fuels. By 1730hrs all crews were stood down, and the 32ha burn had been conducted in accordance with the average prescription set by the burn plan.

Day Three

After a 0830hrs start, all crews spent the day working on the 36ha West Street burn. The burn area, on the western side of the town, is near the local tip which has been subjected to repeated arson fires. The burn area also borders several residential streets so it was a really good burn to get done. This burn in particular couldn't have happened without the hard work of the SMSS crews, who cut over a kilometre of containment line through very thick scrub. The containment line was so good that it was able to be navigated by 2WD without difficulty.

The crew from the mighty Stonefield Brigade had a bumpy start to the day,

experiencing some early 'traction' issues – which were quickly resolved before the crew went straight back to work! Crews worked so well on this burn, despite the 39 degree temperature, that it was all finished by 1430hrs. All the personnel were so dedicated that as soon as that fire was finished, a majority of the units were sent to the West Warialda Parking Area to conduct another burn.

With two units remaining behind to patrol and mop up, everyone else arrived at the parking area to commence the 18ha grassland burn. When the Strike Team arrived we discovered the most dedicated parking area campers ever. They were set up on the edge of the parking area, so when we explained our desire to conduct the burn they simply packed up, moved the 4WD and caravan into the middle of the parking area and watched the firefighters at work! As soon as the area they had been in was extinguished they moved right back and were set up enjoying a cold drink without a single complaint.

Traffic control was conducted on the Gwydir Highway and the burn was finished and mopped up by 1830hrs. For most crews that was the end of the day, however, several personnel from SMSS, and a tanker of local volunteers went back to the West Street burn and dealt with a large tree near a road. These dedicated personnel finally made it home by 1930hrs.

Day Four

The last day arrived, and the Strike Team made their way

to an area 20kms outside Warialda which had been part of the Roadside Vegetation Management Trial. Eight hectares was burnt, with crews working hard conducting the burn and managing the traffic. All personnel arrived back in Warialda at 1215hrs, and then after filling up with water met at Stephen Street to conduct the last burn of the day. The 1ha burn was on Crown Land that backed onto eight homes and three businesses.

Crews worked until 1500hrs before all personnel were sent to the Warialda Swimming Pool for a debriefing and rehydrating session! The Pool Manager could not believe his eyes as 40 firefighters wandered through the front gates. A BBQ lunch was underway and everyone enjoyed a very well-earned rest! A final 'debrief' was held at the pool so everyone could cool down before returning home.

Success all round

In the end nine burns were completed and an area of more than 150ha was treated. No serious injuries were reported, and despite all vehicles suffering some degree of damage (none too serious) the week was a huge success. The support of the Warialda community was overwhelming. Many people expressed their thanks to the firefighters who worked so hard to minimise the risk to the community. A huge thanks is owed to the personnel listed below who all made the Warialda Hazard Reduction Campaign possible.

THANKS TO:

Allan Minty, Alina Roper, Andrew Farrar, Bill Farrar, Brant Murphy, Chris Blessington, Chris Farrar, Chris Firkins, Colin Biddle, Corey Philip, Damian Kelly, Damien Lees, Darryal Luxford, Dave Martin, Digit Farrell, Grahame Hicks, Greg Turner, Ian Sireet, Jillian Guest, John Bateman, John Farrar, John Riley, Karen Hedges, Kim Wells, Kode Lea'uaanae, Leanne Blessington, Lynn Baker, Marcus Mantscheff, Norm Minty, Rob Evans, Rob Gallagher, Robin Trindall, Rodney Sweedman, Rory Firkins, Scott Mack, Scott McPherson, Sharon Holloway, Simon Waller, Stuart Dick, Tim Baxter, Tony Roden, Ty Saunders and Will Allport.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Two personnel from SMSS went ahead and to ensure the containment line was ready before crews arrived to begin lighting the fire. Photo by Graham Hicks

RIGHT: The town of Warialda is surrounded by dry sclerophyll forest and has a large amount of urban interface. A four-day hazard reduction campaign was held in February 2011 to reduce hazard around the town. Photo by Graham Hicks



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



FIREFIGHTERS' POCKET BOOK December 2010

THE FIREFIGHTERS' POCKET BOOK HAS BEEN COMPLETELY UPDATED

A new fourth edition of the Firefighters' Pocket Book is now available.

By Chief Superintendent, Alan Brinkworth AFSM,
Manager State Operations

A major review of the third edition of the Firefighters' Pocket Book, June 2008 was made subsequent to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and the implementation of various operational recommendations, together with feedback, constructive comments and the passage of time.

The new edition incorporates a few significant changes, some minor changes and also introduces a few new topics. A further 60,000 Firefighters' Pocket Information Books and 10,000 complete Firefighters' Pocket Books have been printed.

Volunteer members who have been issued with either the 2004, 2005 or the 2008 pocket book will shortly receive a new Firefighters' Pocket Book information book only to replace the existing information book. New members will receive a completely new Firefighters' Pocket Book including the notebook, grid roamer and plastic cover.

History

In the late 1980s Paul Macmichael, Regional Officer, Highlands Region, assembled a loose leaf field book which contained some basic information sheets, various

check lists, a note book and a grid roamer, all in a red plastic folder. A small number of these were distributed around the State. So this was really our first pocket book. Later in 1995 a Section 41f Incident Controller's Checklist Pocket Book was produced and then in 2000, Phil Robeson published and distributed the Pocket Tactics, Pocket Comms and Pocket Procedures.

The Firefighters' Pocket Book

In 2001, I recognised the need for a Firefighters' Pocket Book and incorporated this into the State Operations business plan. The proposal was also supported by the Rural Fire Service Association and so the long and involved project commenced. I had not, at the time, realised the enormous magnitude of the task I was about to undertake!

The first step was to establish a list of contents which was created in consultation with various sections at Headquarters, Regional and District staff, the State Operations Committee, various Group Officers and a selection of other volunteers.

A considerable amount of research and consultation with other agencies and organisations ensued in

compiling the required information and, of course, it was also necessary to ensure that service standards, policies, procedures and training material were consistent with the detailed information.

A graphic artist gradually created the pages and with the expert assistance of our then Media Officer, Rebel Talbert, the layout, colours and presentation were established to achieve a visually attractive and user-friendly product.

The Pocket Book, all in a plastic cover, was created in two parts:

- 1) an information section with waterproof pages and
- 2) a replaceable notebook together with a grid roamer.

While some of the information contained is in summary form and is a rough 'rule of thumb', it is sufficient to make operational decisions. In the field there are a number of important things all firefighters need to know; from basic safety to vehicle and officer recognition. This information book was designed to provide a fast, easy reference guide to these and other important facts you will need at your fingertips.

The replaceable notebook section has been produced using ordinary paper to keep

the cost down so that when it has been filled up it can easily be replaced. You may use the pages in the notebook in any way you wish, but they have been set out with a grid for ease of writing or drawing maps and have a series of four pages which can be used for each incident, plus there are three sets of primary and secondary assessment casualty forms at the back.

The grid roamer is a replica of the old Bush Fire Council grid roamer with 360 degree compass, corner divisions to suit 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 scale maps and a 90cm scale along one side.

The plastic cover was one of the hardest things to get right and many samples were produced to find the best material and the best weld, that would not only be strong enough but that would leave no sharp edges.

There was a four month testing period for the Pocket Book taking place in the field with particular emphasis on the plastic pages chosen for the reference guide. These were tested against diesel, drip torch fuel, foam, oil, dirt and many other abrasive substances found on the fireground. In the end the only thing that affected the printing was sunscreen!

First Edition

The first 5,000 copies of the Firefighters' Pocket Book, Version 1.0, December 2004 were finally printed and were distributed in May of that year, at no cost, to all Group Officers and Captains of Brigades through their Fire Control Centres.

The Pocket Books were also distributed to Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Forests NSW, members of the State Emergency Management Committee, ACT Fire Service and Norfolk Island Fire Service. Some pages were utilised by the NSW State Emergency Service and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the graphics were also sent to Country Fire Authority, Victoria (CFA) for their use.

Feedback on First Edition

Suggestions and feedback were received after the distribution of the first version and every suggestion was considered and where appropriate incorporated into the revised second edition. Additional pages included two pages for Urban Search and Rescue Standard Marking System and two pages, within the electricity section, to provide information about 'single wire earth return'.

Second Edition

In October 2005 a further 45,000 copies of the Second Edition, Version 1.1 were printed so that a copy was then available for each active firefighter.

Third Edition

Subsequent to the review of all additional feedback and comments, the Third Edition Version 1.2, June 2008 was updated with 10,000 copies printed and distributed for all new members.

Some of the more significant amendments and additional pages included the HazChem Action Code, Dangerous Goods, HazMat/Terrorism 1, 2 & 3, Electricity, First Aid 1 – 6, Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus, Class A Foam for Aviation, Aircraft Recognition 1 – 4, Foam Application 1 & 2, Chainsaw 1 & 2, Map Referencing, Incident Control System 2, Communications Network 1 & 2 (new and old), Agency Liaison Channels 1 & 2, XTL 5000 Series Radio, Organisation Chart and Operations Chart.

New Edition

The new December 2010 Firefighters' Pocket Book is now available on the NSW Rural Fire Service Intranet and MyRFS websites, both as the complete book and the individual pages if required for training or poster purposes.

I would encourage every firefighter to keep this Pocket Book with them at all times as you never know when the information may be useful to you and your crewmates.

The more significant updates and new topics include the following:

- Page 3** FTASC
- Page 4** Changeovers
- Page 4** After Action Review
- Page 5** Fatigue
- Page 17** Safe Driving 4 (Driving Techniques)
- Page 18** Weight Restrictions on Roads and Bridges in NSW
- Pages 22-24** Legal and Illegal Fires
- Page 26** Decontamination Model
- Page 27** General Layout of Decontamination Area
- Page 41** Note: An energized wire in a river, lake or sea may produce potentially fatal voltages in the water as far as 150 metres away from the wire
- Pages 43-48** First Aid updated
- Pages 51-52** AFAC Fuel Container and Tag Colour Coding
- Page 55** BACO Board
- Page 56** Sectorising a Building, Flashover and Backdraught
- Page 58** Forest Fire Danger Index
- Page 59** Graph-Fuel Moisture Content against Weather Conditions
- Page 60** Fire Behaviour Relationships
- Page 61** Prepare. Act. Survive.
- Page 62** Bush Fire Alert Messages
- Pages 69-70** Bush Fire Definitions updated
- Page 77** Flight Safety
- Page 87** T Card Strike Team
- Page 94** Flush Out Hand Signal added
- Page 97** Booster Valve
- Pages 99-100** Working on Roofs
- Pages 103-105** Hazardous Trees
- Page 106** Map Referencing updated
- Page 113** Incident Control System 2 updated
- Page 115** State Assistance updated
- Page 115** Vehicle Safety added
- Pages 122-123** Communications Networks updated
- Page 124** Radio Networks
- Pages 125-126** Incident/s Channel Allocation
- Pages 127-128** Agency Liaison Channels updated
- Pages 129-150** Radio Types updated and added
- Pages 154-159** Weather updated and added
- Page 161** Organisational Chart updated
- Page 162** Operations Chart updated
- Pages 163-164** Combat Agency Functions updated
- Pages 171-173** Tabards and Brassards updated
- Pages 174-176** Vehicle Categories updated

Future review

Any suggestion for improvement should be forwarded to pocket.book@rfs.nsw.gov.au





1200 NSW RFS COMMUNITY FIRE UNITS ROLLED OUT

By Andrew Dillon, Community Fire Unit Project Officer

An innovative program introduced to assist Rural Fire Brigades and further promote fire safety education has been introduced across the State.

Community Fire Units (CFUs) comprise either a trailer or cabinet with firefighting equipment and a group of existing or new brigade members who operate the trailer in the case of an emergency. Each CFU has a designated area of operation which is defined by the local brigade and usually consists of a street, cul-de-sac, village or subdivision.

In the event of a major fire while fire crews focus on the moving fire front, CFU members can use their trailer or cabinet equipment to focus on extinguishing spot fires or mopping up after a fire front has passed.

In quiet times, the CFU members can also offer bush fire education in their local area.

Members of the CFU are provided with light blue coloured PPE (protective uniform) with a back patch that reads: NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE Community Fire Unit Member.

Since the project began in mid-2010 over 150 orders for CFUs have been received from NSW RFS Districts across the State including areas on the urban/ rural fringe, as well as isolated rural locations, semi-rural subdivisions, rural villages and Aboriginal communities.

Community Fire Units may also prove to be an innovative way to attract new members to the NSW RFS as the time commitment required is less than a full brigade membership.

Members of CFUs, however, can also be existing brigade members or part of a District Support Brigade and/but have responsibility over the local CFU trailer and equipment.

It is the local brigades themselves in consultation with their local District staff who decide whether a CFU is suitable for their area. The ongoing role of the brigade is to supervise and assist in the running of each CFU.

In late 2010 four NSW RFS Districts piloted the CFU trailers. Feedback received from these pilot locations has helped to improve the quality and quantity of equipment supplied, and has also helped in the development of CFU procedures. A training package specific to CFU activities is close to completion.

To find out more about NSW RFS Community Fire Units contact Andrew Dillon on 02 6382 5677 or email: cfu@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Community Fire Unit Equipment List

Qty	Equipment
1	4kw pump
8	Lengths of hose
1	1 into 2 breeching
1	Reducer
1	First Aid kit
1	Fuel container
1	Controlled breech
3	Hose branches
2	Reducers
1	Hydrant bar
2	Knapsacks
3	McLeod tools
1	Standpipe
2	Storz spanners
3	Torches
1	Suction hose
1	Water container
4	Witches hats

OPPOSITE PAGE: The Community Fire Unit trailers include firefighting equipment that can be deployed by trained CFU members. Members of CFUs are provided with light blue coloured PPE.

OPPOSITE PAGE LOWER RIGHT: CFU team members Chris Favelle and Andrew Dillon with Euabalong Central Brigade member Dwayne Kirby at the Murrin Bridge Community Fire Unit, an Aboriginal community near Lake Cargelligo. It was one of the first four RFS CFUs in NSW. Photos by Bernie O'Rourke and Ian Maidens



“I love the people. We all get on well together. There are plenty of things for women to do in the RFS. My daughter has joined too.”

Pat Rogers, caterer and firefighter

Making a Difference:

WOMEN IN THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

By Kristine Wendtmann, Making a Difference Project Officer

Times have changed since 1970 when the 16 female active firefighters of the Horsley Park Brigade were dubbed ‘The Panty Hose Brigade’ in a major national newspaper article. In 2011 our total female membership is approaching 25 percent and women are represented in roles right across the organisation.

The wealth of practical experience accumulated by our female members became the basis for the development of *Making a Difference: Women in the NSW Rural Fire Service* – a new resource to encourage women to join the NSW RFS.

Members across the Service contributed the stories and photos which feature in the booklet to inspire other women and highlight the benefits of diversity in our membership.

The resource is the brainchild of the Volunteer Relations and Workforce Planning Unit Manager of that Unit Narelle Koteff said that traditionally, many roles within the NSW RFS, particularly senior and operational roles, have been filled by male staff or volunteers.

“We needed to create something which would support female members and which was specific to the NSW RFS,” she said, “This organisation has a unique history and culture and we wanted to reflect that.”

“The aim of *Making a Difference: Women in the NSW Rural Fire Service* is to showcase the role of women in the NSW RFS both past and present.

“The booklet provides practical information and advice on being a member of the NSW RFS. It also offers assistance to organisational leaders on how to encourage more women to consider the opportunities available to them in the Service.”

The first step in creating the booklet was talking to female members about what they thought of the idea, and how they wanted to promote the Service to other women. The loud and clear message from these initial discussions was that women in the NSW RFS are proud of their achievements and proud to be part of an organisation devoted to helping the community. Our members also indicated that they wanted a resource which would:

- celebrate the positive contributions of our female members as well as pave the way for future improvements in gender diversity
- showcase the experiences and achievements of women in the NSW RFS
- be relevant to all members, not just women.





The *Northern Daily Leader* in Tamworth recently interviewed several local female NSW RFS members and got them all together for this photo shoot!

(Front) Sharon Stratford, (Second row) Joanne Cummins and Christine Brown, (Third row) Robyn Bounds, Jenny Harnett and Denise McAdam, (Fourth row) Diana Read, Shirley Harris, Margaret Ford and Pat Rogers (Back row) Vikki Scanlon, Sue Taylor, Rae-Anne King and Chris Manuel-Roffe. Photo courtesy of *Northern Daily Leader*, Barry Smith

“The kids were off our hands and I wanted to put something back into the community. There’s great camaraderie and it’s like a big family. My husband saw me having all this fun, so he joined too.”

Sue Taylor, Kingswood Brigade

A suggestion for the title and main theme of the resource also arose from these conversations - when asked why they had joined the NSW RFS many women spoke about wanting to make a difference to their communities, and doing something different in their own lives. The booklet *Making a Difference: Women in the NSW Rural Fire Service* was born.

Making a Difference was launched on 8 March 2011 the 100th Anniversary of International Women’s Day. This year the Day marked 100 years of economic, political and social achievements of women around the world, so it was also the ideal opportunity to launch the booklet.

It was a way of formally recognising the women who contribute their time, effort and skills to the job of protecting the community.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons launched the

booklet at a morning tea held at the NSW RFS Headquarters in Lidcombe.

“International Women’s Day is an ideal occasion to pay tribute to the many female members of the NSW RFS who contribute their time, effort and skills to the job of protecting the community,” he said.

“In 2011 our total female leadership is approaching 25 percent and women are represented at all levels of the organisation. I’d like to thank all of you for helping to achieve this great result, and for continuing to support the participation of women at all levels of the RFS.”

Printed copies of the booklet have been distributed across the State and it is available on the NSW RFS intranet, internet and MyRFS. More copies can be obtained by contacting the Volunteer Relations and Workforce Planning Unit at volunteer@rfs.nsw.gov.au.



"My husband Mark joined the Clarence Town Brigade in 1989, and in 1991 as the Captain at the time, asked me to run for the Secretary position at the AGM. The room was full of farmers when I walked into the meeting and they looked at me in surprise as if I was entering sacred ground - I was the first female to dare do so.

It wasn't long before I got itchy feet watching the males jump on the truck and me staying at home organising crews for the next shift. Also, I figured that if I ever wanted to see my husband again I had better become a firefighter! That of course was a first in our District as well.

I did my BF and the rest they say is history. I broke ground for the females in the Dungog District."

Di Bennett from Clarence Town, who joined the NSW RFS 20 years ago, recalled her early experiences in Making A Difference, Women in the NSW Rural Fire Service



Women step up IN MARTINS CREEK

The tiny village of Martins Creek, near Gresford in the Hunter Valley, rallied to save its volunteer bush fire brigade early in 2010 when around 20 community members signed up for basic firefighter training.

Of those 20 new recruits, half were women.

In May 2010 Martins Creek came very close to losing its rural fire brigade unless a fresh injection of volunteers could be found, as Group Captain Grahame Chevalley explained.

"Decisions had to be made whether the brigade would continue as a functional brigade," he said, "Membership had deteriorated, and it was really up to the community to rally together and decide whether they wanted to support a brigade in their area."

Crunch time came at a community meeting when about 30 people turned up. Of those present about 20 people signed up for basic firefighter training and half of those new recruits were women.

"I was really surprised by the numbers that were there," said Grahame Chevalley, "With a population of less than 350 it was a very good result."

While the brigade did not deliberately set out to increase the female membership, they did make it very clear that both men and women were welcome and needed.

Suzette Paton, a Martins Creek stay-at-home mum, expressed delight in donning the fluorescent yellow overalls, although she jokes there has been talk of dyeing the uniforms pink.

"Once we started getting into the training and stuff it was really interesting," she said. "The social side is really good (too) and we have a great time."

Sue Coutts, one of the new recruits and pictured on the cover of the *Bush Fire Bulletin*, has completed her Basic Firefighter training.

"People need communities whether they realise it now, or whether they realise it later on," she said.

"When you're living in a rural environment like this you especially need your community."

ABOVE: Members of the Martins Creek RFS brigade (front from left) Suzette Paton, Sue Coutts and Rachael Prummel, with (rear from left) Deputy Captain Keith White, and Group Captain Grahame Chevalley. Photo courtesy of the ABC Local: Anthony Scully





David Claudie at a night burn at Chuula. Photo by Wayne Andrews

OLD CULTURES, NEW LEARNINGS

**A LOOK AT TRADITIONAL
ABORIGINAL
FIRE MANAGEMENT**

By Lana Andrews, Coordinator Hotspots Program with contributions by Wayne Andrews (The Hills), Geoff Selwood (Canobolas), Jamie Bertram (Mid North Coast) and Terry Hill (NSW RFS Aboriginal Services Coordinator)



In 2010 five staff from the NSW RFS attended a Traditional Aboriginal Fire Management workshop on Kaanji Homelands, Chuulangun on Cape York Peninsula. The workshop was run jointly with the Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation and Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways (TKRP) which records traditional knowledge of Indigenous elders in a modern world.

The fire workshop was held over three days and focused on fire demonstrations, GPS fire scar mapping and training, flora and fauna surveying (both traditional indigenous and modern academic methods) and video recording and interviewing techniques.

The workshop aimed to share the traditional knowledge of the Northern Kaanju people with those at the workshop, and to also give participants some new skills with new technologies in order for them to go back to their own country and record their own traditional knowledge in a similar way.

We camped at Chuulangun Aboriginal community with over 50 others who had come from various Indigenous communities in Cape York, Torres Strait and Kalgoorlie as well as from Bush Heritage Australia, Torres Strait Regional Authority, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the NSW RFS.

The Northern Kaanju People and Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation

The Northern Kaanju people are traditional owners of 840,000 hectares of country on the upper Wenlock and Pascoe rivers in the uplands of Cape York Peninsular.

Kuuku I yu Ngaachi (northern Kaanju homelands) features many important cultural sites and landscapes including story (or Dreaming) places. There are also a number of sites that hold historical value for traditional owners, as it is at these sites that Aboriginal people were 'rounded up' and held before

being forcibly removed from country under the protection and assimilation policies in the twentieth century.

On 4 June 2008 the Kaanju Ngaachi Wenlock and Pascoe Rivers Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) was officially declared. This was the first stage of the Kaanju Ngaachi IPA which covers an area of 197,500 hectares of culturally, spiritually and biologically significant country.

The IPA is managed by the Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation for the Northern Kaanju traditional owners. Chuulangun is located about two to three hours drive (depending on road conditions) from the Cape York communities of Lockhart River (90 kilometres east), Weipa (150 kilometres north-west) and Coen (120 kilometres south). Chuula lies within the boundary of the former Lockhart River Deed of Grant in Trust lands, which in 2001 were transferred back to traditional owner groups. Chuula is occupied permanently throughout the year, however is cut off by road for up to six months during the wet season from November to April.

A number of land management activities on the IPA are undertaken by Chuulangun Rangers which include:

- Fire management
- Weed and feral animal control
- Visitor management including issuing of camping permits and patrols of the IPA
- Cultural, biophysical and water quality surveys and monitoring;

- Preserving key wetlands, catchments and ecosystems of high biodiversity and cultural significance; and
- Flora and fauna surveys.

Under Kaanju law and custom the traditional owners are obliged to look after their Ngaachi (homelands) in a sustainable manner. In return their stories, which are the land, will look after them physically, culturally and spiritually.

“We all felt that the experience and understanding of the Kaanju people and their traditional fire regimes was invaluable.”

Having the opportunity to participate in traditional burning is a privileged learning experience. We all felt that the experience and understanding of the Kaanju people and their traditional fire regimes was invaluable.

During the workshop numerous fires were lit every day (and one at night) to demonstrate the approaches to burn site selection, ignition and containing fire by using natural barriers. Most of the land selected for burning at this time of year is burnt when the country is ready, not when the people are ready - a contrast to

modern management. The timing is dependant on the grasses and whether certain species have flowered and expelled all their seed, rather than just waiting for it to have cured enough to burn. Interestingly the containment of fires is left to differences in grass species and relying on the curing rates being lower than the grass that was targeted for burning. No need for mineral earth containment lines!

Instead of drip torches, stringy bark is removed from trees and used to start the fires using spot ignition by one of the elders. Other rangers then joined the elder in lighting. We had the opportunity to assist in lighting up and watched as low intensity burns moved through the grasses, assisted by mild winds.

The management of the land is something that comes naturally to Kaanju 'Old Man Dundee', one of the elders at the workshop. The Old Man called the shots at each burn and all of the Kaanju mob followed his lead. His connection to the country was obvious to everyone; he seemed to be part of this land, not simply a man walking through it. The Old Man approached each fire in a spiritual way, talking to the land before lighting anything to ensure that the land was indeed ready to be burnt. This intimate connection with the land comes from years of walking the country. The elders at the workshop have spent many many years observing the cycles of nature. The workshop is a way that they are passing this knowledge onto future generations.



TOP LEFT: Dr Tommy George (Kuku Thaypan Elder). TOP RIGHT: Old Man Dundee (Elder) lighting a burn at Chuulangun with stringy bark removed from trees. Photo by J. Bertram LOWER LEFT: Kaanju Ngaachi homelands sign. LOWER RIGHT: NSW RFS members with some of the workshop leaders (L-R): Lana Andrews, Geoff Selwood, Gordon (Chuula Ranger), Wayne Andrews, Jamie Bertram, Tommy George (Elder) and Terry Hill at Chuula Photos by Jamie Bertram, Lana Andrews and Wayne Andrews.

“The elders at the workshop have spent many many years observing the cycles of nature. The workshop is a way that they are passing this knowledge onto future generations.”

The Kaanju Homelands landscape

The country of Cape York is quite different from most vegetated areas in NSW. With open savannahs dominated by grasses, the country is called sandridge and consists mainly of sand with small amounts of clay. The dominant grass species include giant spear grass, cockatoo grass and annual fire grass. The dominant tree species include bloodwoods and stringybarks (amongst others) and termite mounds are scattered across the landscape.

The grasses are important as a food source and habitat for many fauna species and have cultural significance for the traditional owners. As an example, the seeds of fire grass are an important food source for the Golden Shouldered and the Hooded Parrots. Ants also collect the seeds in piles to build their nests.

The traditional owners at the workshop stressed that the burning of fire grass at the incorrect time of year will cause

the vegetation to become shrubbier which, after several years, will cause the fire grass to die out. This drastically reduces the food available for the local fauna. The increase in a shrubby layer also increases fuel loads and therefore the likelihood of more intense and less controllable fires.

The contrasts between traditional and modern fire management

The fire management practices of the Kaanju people are in contrast to the way in which much of NSW is managed. Burning for the needs of the landscape is interwoven with cultural beliefs and the living requirements of the traditional owners. Unlike NSW, parts of the Cape are burnt every year with the open savannah maintaining its health through this regime of burning.

Kaanju land management is focused on the health of the country whereas in modern methods, consideration of the land as a resource for commercial gain is also important. David Claudie,

a traditional owner and CEO of the Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation, was one of the elders sharing his knowledge of country at the workshop.

David is a man of measured words and when sharing his thoughts on fire and its application for regeneration of the country he said: “It’s not just about fire, it’s about everything, the trees, the grass, the animals, the soil. It is not just about fire.”

Traditionally burning has been used for a wide range of complex purposes. After a burn the new shoots of regeneration on plants attracts animals which can be hunted. Burns also remove older plants, encourage new growth and allow easy access to land by foot. The smoke from the burns was used for signalling, ceremonies and as a natural insect repellent. The hot ash produced by the fires was used medicinally.

The way country is burnt also incorporates traditional beliefs. For example, burns which are low in intensity do not damage canopy foliage, which they



ABOVE: Old Man Dundee at Chuula burn. Photo by Wayne Andrews

Traditional Practices	Modern Practices
Know the vegetation types (through observation and passing down of knowledge)	Identify the vegetation types
Learn from the elders when to burn	Burn when fuel loads dictate
Burn for the health of vegetation, which will protect assets, as fire will not travel	Reduce fuel loads to protect assets
Burn country to refresh the land so all flora and fauna will benefit	Burn within the stipulated time limits as per legislation
Burn annual grasses/low shrub layer at the correct time	Burn for the best results to maximize asset protection
Burn with the wind to allow fauna time to escape based on direction of smoke drift	Burn against the wind to reduce ground speed of the fire
Burn fine fuels only	Burn fine fuels and some larger fuels due to time lapse of the fire front
Keep soil cool	Warm soil to allow seeds to germinate
Transfer knowledge of the burn sites to others by word of mouth	Map fire grounds by satellite and GPS technology

believe should never be burnt as the toxins released have adverse effects on humans.

In learning the traditional ways of fire management, differences and similarities could be seen with modern management practices. Some observations were made and can be seen in the table to the left.

Challenges into the future

There are conflicting views between traditional owners and government agencies on burning regimes in the Cape. Traditional owners are working closely with their neighbours and land managers, however, to ensure collaborative fire management into the future.

Indigenous peoples in northern Australia are extremely concerned about the maintenance of their culture. Traditional owners living at Chuulangun have repeatedly expressed concern at the rate at which elders and knowledgeable people are passing away and the consequential loss of local indigenous knowledge and language. The loss of this unique and important

knowledge, along with the loss of linguistic diversity, is as significant to Cape York ecologically as are the current physical changes threatening biodiversity.

These workshops are definitely a positive step toward preserving that knowledge and sharing it with indigenous and non-indigenous fire managers.

Our chance to spend time with the Kaanju mob was indeed a rewarding and enriching experience. To be able to see a different way of using fire opened our eyes to a practice that is thousands of years old. There are many more things to be learned from our indigenous friends and there are plans to hold similar workshops in parts of NSW.

For more information visit:
<http://www.kaanjungaachi.com.au/ChuulangunAboriginalCorporation.htm>
<http://www.tkrp.com.au/ChuulangunAboriginalCorporation.htm>
<http://www.tkrp.com.au/ChuulangunAboriginalCorporation.htm>



A NEW RESPONSE

An overview of the
Computer Aided
Dispatch - Incident Response
System Project

By Mariell Taylor, Senior Project Officer,
CAD-IRS Scoping Project



The unusual pink light at this fire in Long Point in February 2011 was produced by the unique mix of smoke and emergency lights. Photo by Anthony Clark, Media Services

Dispatching resources in response to Triple Zero (000) calls is part of the daily business of the NSW RFS.

While most Australian fire agencies have converted to a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, the NSW RFS continues to dispatch its fire trucks and personnel using a manual system. The Service is currently analysing the possibility of making the change to CAD as well.

The CAD technology would assist in identifying the nearest, most, appropriate appliances to respond to reported incidents.

Once identified, the brigades would be notified from a central Communications Centre (ComCen), and once 'on air' will be dispatched to the incident. This technology would replace the manual processes currently in place.

The use of this technology in the NSW RFS, which would be one of the biggest changes to the Service for many years, has been made possible by an upgrade of the CAD system at the Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW).

FRNSW recently gained government approval to replace their current CAD system.

Funding for the new system was contingent on them making the software available across the whole emergency services sector. As a result the NSW RFS now has access to the latest CAD software.

The Service is now engaged in a thorough and complete analysis of the suitability of the CAD system for the NSW RFS. The Service needs to identify, review and, if the project is approved for implementation, develop the required policies, systems, practices and training. It is important to note that the Service we will not be

implementing CAD until a full analysis of these issues has been completed.

The Scoping Project engaged in analysing the requirements of the CAD system is titled: Computer Aided Dispatch - Incident Response System (CAD-IRS). It is a long title and acronym but it seeks to acknowledge both the technological component as well as the operational processes, procedures, protocols, roles and responsibilities involved.



CAD-IRS is designed to improve incident receipt, notification and response by:

- Implementing a consistent system across the State
- Reducing workload and improving the quality of life for staff and volunteer Duty Officers
- Speeding up response notification times by reducing the number of steps in the process
- Automatically recording incident data on both NSW RFS and FRNSW CAD systems simultaneously to assist in identification of appropriate appliances for dispatch
- Automatically recording incident information to assist brigades in post incident reporting
- Providing dedicated dispatch personnel operating in a specialist operating environment.

The FRNSW along with most other Australian fire agencies have been using CAD systems for many years. All have learned lessons along the way,

and part of the Scoping Project Team's role is to gather those lessons to ensure the greatest opportunity for success for the NSW RFS.

The NSW RFS CAD-IRS Program comprises two projects, namely:

- **Project 1 – CAD-IRS Scoping**
- **Project 2 - CAD-IRS Implementation**

1. CAD-IRS SCOPING

The Scoping Project is being undertaken from 2010 to 2012. The issues and factors to be considered by the project include:

- The CAD-IRS business model and process
- The design and configuration of a suitable NSW RFS Communication Centre (ComCen) for incident dispatch
- The structure of the NSW RFS ComCen and District staff roles
- The relationship of the CAD-IRS to the future Operations Management System

- Communication requirements including radio, paging and telephony systems
- Doctrine, policy and procedural changes
- The data requirements for a CAD-IRS
- Change management planning and communication with stakeholders (including NSW RFS staff and volunteers).
- Identifying potential changes to staff terms and conditions of employment
- Potential training requirements
- Arrangements for disaster recovery and business continuity management
- Options to be considered with complete costs finalised
- Proposing an implementation schedule.

Trial in the Mid North Coast Team

As a component of Project 1, the Commissioner has directed the implementation of a trial dispatch and communication project in the Mid North Coast Team. This Team, based around Coffs Harbour and Bellingen,

already uses a commercial call centre so they already have significant experience in the use of centralised dispatch.

While we won't be using a CAD system in this trial we will be able to 'test the waters' for a centralised incident notification and dispatch process in an NSW RFS operating environment. The trial will take place in July 2011.

Business Representative Groups

In mid to late 2011 the Project Team will establish a number of Business Representative Groups. Each group will be responsible for developing the Service's position in a given key area. These Business Representative Groups will comprise 35 salaried and volunteer representatives from across the Service including key business units from Headquarters, Regions and Districts.

The story so far

A considerable amount of work has been already undertaken within the scoping phase of the project, including:

- Visits to other organisations in the ACT, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia as well as NSW to view their CAD systems
- Development of draft CAD-IRS response processes and business requirements
- Participation in the configuration and establishment of the FRNSW CAD system
- Researching Communication Centre designs and layouts
- Preparation of draft papers to determine the potential radio, pager and telephony requirements as well as the resources required for technical support.

The CAD-IRS Scoping Project is a significant initiative for the Service and much work is required to meet the current target of developing a report to the NSW RFS Executive by mid-2012.

2. CAD-IRS IMPLEMENTATION

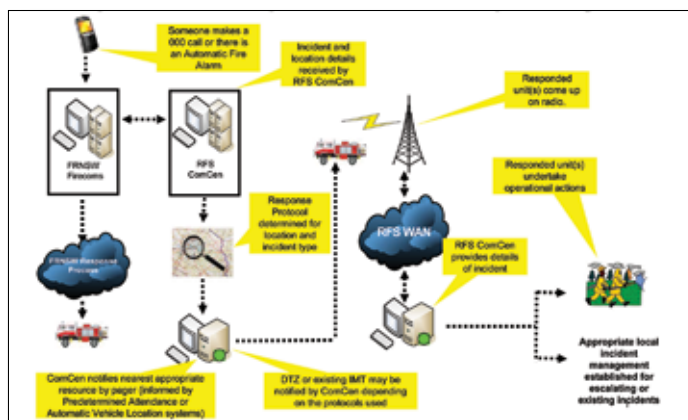
If it is approved, the Implementation Project will be a phased roll-out over several years. The implementation of a CAD-IRS will be a significant change to many of the Service's customs and practices and it is important not to unnecessarily rush the change if people or operating systems are not ready. In Year 1, the Project Team will be starting with a number of pilot Districts and this will be followed by the first of the phased implementation.

The phased implementation of CAD-IRS would be undertaken over a period of four to five years following the pilots.

Need more information?

For further information and to view some Frequently Asked

The CAD-IRS process: How it could work in the NSW RFS



Questions check the CAD-IRS Project page on MyRFS and the NSW RFS intranet. You can also contact the CAD-IRS Project Team at: CAD@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Some typical CAD displays, showing a list of incident locations and map views.

ONE OF THE LARGEST PROGRAMS EVER UNDERTAKEN

The community of NSW relies on the NSW Rural Fire Service to provide help and support under difficult circumstances. Some of the most critical portions of an incident are when they first occur, and the more quickly emergency services can respond and attend, the more likely the problem will be speedily resolved. As with all public sector organisations, the community expect continuing improvements with the service we provide.

For many years the Service's response procedures have served us well. In the modern environment, however, there are improvements that can be made. In particular, we can minimise the number of steps required to report an incident and therefore speed up the process, we can also provide back-up procedures and reduce the variety of systems used across the State.

During 2010, I commissioned a project to further improve on our Incident Response System by investigating potential linkage to the new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system being implemented by Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW).

The Computer Aided Dispatch-Incident Response System (CAD-IRS) Scoping Project will continue through to 2011/12 and will examine radio communication, paging, response policies and procedures, workforce planning, training, communication centre design and a host of other related factors prior to considering implementation. We are working closely with the FRNSW to ensure we take a unified approach in order to maximise efficiencies and lower costs.

In developing this project, a broad range of views will be canvassed. Both staff and volunteers will be represented on the Project Team as well as the Business Representative Groups which will be set up in 2011/12. Members of the Project Team will be communicating with staff and volunteer groups over the next year and I ask you to make use of this opportunity to contribute.

If the results of the CAD-IRS Scoping Project support implementation in the NSW RFS, it will be one of the largest programs we've ever undertaken.

For further information, and to view some Frequently Asked Questions, I strongly encourage you to have a look at the CAD-IRS Project page link on the MyRFS homepage. The Project Team can be contacted at CAD@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

I'm confident the development and eventual implementation of the CAD-supported Incident Response System will be a great support to volunteers as we all strive to better meet the needs of the community.

I look forward to your participation and support of this important program.

Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM
NSW RFS Commissioner



Photo by Matthew Reeves, Learning and Development Officer

DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS with State Level Training

By Matthew Reeves, Learning and Development Officer

Throughout 2011 over 300 NSW RFS members will participate in training and workshops provided through Learning and Development Systems at the NSW RFS Headquarters in Lidcombe.

These courses and workshops cover a range of competencies and professional development topics and allow for members to gain new competencies as well as refresh and renew skills.

Learning and Development Systems (L&D) is the unit responsible for developing training programs and managing the NSW RFS Registered Training Organisation (RTO) status.

In addition to developing the courses that members attend at District and Regional level, the Unit trials new programs prior to their wider release, develops and facilitates professional development programs such as the Certificate IV Training and Education (TAE) upgrade, Lead and Develop Teams (LDR) and Monitor Brigade Safety (SAF) programs and instructor/ assessor development workshops. They also develop and facilitate the Service's high level Command, Control and Communication training and Incident Management Workshops as well as the Incident Controller, Major Incident program.

Throughout April and May over 25 Crew Leader Instructors attended professional development training. They spent a weekend enhancing their skills and knowledge in Incident Control Systems (ICS), inter-personal communications, leadership techniques and Crew Leader course delivery. This workshop generated a lot of discussion and will result in the introduction of new ideas that will round out the delivery of Crew Leader training across the State over the coming years.

In the wake of the 2009 Black Saturday fires in Victoria, the L&D Unit, along with Operational Services has been working hard to analyse and further develop our command level training. The Research and Development team have recreated the Incident Management Workshop which is the pathway to Incident Management qualifications such as Planning, Operations, Logistics and Control. This workshop is in the process of being piloted with senior

NSW RFS managers and senior personnel from other emergency service agencies, including interstate agencies.

The benefits of attending State level training programs are numerous. In particular the L&D team is dedicated to updating the learning material whenever there are changes to techniques and standards.

For this reason the professional development workshops are an opportunity for district instructors and assessors to get updated on the latest practices and knowledge. An example of this is the Breathing Apparatus Instructor workshops run in 2010 and 2011. These workshops have focused on new concepts in the delivery of BA training as well as advanced structural fire behaviour knowledge and application.

August training in Village Firefighter and Breathing Apparatus

In August 2011 the L&D team will facilitate further professional development workshops for members who instruct and assess Village Firefighter (VF) as well as for members who instruct Breathing Apparatus or require the Breathing Apparatus Operator qualification. This is relevant for Districts that are introducing BA in the near future and need a pool of members qualified to assist with the start up, or for L&D or Operations Officers who have BA in their District and would like to develop delivery course skills and gain certification. The August workshop will be held at the Mogo training facility, which is part of the Far South Coast team.

The VF workshop is aimed at instructors and will cover topics such as advanced structural fire behaviour (incorporating dolls house lesson delivery), gas fire attack techniques, emerging technologies such as solar power systems and new vehicle technologies.

The BA professional development workshop will run the BAO course in full for members who require the qualification and will act as an

opportunity for instructors who have attended our advanced workshops to practice their delivery skills. It will also be an ideal refresher and update for district staff that have BAO, but have lapsed in their currency and need to refresh their skills and competencies.

The workshops are challenging, but they offer a chance for instructors and assessors to develop technical firefighting and training delivery skills and well as establish instructor/ assessor networks and develop team effectiveness.

Nominations for the Village Firefighter Instructors workshop and/ or the Breathing Apparatus Workshop and course can be submitted through your local Learning and Development Officer. Nominations close 8 July and further information can be obtained by calling Matthew Reeves from Learning and Development Systems on 8741 5210 or email: matthew.reeves@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

ART program

Another major development to come out of the L&D Unit this year is the Advanced

Resuscitation Techniques (ART) program. Districts can now run the ART training program which consolidates the former Advanced Oxygen Resuscitation (AOR) training and now includes Automated External Deliberator (AED) training. The ART program builds on the First Aid Application (FAA) program and was developed with a reference team of NSW RFS members who have utilised their medical, paramedical and emergency service backgrounds. This program puts Districts in the position to deliver the absolute latest in Advance Resuscitation Techniques and compliments the roll out of AEDs across the Service.

For the full 2011 State training calendar, log on to MyRFS or take a look at the 2011 Training Information Book, available from your local office.

If you have any comments, suggestions or feedback on NSW RFS State level training, they can be forwarded to Grant Kingston, Supervisor, Quality and Compliance, Learning and Development Systems on 02 8741 5211 or email: grant.kingston@rfs.nsw.gov.au.





NEW ROUND OF RECRUITMENT FOR STATE MITIGATION SUPPORT SERVICES

Story and photo by Glenn Woods, Business Support Officer, Operational and Mitigation Support Services

The last edition of the *Bush Fire Bulletin* showcased the work of State Mitigation Support Services (SMSS) and how they assist and support brigades across the State with preparation of hazard reduction burns and assisting residents through the Assist Infirm Disabled and Elderly Residents (AIDER) Program. In February 2011, SMSS began recruiting an additional 80 seasonal State Mitigation members. The first round of recruitment focused on Glendenning, Mittagong and Oberon along with the second, third and fourth round of recruitment focusing on Lismore, Coffs Harbour/Urunga, Taree, Tamworth, Moree, Mudgee, Dubbo, Cobar, Cessnock, Nowra, Queanbeyan, Cooma, Mogo and Glendenning.

Over 165 applications were received for these positions and through an intensive process of interviews, medicals and the Arduous Pack Test, volunteers from around these areas advanced to undertake the new State Mitigation Induction Program. Phil Brockett a new Crew Leader based at

Glendenning said: "I think that SMSS is a very dynamic unit and I have a variety of skills that I can offer the team".

The new candidates undertook an enhanced State Mitigation Crew Member Induction Program over the course of three weeks. The intensive program included training in safety, injury prevention, RFS Code of Conduct and Ethics, managing risk factors, working with vulnerable people and management of equipment as well as Safe Work on Roofs (SWR), Remote Area First Aid Training, Trim and Cross Cut Felled Trees (TFT) and Aviation Basic Knowledge (ABK). Crew members with appropriate qualifications also undertook specialised training in Remote Area Firefighting Training and Advanced Resuscitation Techniques.

During the Induction Programs, crews were visited by Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers. The Crews also travelled to various locations around the State as part of their

training with existing crews, this included participating in mitigation jobs in areas such as Mt Tomah within the Blue Mountains, Hilltop within the Wingecarribee District and around Oakdale in the Wollondilly Shire.

After the three week Induction, new SMSS Crew Leaders completed an extra week of training which included Conduct Briefings and Debriefings (CBD), an introduction to prescribed burning and intensive training in Occupational Health and Safety. Gary Hansen a new Crew Leader based at Glendenning said: "I want to assist in the service of the volunteers, by helping with the preparation of their mitigation work and to aid residents who need help preparing their property in the event of bush fire."

Brent King a new Crew Leader based at Tamworth said: "The thing I am most looking forward to once starting in my role is being out in the open and the satisfaction of making a difference."

Since the start of the induction programmes the new mitigation crew personnel are now working to assist brigades with the protection of their local communities through the preparation of control lines for hazard reduction burns, creating and maintaining Asset Protection Zones (APZ's), works under the Assist Infirm Disabled and Elderly Residents (AIDER) programme, post burn rehabilitation works, assistance with prescribed burning and vegetation clearing on fire trails. Peter Heward a new Crew Member based at Glendenning said: "I believe Mitigation to be a service that can do some good for the community and saves lives." Recruitment for new seasonal crew positions in Warialda, Coffs Harbour/Urunga, Bega, Cooma, Taree, Orange, Nowra, Mogo, Wagga Wagga, Lismore, Mudgee, Cessnock and Glendenning will take place prior to the start of the fire season.

For further information about SMSS, visit www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au

WORN WITH PRIDE...



The NSW Rural Fire Service Crest 1961- 2011

While the history of volunteer bush firefighting in NSW dates back to 1898, the use of the official Crest only began in 1961.

By Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth,
AFSM, Manager State Operations

The story of the Crest, like many stories within the NSW RFS, has become folklore. As legislation and the needs of the day determined, the name of our organisation has evolved from Bush Fire Brigades, then Bush Fire Services, Bush Fire Service and in 1997 we became the NSW Rural Fire Service. There were also many versions of the

associated advisory bodies culminating in 1988 in the formation of the Department of Bush Fire Services.

As well as the official changes, there has also been the unofficial evolution of the Crest. Personal taste made its mark with some Districts designing their own variations to the Crest for use on their uniforms and trucks.

We have pieced together anecdotes and evidence about the Crest and have determined that there were four main phases in the development of the NSW RFS Crest and these are shown below.

The following liftout pages show the many versions, changes and evolution of the Crest over time.

1961



It began with a firefighter in the Heathcote area south of Sydney. Ray Watchorn is celebrated as the creator of the original Bush Fire Brigades Crest - a burning tree with a blue background surmounted by a small crown (Imperial or Tudor).

The crown is traditionally used to signify authority and credibility. The burning bush represents the control and management of fire to protect the people and the landscape of the Australian continent.

Mr Watchorn was a foundation member of Heathcote Bush Fire Brigade and later became Fire Control Officer in Sutherland. He was instrumental in the growth of bush fire brigades in the area south of Sydney, introducing improvements in laws and equipment that benefited not only the Shire, but in many instances, the whole State of NSW. He was well qualified to dream up the logo that would represent all brigades in NSW.

In 1963 the crown was enlarged. Later as various patches for use on uniforms were manufactured, two different crowns appeared on the Crest, the Imperial or Tudor Crown, commonly referred to as the King's Crown and the St Edwards Crown also known as the Coronation Crown or Queen's Crown.

1965



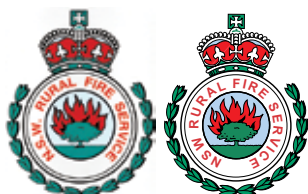
In 1965 it was proposed that the cloth insignia for use on the shoulder, chest or a cap would be available free from the NSW Bush Fire Committee. In July 1965, the new transfers and rank identification for vehicles and helmets became available at a cost of 15 shillings per 100. The crown used in these official Crests was the St Edward's Crown.

1983



In 1983 a wreath of green laurel leaves was included on the Bush Fire Brigades Patch. In the mythology of ancient Greece, the god Apollo's favourite tree was the laurel tree and this came to symbolise a heroic act or victory. The green leaves also symbolise growth and regeneration that follows the management of fire.

1997 | 2009



The NSW Rural Fire Service was established by an Act of Parliament in 1997 and the Crest was adapted accordingly. More recently in 2009, the Crest was adjusted slightly to remove the full stops in NSW to bring it into alignment with Australian Government style guidelines.






1961- 1964

			
1961 NSW Bush Fire Brigades screen printed patch (logo with blue background surmounted by small King's crown)	1963 NSW Bush Fire Brigades screen printed patch and rank identification (logo with blue background surmounted by large crown)		1964 NSW Bush Fire Brigades screen printed patch (logo with white background surmounted by large crown)

1965- 1982

				
1965 NSW Bush Fire Brigades screen printed patch (logo with red tree trunk and white background surmounted by large crown)	1965 NSW Bush Fire Brigades non-reflective transfer and rank identification for vehicles and helmets	1966 NSW Bush Fire Brigades non-reflective vehicle door decal (logo with blue background surmounted by large crown)	1966 NSW Bush Fire Brigades screen printed patch with woven edge (blank space for Brigade name)	1967 Fire Control Officer octagonal woven patch
				
1972 Bush Fire Council of NSW non-reflective door decal	1970 Fire Control Officer woven patch for dress uniform	1970 Bush Fire Brigades woven patch	1970 Fire Control Officer woven patch	1970 Bush Fire Brigades woven patch (blank space for Brigade name)
				
1972 Bush Fire Brigades oval patch with green border (blank space for Brigade name)	1973 Bush Fire Brigades white rectangular woven patch	1977 Bush Fire Brigades reflective door decal	1977 Bush Fire Council of NSW reflective door decal	1982 Bush Fire Council of NSW woven patch

1983-1996

				
1983 Bush Fire Brigades patch Addition of the green laurel leaves	1983 Fire Control Officer patch (red writing)	1984 Fire Control Officer patch (white writing)	1984 Fire Patrol Officer patch	1984 Fire Prevention Crew patch
				
1984 Bush Fire Council of NSW patch	1984 NSW Bush Fire Council of NSW, Regional Officer patch	1986 White NSW Bush Fire Brigades patch for white overalls. These were also made in yellow for the yellow overalls and light blue for the light blue dress shirts. All were manufactured with King's and Queen's crowns		
				
1988 NSW Department of Bush Fire Services patch	1988 NSW Department of Bush Fire Services reflective door decal	1990 NSW Bush Fire Brigades patch with white border for overalls and dress uniform	1990 NSW Bush Fire Brigades patch with dark blue border for 'fatigues'	1992 NSW Bush Fire Services patch with white border for overalls and dress uniform
				
1992 NSW Bush Fire Services reflective door decal	1993 NSW Bush Fire Service patch with white border for overalls and dress uniform	1993 NSW Bush Fire Service reflective door decal	1995 NSW Bush Fire Service Chaplain patch	

Worn with Pride: The NSW RFS Crest

1997-2011



1997 NSW Rural Fire Service patch with white border for overalls and dress uniform



1997 NSW Rural Fire Service patch with dark blue border for "fatigues"



1997 NSW Rural Fire Service Chaplain patch (withdrawn from Service in 2003)



1997 NSW Rural Fire Service plastic patch for leather jackets (unofficial)



1997 NSW Rural Fire Service reflective door decal



2009 current NSW Rural Fire Service patch with white border for overalls and dress uniform (logo corrected to remove full stops in NSW as per government style guide)



2009 current NSW Rural Fire Service reflective door decal



Worn with Pride: The NSW RFS Crest

Professional Development Opportunities

Enhance your skills and knowledge through instructor workshops.
Apply your skills and knowledge in practical scenarios. Develop instructor networks.



Village Firefighter Instructors

22 to 24 August – Mogo Training Facility

Topics covered include:

- Structural fire behaviour
- New vehicle and emerging technologies
- Gas fire techniques
- Managing live fire training
- USAR Category 1

Breathing Apparatus Instructors

25 to 28 August – Mogo Training Facility

Topics covered include:

- Advanced structural fire behaviour
- Branch handling techniques
- Managing live fire training
- Contemporary firefighting techniques

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION contact Matt Reeves
(Learning and Development Systems) on telephone 02 8741 5210 or via
email Matthew.Reeves@rfs.nsw.gov.au.





REGION NORTH IMPRESSES ONCE AGAIN

By Bryan Daly, Regional Operations Manager, Region North

Training in Counter-Terrorism was one of the new features of the Region North Exercise this year.

Several units of the NSW Police Force, Counter Terrorism & Special Tactics Command attended the Exercise for the first time to present a realistic scenario to volunteers. They included members of the Terrorism Investigation Squad, Terrorism Intelligence Unit

and the Counter Terrorism Capability Support Unit.

Volunteers came across an old farmhouse complete with a Home Made Explosive (HME) laboratory, Commercial Explosives information and Improvised Explosive Device(IED) information in a mock setup and display inside.

The police gave detailed instructions on how to identify terrorist-related activities

and how they should react. The Exercise was very well received by the volunteers.

Region North Operations Manager Superintendent Bryan Daly said that this year the crews were exposed to a number of new scenarios, thereby giving them a broader skill base, and an understanding of incidents that they normally would not experience. Apart from the Counter Terrorism



OUTSTANDING DEDICATION

2011 saw the introduction of a special trophy, awarded to the Best Performing Crew – The Alan Brinkworth Perpetual Trophy for Best Performing Crew.

The introduction of the trophy is recognition of one outstanding individual – Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth (left). The Region North Exercise Committee felt that his support, dedication and commitment to the Region North Exercises over its entire 11 year history is deserving of recognition.

“It would be fair to say that without Alan Brinkworth, this annual exercise would not be the success it is today,” Superintendent Daly said, “In fact it would probably not exist. Alan has been one of the outstanding supporters of Regional Exercises across the State.”

Alan Brinkworth was present at the Regional Exercise to present the inaugural award to the Gilgandra Brigade (lower left) for their outstanding performance over the weekend; he is retiring from the NSW RFS later in 2011.





DOUBLE CONGRATULATIONS

Wardell Brigade, south of Ballina, sent five members to the Region North Exercise and they were all attending their first Exercise. When all participating crews gathered for the final event, awards were presented to the Best Crew and the Best Crew Leader. No one was expecting that there would be an award for The Most Outstanding Individual Performance.

When Andrew Monti's name was called he went forward, was congratulated and given a gift voucher for \$250 to spend at the RFSA Shop. Andrew recalls that the person making the presentation said, "The award is for the crew member judged to have the best overall performance and who showed a willingness to carry out tasks allocated by his crew leader." Nicola Brookhouse from the Northern Rivers Team was also given the award.

But this was not the only cause for celebration for the 18-year-old Andrew. Apart from this extraordinary recognition from within the NSW RFS, Andrew has also recently earned the highest achievement in Scouting - the Queen's Scout Award. He received his award personally from the NSW Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir. Congratulations Andrew.

training, volunteers also learned about safety around electricity, motor vehicle accidents, a team challenge, basic skills, heavy plant, LPG safety aircraft and airbase operations.

"We undertook a comprehensive review of the scenarios following the 2010 Exercise," Superintendent Daly said,

"The Committee decided to instigate a new format with three Divisions and each containing scenarios planned to take four hours to complete. One Scenario was allocated a four hour block of time, and the remaining eight were allocated one hour. This format was designed to allow more time to be spent by the crews on the introduction to aircraft and airbase operations."

A four-hour scenario at the Glen Innes airbase introduced crews to aircraft operations and capability, airbase operations and provided an opportunity for all participants to gain qualifications in Aviation Basic Knowledge (ABK). Ninety-five percent of personnel who went through the Scenario attained ABK qualification.

A second aircraft scenario saw crews responding to a crashed aircraft, and focused on leadership, scene preservation, fire extinguishment and casualty assistance.

Each scenario at the Region North Exercise was under the management of a senior volunteer or staff member who had extensive experience and knowledge of that topic. A number of scenarios were presented by experienced staff

from other agencies including Country Energy, NSW Police Counter-Terrorism Unit & Special Tactics Command and Draeger.

For the first time in the 11 year history of the Region North Exercise it was a wet weekend, but the overcast conditions failed to dampen the enthusiasm of the 448 participants. It took place on the weekend of 18-20 March and crews had travelled from all over Region North as well as from Sutherland, Hawkesbury and Queensland.

TOP: Photos from the Region North Exercise showing crews and support teams testing their skills, attending presentations and learning First Aid and other skills. Photos by Anthony Clark, Media Services.

THE ALAN BRINKWORTH PERPETUAL TROPHY FOR BEST PERFORMING CREW
Gilgandra Crew
Warrumbungle Team
Castlereagh Zone

BASIC SKILLS

Winners

Queensland Fire & Rescue
Warwick Group,
Stanthorpe

Runners up

Scots Head
Lower North Coast Team
and
Gunnedah Brigade
Liverpool Range Team

These teams will go on to represent Region North at the 2012 State Championships in September 2012

BEST STRIKE TEAM LEADER
Jillian Guest
Namoi Gwydir

BEST CREW LEADER
Craig Oates
Mid North Coast

For the first time two awards were given for the most outstanding individual performances.

MOST OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE
Nicola Brookhouse
Northern Rivers
and
Andrew Monti
Far North Coast

It is those who work behind the scenes at the Region North Exercise are what make it so successful and enjoyable, so this year an award was given to the person who offered the most outstanding support.

OUTSTANDING SUPPORT
Paul James
Far North Coast

The Committee are most grateful to the sponsors of the Exercise who would like to acknowledge the ongoing and generous support of the RFSA, Country Energy, Gilbert & Roach Isuzu dealers and Draeger.



Photo by Mike Rushby

CAR RESCUE STEP BY STEP

Story and photos by Colin Green, Bombala Brigade

On Australia Day 2011 the NSW Rural Fire Service combined forces with several other emergency service agencies in Bombala on the NSW south coast to demonstrate what happens during a motor vehicle accident.

The scenario was conducted before a large crowd at the Bombala Showground and included members of Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW, formerly NSW Fire Brigades), Ambulance Service of NSW, NSW Police Force and the Snowy Hydro South Care rescue helicopter.



The scenario was of a single vehicle accident involving two occupants. The passenger had been unrestrained while the driver sustained serious lacerations, internal injuries and fractures. The vehicle had come to rest on its side.

Stablisng the vehicle was the first priority. Here we see the Holton Foot being assembled, which is a a device for stablisng the vehicle prior to rescue.



The Snowy Hydro South Care helicopter joined the exercise. In this scenario the Snowy Hydro South Care staff monitored the extraction of the occupants and the attending doctor gave a demonstration of current CPR methods. The helicopter is an invaluable backup to emergency services in the Bombala area, providing hands-on resusitation, victim stablisng and management in preparation for extraction to the helicopter.

The inventor of the Holton Foot, Mick Holton provided commentary for the crowd.

Mr Holton is a former FRNSW Senior Rescue Instructor and is currently the NSW RFS Monaro Team Learning and Development Officer. He explained that the Holton Foot is designed to stablise the vehicle prior to the extraction of occupants thus preventing risk of injury to the rescuers and further injury to the victims. "The principles of its application are simple and could be achieved using a crow bar, a couple of pocket lines and some basic knot tying skills," he said.



4



While FRNSW conducted the rescue, the NSW RFS Bombala Brigade provided fire suppression services.

Spills of fuel and other contaminants and ignitions are always a danger in motor vehicle accidents. The presence of the NSW RFS ensures the safety of both the victim and rescuers while the rescue is taking place.

The NSW RFS may also be called upon to manage traffic around an accident.



FRNSW and Ambulance Service of NSW removed the roof of the vehicle and the extracted the victims. In order to minimise movement, and therefore reduce the risk of further injury, the victims were transferred to spine boards to be taken out of the vehicle.

7



Throughout the scenario speakers conducted commentary to convey the various roles of the emergency services at such a accident scene. The Ambulance Service of NSW was represented by an incident paramedic who explained to the audience how the patient was being managed and what treatment she was receiving for her injuries.



After the victims had been removed from the vehicle, the NSW RFS members were called upon to assist with the removal of the vehicle and the rehabilitation of the site by removing debris and spillage from the roadway.

Fortunately the number of accidents in the Bombala area is relatively few, so a combined services scenario such as this provides the NSW RFS members with a valuable opportunity to sharpen their skills.

Thomas the Tanker



On Saturday 11 December 2010, Bell Brigade, located in the north western corner of the Blue Mountains District, held a small Truck Naming Ceremony.

The new Cat 1 Tanker was handed over to the brigade in November. On delivery of the new vehicle the brigade had no hesitation in naming their new truck - Thomas the Tanker. It is in honour and memory of Les Thomas who passed away from cancer in December 2007.

At the time of his death, Les Thomas was the Bell Brigade President and for many years was the brigade Engine Officer. Les Thomas' widow Yvonne and grandson Harry unveiled the newly named truck. They are seen here with Captain Greg Honeysett and President Rick Whitbread.

Emily Honeysett
Bell Brigade

FLASHING THE **YELLOWS** AT MARDI GRAS!

By Susie McGregor, South Katoomba Brigade

On Saturday 5 March 2011 I attended the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney.

I had never attended the Mardi Gras, but throughout my life have had many gay friends. When the NSW RFS called for people to join the Mardi Gras march in support of our gay comrades and as a demonstration of the spirit of acceptance within the NSW RFS, it seemed too good an opportunity to miss.

Two of us travelled from the upper Blue Mountains, arriving at the meeting place in Hyde Park at 5.30pm. Already, the excitement in the air was palpable. All sorts of amazingly costumed people, many with supporters in tow, were milling around. We thought that we would go get something to eat however the preparations for the parade were far too interesting to leave. We wandered around looking at the final practices of dance routines and the preparation of a bewildering amount of floats.

The enormous amount of work that goes into many of the costumes is mind boggling not to mention time given up to the practice of parade routines.

The feeling in the staging area was of acceptance, happiness and mutual respect. Almost every float had its own individual sound system which was played at full volume. As day turned to night members of each contingent started to dance and display.

The NSW RFS contingent comprised a Cat 1, a command vehicle and about 40 members. As we came up College Street and prepared to turn into Oxford Street, the main route for the Mardi Gras parade, the marshals called for us to halt for about a minute. Then we swung around into Oxford Street and a great roar went up from the crowd! It was quite overwhelming!

We then marched, hugged, grinned and waved our way to the Sydney Cricket Ground, throwing small gifts into the crowd and generally having a fantastic time.

I was enormously glad that I had been motivated enough to go and I will endeavour to return each year. It was just great. I know that next year there will be more people from our brigade and more from Fire Control Centre - which will make it even more fun.



ABOVE: Susie McGregor with an unnamed participant in the Mardi Gras parade: "When I saw that yellow gown, I knew a photo together was required!" Susie said. Photo by Alison Church

HOW DO YOU MAKE A CAT 1 SMALLER?

Put it next to a Caterpillar 789 mining dump truck!

In February 2011 the Bulga Brigade in the Hunter Valley had the opportunity to get up close to a new Caterpillar 789 mining dump truck. By mining standards, with a 177 tonne payload it is a mid-size dump truck yet it dwarfs a NSW RFS Cat 1! For the motorheads, the 789C has a 69 litre turbocharged, aftercooled V16 diesel engine generating 1,417 kW. Fuel tank capacity is 3,222 litre. By comparison Bulga's Cat 1 weighs 13 tonne with an 8.226 litre engine producing 150 kW and carries 180 litres of diesel.

Photo by Steve Brown,
Hunter Valley Team



DON DEPPERLER

29 December 1950
– 31 January 2011



ABOVE: A guard of honour comprising of more than 425 NSW RFS volunteers and staff was formed at Don Deppeler's funeral

Donald (Don) Deppeler, Senior Deputy Captain of Marsden Park Brigade, Cumberland Zone, died on 31 January 2011 after suffering what appears to be a heart attack while driving the brigade's Cat 1.

Don was on a routine run to the Fire Control Centre to pick up equipment when he seems to have suffered a heart attack and collapsed behind the wheel. The vehicle crossed the median strip, two lanes of oncoming traffic, another median strip and road, before crashing into a tree and coming to rest on a front fence of someone's home. His crew mates on board, Wayne and Mark, did an outstanding job. Not only did they apply some

control to the steering wheel and apply the handbrake, they applied life sustaining first aid to Don, along with some assistance from a local resident, until additional emergency services arrived.

Police, Fire & Rescue NSW and the Ambulance Service of NSW were all in attendance. FRNSW extricated Don from the vehicle and performed CPR until the ambulance arrived. Further medical assistance was provided on scene before he was transported to hospital by ambulance. Unfortunately, and despite the best efforts of all concerned, he died not long after arriving in hospital.

Don had been an active member of the NSW RFS

since at least 1994 and a member of several brigades including Moss Vale, Goulburn Mulwaree, Shanes Park, Parkesbourne and for approximately the last six years Marsden Park.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said he had met and worked with Don on many occasions.

"He was an extremely active member, the quintessential volunteer that was always there to lend a hand no matter the task."

Don was very popular, well respected, highly regarded and much loved by members, not only in the Marsden Park Brigade and Cumberland Zone,

but right across NSW. In fact, his mates at the Cumberland Zone created a slide show of Don's time in the NSW RFS, which was shown as part of the funeral ceremony.

Don's funeral was attended by hundreds of NSW RFS volunteers and staff from across the State. The Commissioner gave the valedictory and gave a personal tribute to Don during the service. The NSW RFS Chaplains Ian and Kerry Spall conducted the funeral.

A guard of honour comprising of more than 425 NSW RFS volunteers and staff was formed for Don's casket at it arrived at the Crematorium.



MEMORIAL FOR EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Since June 2001 an annual Memorial Service has been held for Emergency Service Volunteers at Mrs Macquarie's Point in Sydney. This year's Service will be held at 10.30 am on Sunday 9 October 2011. All NSW RFS members are invited to attend.

Details of the Service will be advised closer to the date through the NSW RFS Intranet and MyRFS. For further information please contact Cassandra Wood, Membership and Strategic Services via email cassandra.wood@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Thoughts from a new guy

The Berowra RFB produces a quarterly newsletter and asks its members to contribute articles. Below is a letter that was received from one of the newest members of the brigade.

"From the moment that I joined the Berowra Brigade I felt welcome. Shy by nature, I felt a little nervous and out-of-place but was made to feel right at home. Everyone that I have met has been warm, honest and friendly.

The knowledge, expertise, guidance, help, advice and tips I have received have been greatly appreciated. Whenever I tried a task for the first time and failed miserably (even on the second, third and fourth attempts) I was never made the object of derision. Instead I was patiently encouraged to try again and again until that skill had been mastered.

The stories all of you have told me have kept me both informed and entertained. Social gatherings I have so far attended have been great fun. Whenever I cannot attend an event due to prior commitments I honestly feel a little miffed!!

My girlfriend is amazed at how happy I have been since joining the brigade and slightly suspicious at my willingness to drop everything on very short notice to 'attend training'. Workmates have also commented upon the general improvement of my demeanour. Privately I feel better about myself. I find that I walk with my head up, back straight and a spring in my step. This is not due to arrogance; it is because you have instilled confidence in me. I do, however, feel proud to be associated with people of your calibre.

I truly hope that I pass the upcoming course evaluation and live up to your expectations. I know that I have a lot more to learn and a long way to go and with this brigade I'm sure I'll achieve any goals placed before me. When the day arrives that I will be in your position welcoming the new members I can only pray that I will be able to maintain the high standard you have displayed.

You're a great bunch of guys and gals and don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

Leon Haxton, Berowra Brigade

Berowra Brigades' four newest members (L-R) Mal Desmarchelier, Craig Wilkins, Debbie Wain, Leon Haxton after the completion of their first Hazard Reduction. Photo by Josh Topham



NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK



"Here we are five happy and relieved faces from The Bays, Phegans Bay, Central Coast, (L-R) Noel, Mark (front), Stephen, Cimi and Blake, having just passed our BF (Bush Firefighter) Assessment on 5 March 2011. We call ourselves the Blanket Folders (BF)!

Training began in November 2010 with an intense theoretical weekend, followed by weekly practical training sessions with our fearless captain Chris Francis, our wonderful Deputy Captain Dave Taylor, and other supportive members of our brigade. We are now training with the rest of the team on Saturday mornings, which has been a real eye opener!

I attended The Bay's Open Day last year, as I was new to the community. There I discovered that I was living in Firezone 8, which got me thinking that the best way to learn how to protect my home was to learn to protect others as well.

My biggest challenge is that I have not experienced a fire! Imaginary scenarios are

invaluable training tools, but the real thing would have cemented what I was learning into reality.

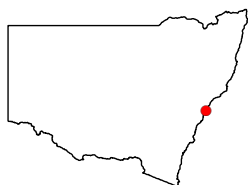
I am looking forward to becoming a dependable crew member, and to further my NSW RFS education via the training modules... I would like to drive the truck some day.

Thank you to our teachers at The Bays for their nurturing and strict support over the months. Thank you also goes out to our Assessment Team at Kariong Fire Com who made the day fun and less daunting than I thought it was going to be. Now we are qualified BF's, we can go out and gain the experience!

Cimi Ross, The Bays Brigade

BRIGADE IN PROFILE

Name of Brigade: Copacabana
Year Brigade formed: 1962
Current Captain: Chris Bygrave
Current President: Jim Bruton
District: Gosford



Can you give us a brief history of the brigade?

The Copacabana Rural Fire Brigade was formed in 1962. The brigade's first station was a single tanker bay, which later underwent extensions to create a second vehicle bay and office. The brigade occupied this station until June 2009, when it moved into its new building on the beach front at Copacabana. The brigade had no option other than to relocate, as the existing station was built on a stormwater easement. Our new station is currently home to our Category 1 tanker, Category 9 striker and new Category 11 pumper - as well as several of our members who always seem to have something to do at the station.

What are some unique parts of your brigade's history?

Copacabana Brigade has a unique group of very dedicated honorary members known as 'The Crafty Ladies'. These women are from Broadwater Court Retirement Village in nearby Kincaid. They work tirelessly preparing art and craft items and then donate all money raised from the sale of these to our brigade. The ladies

have been involved with the brigade for over 10 years and have contributed more than \$27,000 to the brigade. Money donated by the Crafty Ladies is used to purchase better equipment for our vehicles and station. To say thank you for this wonderful contribution, the brigade put on barbecue for the ladies, who really enjoy the company of the Copacabana Brigade members.

What are some recent milestones the brigade has achieved?

Since the mid-1990s the brigade has been working towards building a new fire station. As the brigade had become one of the busiest and most reliable brigades in the District, it had become clear that the brigade needed bigger premises. A new station finally became a reality in July 2009 with the brigade moving into a new building on the beach front at Copacabana. The new building features three vehicle bays, a multi-purpose area, an office, kitchen and a mezzanine training room. Diligent fund-raising by brigade members including the Crafty Ladies' support, meant that

the brigade itself contributed more than \$35,000 to the project. This money was used to pay for the training room, remote control roller doors, air conditioning, concrete paths, painting and furniture. At the end of 2010 the brigade was delivered a brand new Category 11 urban pumper to enhance fire protection for the local community.

What type of area do you cover? (E.g. farm/urban/bushland)

Copacabana Brigade covers a very diverse area. There are approximately 1,500 homes in the town of Copacabana and the town is surrounded by dense bushland, including forest and coastal scrub. The brigade regularly responds to calls for assistance in the neighbouring brigades of Avoca Beach and Macmasters Beach. These neighbouring areas include multi-story structures, petrol stations, national parks and significant roads.

What types of incidents does your brigade attend?

Copacabana Brigade attends between 90 and 120 incidents per year involving everything

from bush fires to structure fires and motor vehicle accidents. We also regularly enjoy an evening walk on the beach attending to illegal bonfires.

What vehicles do you have?

The brigade currently has a 1998 Isuzu dual cab Category 1 tanker, a 2004 Land Rover Defender dual cab Category 9 striker and a 2010 Hino Category 11 urban pumper.

The brigade was to be delivered a brand new tanker in 2001 but was disappointed to learn that the new model vehicles were too high for the old brigade station. So we have had to wait for our new station before we could have a new tanker.

What type of training do you conduct and how do you go about doing this?

Copacabana Brigade is a very active brigade, training twice a week. Recently we have been conducting joint training with Avoca Beach Brigade on a Wednesday night and have been finding that our members are getting more out of training with a larger group, as well as being able

to share the experience from both brigades. This also takes the pressure off the training officers as each brigade takes turns to organise training. It also helps us to maintain a good working relationship with our neighbouring brigade.

As there are many younger members in both brigades, we like to keep our training practical, interesting, relevant and fun! We feel it is most important to have everyone walking away from training having enjoyed being there. Sessions can range from basic hose and pump drills, to structure fire training involving several crews and breathing apparatus.

What are some unique skills and features of your brigade?

Copacabana Brigade has changed significantly in the last 20 years. It has transformed from been known as 'Dad's Army' dominated by local retirees who could always be counted on to turn out, to being now known as 'the kindergarten brigade'. This came about because many of the current members of the brigade joined at a very young age. Many of them now fill significant roles in the brigade including the current Captain, Senior Deputy Captain, Equipment Officer, Station Officer, First Aid Officer and Executive Member - all of whom are under the age of 25 and have been with the brigade since the age of 14! So while they have a lot of experience and commitment, they are also quite young.

We find the enthusiasm of the younger members is a driving force within the brigade. They don't have a 'this is how it has always been' attitude so they are always coming up with new ideas, new ways of achieving tasks and that includes embracing new technology.

A brigade with such a large contingent of young members, however, comes with its own challenges. There is stress put on the brigade's drivers as many of the young members are not eligible to obtain a truck licence. We also have a constant battle ensuring the young ones tidy up after themselves around the station. This is where the older members keep a nice balance and remind the young ones it is not all about riding in the truck - maintenance is equally important.

The brigade strives to have all of its members trained to at least Village Firefighter standard and First Aid qualified. Recently a number of members completed the Safe Working on Roofs training, as well as advanced oxygen resuscitation.

Within the brigade we have breathing apparatus (CABA) operators, tree fellers and crosscut chainsaw operators, a Deputy Group Captain, Rural Fire Instructors, Rural Fire Assessors, prescribed burn supervisors and community safety assistants.

What are some unique features of your community?

Copacabana is a beachfront community consisting of approximately 1,500 homes, a school, 13 small shops and a surf club. Much of the community is surrounded by dense bushland and coastal scrub. There are many steep hills and tight roads in Copacabana and access to many properties is quite limited due to the steep slopes. This proves challenging for the brigade, and highlights the need for regular area familiarisation.

We find the enthusiasm of the younger members is a driving force within the brigade. They don't have a 'this is how it has always been' attitude so they are always coming up with new ideas, new ways of achieving tasks and that includes embracing new technology.

Copacabana Brigade has a strong working relationship with the Copacabana Community Association and Neighbourhood Watch group. Both these groups use our station to hold their meetings. The Community Association also played a large role in the building of our new station and without them we would not have the facility that we do now.

What community events does your brigade participate in?

In 2009 the brigade attended the first Copacabana Community Christmas Carols by assisting with road closures and selling glow sticks. It appears this may have become an annual event as the 2010 Carols were of equal success despite unfavourable weather.

Every year the brigade attends the local festival at Kincumber, conducting fire demonstrations and bringing along a fire truck for display. The brigade also has regular visits from the local primary school students who always enjoy visiting the fire station.

Copacabana Brigade participates in the annual NSW RFS Open Day, and was delighted with the success last year with over 100 people visiting our new station that day.

Written by Christian Yanni,
Senior Deputy Captain,
Copacabana Brigade
All photos courtesy of Leigh
Pilkington, Significant Imagery,
Avoca Beach Brigade



OPPOSITE PAGE: Copacabana Brigade members at the official opening of their new building.
ABOVE: Glen Beasley and Ashley Bruton practicing forcible entry on cars at training.
RIGHT: Brigade member Hannah Langbridge practices forcible entry on cars at training.

BRIGADE IN PROFILE

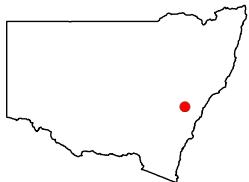
Name of Brigade: Mt Wilson/
Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade
– First Responder

Year brigade formed: 1958

Current Captain: Beth Raines

Current President: David Howell

District: Blue Mountains



Can you give us a brief history of the brigade?

In its current incarnation, the brigade was formed after the fires of 1957 when the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine brigades combined. At that time the Mt Wilson station was established as headquarters for the brigade. Documents in our local Historic Society archives indicate that a brigade at Mt Wilson was originally formed in 1939.

What are some unique parts of your brigade's history?

The first fire truck at Mt Irvine was a blitz, and the second was a 1945 Studebaker with a water tank on it. The Studebaker was sold in 1992. It still goes and its hoses are all in working order, in fact it was sold on the condition that it would be made available for firefighting if required. After it left our brigade the Studebaker went on to have a successful movie career. You may have seen it repainted as a Darwin Fire Brigade vehicle in the movie Australia!

In 2007 the brigade volunteered to be the first rural fire brigade in the State to join the Community First Responder (CFR) Program - a joint initiative of the NSW RFS and the Ambulance Service of NSW. Seven members of the brigade were trained to provide immediate emergency medical assistance pending the arrival of paramedics. Approximately one third of all incident calls that the brigade responds to are medical emergencies. Previous to the CFR program starting call outs were split equally between fire calls and storm damage/ trees down.

What are some recent milestones the brigade has achieved?

In the late 1990s a new building replaced an old two door brick garage as our new brigade headquarters at Mt Wilson. Later this year the brigade is planning to expand the building to house a larger number of vehicles. The Mt Irvine station is a single door brick building in which it is increasingly difficult to house the larger vehicles. The brigade has plans to enlarge this building as well.

There is no mains water supply at Mt Wilson or Mt Irvine so securing a reliable source of water is always a priority. Thanks to the generosity of residents five 35,000 litre tanks have been placed at strategic locations throughout the two villages and an Emergency Management Australia Grant, received in 2006, allowed the construction of two 120,000 litre concrete tanks, one beside each station.

An observant and quick thinking member secured an unused communications tower (almost for free) for the brigade. Both the NSW RFS and Ambulance Service of NSW have installed equipment on the tower which is vital in providing better communications, especially for canyon rescues in the surrounding rugged terrain and the brigade station will be ready to act as a Div Com (Divisional Command) in major incidents. The brigade has also installed its own weather station and aims to have current weather details available on the brigade's website.

What type of area do you cover?

Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine are isolated villages in the upper Blue Mountains surrounded by the Blue Mountains World Heritage Wilderness. They are on the remains of old volcanoes and their rich basalt soil results in lush temperate rainforest vegetation, a complete contrast to the surrounding dry sclerophyll vegetation of sandstone country. Mt Wilson developed in the nineteenth century as a 'hill station' (it is at 1,000m and two hours drive from Sydney), a place for wealthy Sydneysiders to escape the summer heat. Today it is still a weekend retreat and famous



for its European style gardens. Mt Irvine at 800m is more rural in character and is famous for its walnut and chestnut trees.

What types of incidents does your brigade attend?

As most emergency services are some distance from our villages, our local brigade attends to a wide range of emergencies – bush fires, structural fires, motor vehicle accidents on Bell's Line of Road, search and rescues, storm damage and medical emergencies. We also provide assistance to other brigades and states and sent crews to assist Victorian firefighters during the 2009 Black Saturday fires in Victoria.

What vehicles do you have?

One Cat 11 Pumper, one Cat 1, one twin cab Cat 7, one Cat 9 Landcruiser and one Personnel Carrier Hilux (fitted out as a Community First Responder vehicle).

What type of training do you conduct and how do you go about doing this?

As most of our members are weekenders, we conduct training on the first Sunday of each month. Several of our regular training days are

devoted to joint training with other brigades in our sector. Occasionally, extra training sessions are provided. In late 2010 we provided training for volunteers working as station officers during a major incident. There was also a two-day Remote Area Firefighting Team (RAFT) exercise in our area. Of the 30 or so in the Blue Mountains RAFT team members, three are from our brigade. Community First Responder training is held on the first Friday of every month with the assistance of paramedics from Lithgow Ambulance.

What are some unique skills and features of your brigade?

In villages where the population largely consists of professionals from nearby Sydney, there is no shortage of management and strategic skills; but with so many weekenders, finding a crew mid-week can sometimes be a challenge. We are lucky to have a highly energetic and committed captain in Beth Raines - the only female captain in the District. Her leadership skills and great personal charm have ensured strong support for the brigade



ABOVE: We are lucky to have a highly energetic and committed captain in Beth Raines - the only female captain in the District. TOP: Willy to Billy: Our largest fund raising event is a 34km bush run from Mt Wilson to Bilpin. ABOVE: Our catering team are renowned for their home made cakes, slices and scones!

in the community. Her abilities are recognised throughout the District and she recently travelled to Lord Howe Island as part of a team of four to provide training and support for the local rural fire brigade there.

Community engagement is considered an important part of preparing the community for bush fire emergencies. Street meetings were held throughout the two villages last year covering all streets to advise the residents on property protection. Street coordinators have been appointed throughout the two villages to act as an information source in the case of a bush fire, thereby freeing up phones at the station and allowing the captain and station officer to concentrate on crews and managing the incident. As the villages are isolated, properties are large and most residents are weekenders, members are kept up to date via email and through the brigade's website.

The beautiful World Heritage Wilderness that surrounds Mt Wilson attracts many canyoners and bushwalkers.

The terrain is rugged and some of the fitter members of the brigade have developed skills and knowledge to assist in the rescue of injured and lost parties. A local group of NSW RFS volunteers regularly explore different canyons in the Wollangambe to familiarise themselves with the area – all hard work of course! We have been told that the other emergency services enjoy coming to Mt Wilson, not only for the professional assistance they receive but also for the hospitality. Our catering team are renowned for their home made cakes and slices!

What are some unique features of your community?

Between the two villages there are approximately 250 residents, 70 percent of whom are weekenders. A large proportion of residents are retirees. Of the approximately 75 permanent residents, only 12 are under the age of 50.

The peak times for visitors are Spring and particularly Autumn when the colours of the trees are so spectacular and the walnuts and chestnuts are

ready for harvesting! Visitors at that time of year bring the population up to 500 on weekends. The World Heritage Wilderness around Mt Wilson attracts many bushwalkers, canyoners and campers. In the warmer months their numbers can peak on weekends at 200 per day. The villages are accessed from Bell's Line of Road, a busy, largely two-lane road from Sydney to Lithgow. NRMA has declared this road: 'currently one of the most dangerous in Australia'.

What community events does your brigade participate in?

Our largest fund raising event is a 34km bush run from Mt Wilson to Bilpin (in the neighbouring district of Hawkesbury). The run is organised jointly by the Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine and Bilpin Brigades and is colloquially known as the "Willy to Billy". Over 350 runners registered for the event in 2010 and it is one of the most popular in the running calendar. The run is renowned for the beauty of the scenery and the rural hospitality and friendliness of

the volunteers at the start, at the drink stations along the way and the barbecue at the end. This year the start was delayed 30 minutes which gave some contestants, according to comments on running websites, the chance to score a 'personal best' in eating scones!

Any final thoughts or comments you would like to make?

The brigade receives strong support from the community but with an ageing and largely non-resident population, it is always a challenge putting a crew together. Nevertheless, a core group of about 20 very active members led by a very committed captain, means that we always manage to acquit ourselves well. We can always be relied upon to provide support to other brigades and emergency services in the mountains and further afield.

Written by Kathleen Oakes, District Administration Officer - NSW RFS Blue Mountains District and Volunteer, Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Brigade
Photos by Kathleen Oakes

BRIGADE IN PROFILE



What is a Community First Responder

The Community First Responders provide a quick initial local response to Triple Zero (000) calls to Ambulance Service of NSW by providing initial emergency care before the ambulance arrives.

Another vital part of the First Responder's role is to meet the ambulance and escort it to the patient to ensure no time is wasted. They are able to locate and operate all equipment on an ambulance to assist the paramedics once they arrive.

In a medical emergency the immediate response should still be to call Triple Zero (000). At the same time as the call goes out to the ambulance, First Responders will be paged and can respond to the patient immediately.

The Community First Responder program was devised as a practical solution to the health needs of remote communities where an ambulance can take half an hour or more to attend a medical emergency.

Community First Responders are accredited and operate under Ambulance Service of NSW governance and training. NSW RFS volunteers respond under a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the Ambulance Service of NSW.

The Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Brigade was well placed to provide NSW first batch of First Responders already having a defibrillators and two oxygen resuscitation units purchased with community donations.

Why did you decide to take up the CFR program at Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine?

Our isolation means that an ambulance can take up to 45 minutes to arrive. On top of that, most properties are identified by names not numbers and there are several dirt roads and long entrance driveways making it quite confusing for the ambulance service.

The decision to join the CFR program was crystallised when a resident fell and broke their

leg. The ambulance couldn't locate the property and while they eventually got directions from a local, the medical assistance was quite delayed.

Now, we can provide the first response for any medical emergency in the area and directing the ambulance has become part of the service.

How many of your brigade are involved in the CFR?

Seven brigade members are trained and regularly participate.

Did they have previous medical experience?

Six of the seven in the team had no medical experience and one person was trained as a nurse but had not practised for many years.

What kind of training is involved?

Community First Responders receive intensive training from Ambulance Service of NSW officers and from Charles Sturt University trainers.

Successful graduates are known as Honorary Ambulance Officer – First Responder and are trained in the skills required to sustain life until an ambulance arrives.

First Responders are qualified to administer CPR techniques and defibrillation in the case of heart attacks, and to administer specified medications. They are able to deal with diabetic emergencies, anaphylaxis (severe and life-threatening allergic reaction), and monitor vital signs until the arrival of qualified medical assistance.

Once the First Responders are certified, each person is supplied with a personal kit and the brigade also has a kit kept at the Mt Wilson Fire Station. NSW RFS provided a Personnel Carrier vehicle for transport and the Ambulance

ABOVE: In 2007 the brigade volunteered to be the first rural fire brigade in the State to join the Community First Responder Program - a joint initiative of the NSW RFS and the Ambulance Service of NSW

2011

ST FLORIAN'S DAY 2011:

The NSW Rural Fire Service Internal Bravery and Service Awards

It's the day in the Service calendar when pomp and ceremony are invited to the NSW RFS Headquarters.

On 4 May, St Florian's Day every year NSW RFS Headquarter's hosts a ceremony to present the Internal Bravery and Service Awards to acknowledge the extraordinary acts of bravery and service of volunteers across NSW.

This year it began with the NSW RFS Pipes and Drums and then the Commissioner and Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency

Services, Steve Cansdell, presented the Awards. At this year's ceremony 11 individual and six group recipients were acknowledged.

The Awards were instituted on 1 February 1999. The establishment of an internal awards system is authorised under the Rural Fires Act 1997 and accompanying Regulations. Eligibility for these Awards is extended to all members of the Service as defined within the

Act and Regulations. The fourth of May is chosen each year for the Awards Ceremony as it is the Feast Day of St Florian, Patron Saint of Firefighters and International Firefighter's Day.

To read the stories about each of the Awards you can read or download the Awards Booklet from the MyRFS website posted on 4 May 2011 or watch video footage of the day on the NSW RFS website.





THE COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION FOR BRAVERY

**Group Captain Mark Hoskinson
Bland Temora Zone, Region West**

Late in the afternoon of 21 December 2007, following heavy rain in the area, Mr Hoskinson was advised that a mother and her three young children were stranded in their car on a causeway. Mr Hoskinson drove to a neighbour's property in failing light and torrential rain where he swapped his utility for a tractor.

The floodwaters intensified to the extent that water was penetrating the cabin and the tractor was being pushed sideways. Mr Hoskinson persisted with the search in these dangerous conditions and eventually found the vehicle with the family still inside with water lapping the

windows and seeping under the doors. Aligning the tractor with the car, he got everyone out through the windows and into the cabin of the tractor and drove them to safety.

Mr Hoskinson then received advice that two men were also stranded in their utility. He drove the tractor to the area and found the men trapped with water up to the windows of the vehicle. He placed a winch cable on their stranded vehicle and pulled them to safety.

Mr Hoskinson's actions in rescuing six people stranded in floodwater under dangerous conditions were in line with the best traditions of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

THE COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL)

**Firefighter Christopher Smith
Firefighter Colin Irwin
The Lakes Team, Region East**



THE COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (INDIVIDUAL)

**Bernie Brompton
Headquarters, Region East**



THE COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL)

**Group Officer Phillip William Baer
South West Slopes, Region West**



THE COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (INDIVIDUAL)

**Velma Walker
Shoalhaven District, Region South**



THE COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (INDIVIDUAL)

**Deputy Group Captain John Oliver
Goolmangar RFB,
Northern Rivers Team, Region North**



**THE COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION
(INDIVIDUAL)**

**Deputy Group Captain Adrian De Hoon
Woodburn RFB, Northern Rivers Team, Region North**



**THE COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION
(INDIVIDUAL)**

**Group Captain Alan Bier
North West Zone and Bogan District, Region North**



**THE COMMISSIONER'S
CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION
(UNIT)**

**Woodburn Rural Fire Brigade
Northern Rivers,
Region North**

THE COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

**Gilgandra Rural Fire Brigade
Castlereagh Zone, Region North**



THE COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

**The Hornsby/Ku-Ring-Gai District Training Team
Region East**





**THE COMMISSIONER'S
CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION
(UNIT)**

**Organising Committee,
Annual Region North
Exercise Region North**

THE COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

**Lightning Ridge Headquarters Brigade
North West Zone and Bogan District, Region North**



THE COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

**Southampton Rural Fire Brigade Crew
Clarence Valley District, Region North**



**The Commissioner's Certificate
of Commendation (Individual)**

**Muriel Stevens
Grace Fletcher
Tarana RFB, Lithgow,
Region East**

These sisters began their association with the Volunteer Bushfire Brigade in March 1938 and have served and supported the Tarana branch of the Volunteer Bushfire Brigade since its formation in November 1939.

After terrible fires in 1944 special mention was made of Muriel Stevens and Grace

Fletcher for their tremendous efforts in providing food to the firefighters for the duration of the emergency.

At all fundraisers, community events, training days, working bees, hazard reduction burns and fires, Grace and Muriel have helped with catering, from setup, serving and cleanup. Muriel Stevens has been heard saying on more than one occasion "we cannot do the work but we can feed you." This shows their dedication to the Brigade and their willingness to be involved and assist in whatever way possible. They support

fundraising efforts, boost moral and give their time freely to assist the Brigade.

Remarkably, despite their advancing years, they still remain active members and have been valuable members of their local Brigade for over 71 years.

As Muriel and Grace were unable to travel to the NSW RFS Headquarters for the ceremony, Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons travelled to Tarana to present them with their Certificates of Commendation.

RELEASE OF REVISED INTERNAL AWARDS

As part of the 2011 St Florian's Day celebrations it was announced that there had been a revision of the Internal Awards. This included a complete redesign of the Award for Valour, and the introduction of lapel pins for The Commissioner's Award for Valour, Commendation for Bravery and Commendation for Service.

The redesign of the Award for Valour was undertaken by Awards Officer, Melissa Mobberley. It consists of an eight pointed cross emanating from the crest of the NSW Rural Fire Service, and is an antique gold colour. The Award for Valour is awarded to recognise an act of conspicuous courage involving exceptional bravery under circumstances of great peril where there has been a clear and significant risk to life. To date there has only been two recipients of the award for valour, since the Internal Awards inception in 1999.

Further information on awards can be found via MYRFS, Intranet or by contacting the Awards Section at awards@rfs.nsw.gov.au.



The Award for Valour is awarded to recognise an act of conspicuous courage involving exceptional bravery under circumstances of great peril where there has been a clear and significant risk to life.



FROM LEFT: The new Commendation for Service. The new Award for Valour. The new Commendation for Bravery.

meet the members

YOUNG MEMBERS TAKE A STAND

By Amanda Scott,
Acting Youth
Development Officer

After a State-wide search, the NSW Rural Fire Service has appointed nine young people for the inaugural NSW RFS Young Members Group.

In March 2010 the Commissioner, in conjunction with the RFS/ RFS Membership Services Consultative Committee, endorsed a proposal to establish a sub-group specifically for young members of the NSW RFS.

A call for nominations went out and 18 outstanding applicants from brigades across NSW were invited to attend a leadership and training program in Sydney. Of these 18, nine were selected to form the inaugural Young Members Group. The Group members are:

Elise Tasker (Chair)
Jason Conn (Deputy Chair)
Petia Grear
Stephanie Nadalini
Tiffany Outridge
Shane Hole
Lawrence Knight
Patrick Mooney
Christian Yanni
(RFS representative).

These nine were selected for their leadership potential and their ability to represent the diversity of young volunteers across NSW. Members come from a variety of backgrounds ranging from those engaged in full-time study and living in

metropolitan locations, to those working full-time on farms in remote areas. All NSW RFS regions are represented on the Group.

The Group will meet regularly to discuss matters pertaining to the young members of the NSW RFS. Their primary role is to advise the Membership Services Consultative Committee and to provide advice to other business areas of the NSW RFS. The delegates are appointed for a one year term, after which there will be an opportunity for other young members to apply for selection.

First Young Members Forum in Bathurst

At their first meeting in December 2010 the Group agreed that their priority was to consult with other young members. Consequently the inaugural Young Members Forum was held in Bathurst in late April 2011 with over 60 members attending.

The young members' energy and enthusiasm attracted a lot of interest both within and without the Service. Over 30 mentions of the forum were made in the media over the two days of the forum including a feature on the Central West WIN TV news.

Chair of the Young Members Group, Firefighter Elise Tasker was thrilled to be promoting the Service in this way. She said it shows that the Service is leading the way in embracing everything that young people have to offer. The media were also interested in how many women involved in the young members forum.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons joined the forum on the second day and acknowledged the important part young members have to play in setting the direction for the NSW RFS today and into the future. He engaged with the young members and sought their opinion in the three key topics they had identified for the NSW RFS today: communications, leadership and bridging the gap between young and older generations.

The Commissioner joked that, due to the ageing demographic of the Service, the Young Members forum was one of the rare occasions where he felt old.

"By volunteering their time and taking on a proactive role," he said, "our young members are demonstrating they have the skills, abilities and attributes to be future leaders."



Name: Elise Tasker (Chair)
Brigade: Illawong
District: Sutherland
Region: East
Age: 24

How long have you been in the NSW RFS?
Since 2009.

Why did you join?

Because I wanted to do something out of the ordinary and engaging.

What keeps you busy outside the NSW RFS?

Work, spending time with family and friends.

What's your most memorable experience in the NSW RFS?

Attending the Women in Firefighting Conference in 2010 and my first hazard reduction burn where I able to put all my training in to practice.

What is your favourite food?

Vegemite and cheese toasties.



Name: Jason Conn
(Deputy Chair)
Brigade: Comobella
District: Orana
Region: West
Age: 21

How long have you been in the NSW RFS?
Since 2002.

Why did you join?

Living on a farm, protecting property has always been an issue. I joined to give a hand to those who need help in the hope that they would help me if I needed it. I also wanted to be involved with a community organisation.

The Young Members Group would like to hear from young members about their concerns, aspirations, ideas and experiences in the NSW RFS. The Young Members Group can be contacted at: youngmembersgroup@rfs.nsw.gov.au

What keeps you busy outside the NSW RFS?
Work.

What's your most memorable experience in the NSW RFS?
Fighting a bush fire at Goonoo.

What is your favourite food?
Roast lamb.



Name: Petia Grear
Brigade: Dumaresq
District: New England
Region: North
Age: 21

How long have you been in the NSW RFS?
Four years.

Why did you join?
My best friend's dad was an L&D officer in the RFS so my friend and I decided to join up.

What keeps you busy outside the NSW RFS?
Work and Facebook.

What's your most memorable experience in the NSW RFS?
Putting out a spot fire at Brooms Head.

What is your favourite food?
Food in general.



Name: Stephanie Nadalini
Brigade: Gulgong DC
District: Cudgegong
Region: West
Age: 18

How long have you been in the NSW RFS?
Almost two years.

Why did you join?
I wanted to help the community and it was a new experience.

What keeps you busy outside the NSW RFS?
Work, work and more work. University as well soon.

What's your most memorable experience in the NSW RFS?

I'm arachnophobic. And on one fire call I had spiders take refuge on my body, particularly my helmet, and they tried for my face. Memorable for all the wrong reasons! :)

What is your favourite food?
mmmm...have to go with parmigiana.



Name: Tiffany Outridge
Brigade: Mooney Mooney
District: Gosford
Region: East
Age: 21

How long have you been in the NSW RFS?
Seven and a half years.

Why did you join?
I joined because my parents did.

What keeps you busy outside the NSW RFS?
Uni and life.

What's your most memorable experience in the NSW RFS?
My first hazard reduction.

What is your favourite food?
Pink Lady apples.



Name: Shane Hole
Brigade: Shoalhaven Heads
District: Shoalhaven
Region: South
Age: 21

How long have you been in the NSW RFS?
Four years.

Why did you join?
To gain life skills and valuable knowledge which I could then impart onto my community in times of need. The satisfaction

of working in a close-knit team to ensure the safety of members within my community keeps me enthusiastic about the Service.

What keeps you busy outside the NSW RFS?
My Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in Management and Human Resource Management, at the University of Wollongong. I'm also preparing for the Associate Degree in Policing Practice down in Goulburn in 2011, while also having more than enough time to enjoy a social evening with my mates.

What's your most memorable experience in the NSW RFS?
Going out-of-area to Blacktown for storm damage and Inverell for firefighting. I also hold a high regard for the local training and social events held within my local Shoalhaven Heads brigade.

What is your favourite food?
Ummm... I'd have to say Cadbury Caramello chocolate!



Name: Christian Yanni
Brigade: Copacabana
District: Gosford
Region: East
Age: 24

How long have you been in the NSW RFS?
10 years.

Why did you join?
I have been interested since I was really young.

What keeps you busy outside the NSW RFS?
Work.

What's your most memorable experience in the NSW RFS?
The 2003 Canberra fires.

What is your favourite food?
Anything which contains sugar.



Name: Lawrence Knight
Brigade: Jamberoo
District: Illawarra
Region: East
Age: 21

How long have you been in the NSW RFS?
Four or five years.

Why did you join?
To do something for my community.

What keeps you busy outside the NSW RFS?
Uni, sport, work.

What's your most memorable experience in the NSW RFS?
My first Section 44 fire.

What is your favourite food?
A baked dinner with Yorkshire puddings.



Name: Patrick Mooney
Brigade: Condobolin
District: Lachlan
Region: West
Age: 22

How long have you been in the NSW RFS?
About 10 years.

Why did you join?
We need people to help us look after our property. So if I want their help, I need to help them look after theirs. I also have a real interest in the organisation.

What keeps you busy outside the NSW RFS?
Working and having a few drinks with friends.

What's your most memorable experience in the NSW RFS?
Going down to help out with the 2009 Victorian fires.

What is your favourite food?
I will eat anything!

Medals at the POLICE GAMES

Sarnia Rusbridge from Galston Brigade represented the NSW RFS in the recent 2011 Police Games in March winning one Gold, three Silver and three Bronze medals.

She is seen here on her horse Mantario during the Cross Country event of the Equestrian Games at the Hawkesbury Showground.

Also representing the NSW RFS at the Equestrian Games were Marguerite McKeown from Grose Vale Brigade who won one Silver and one Bronze and Julia Sercombe from Blaxland Ridge Brigade who won two Silver and two Bronze medals.

"Although the fires didn't top the Police, we gave it a darn good shot and had a blast in the process!" said Julia Sercombe. Julia also competed in athletic events bringing home a Silver in the Novice women's cycling and a Gold in the Cross Country event for her age group.

The Police Games ran during the month of March in an atmosphere of friendly competition between members of the many emergency services organisations from across NSW.

If you would like to represent NSW RFS in the 2012 Police Games please go to their website www.nswpolicesport.com to find out more information.



Photo courtesy of Free Rein Photography.



Cadets honoured twice on Australia Day

Cadets from the Young Shire received double honours on Australia Day this year.

Not only did they attend the celebrations on Darling Harbour to receive their award for winning the Cadet title at the 2010 State Championships, they were also nominated for a Community Service award by Young Shire Council – presented on the same day.

The Community Service award was given to the community service organisation or group which has made the most outstanding contribution in the local community in the past year.

Zone Manager Superintendent Trevor Reeves says, "These kids are a terrific example of the young people in our community and are not only an asset to the RFS but an asset to our whole community."

Throughout the Young Shire there are 23 junior members spread over seven brigades. Despite their age the cadets from South West Slopes Zone are veterans of local, State, and National competitions having represented their Zone at the 2008 State Championships in Tweed and the 2009 National Fire Cadet Championships in Penrith.

With so many young members in the area, selecting the best team for the 2010 State Championships became a difficult task. Superintendent Reeves, who helped select and

train the team, says the team managers looked for six cadets who would work together well as a team and have fun during the training sessions leading up to the Championships.

The team were given tremendous support by their parents, the District and by the management team. Training sessions were well attended and trainers kept the focus on teamwork, leadership and basic skills. "We always said this isn't about winning competitions, it's about participating and gaining the skills to assist the community," said Superintendent Reeves.

Congratulations to the Young Shire Council Cadets and to the many dedicated family members and NSW RFS volunteers who assisted the cadets throughout the training - particularly the two chaperones, Sam Tout and Leanne Savva.

ABOVE: The team are a composite team of junior members: (L-R) Melanie Savva (Koorawatha Brigade), Jesse Edgerton (Bribbaree Brigade), Broden Holland (Thuddungra Brigade), Tom Reeves (Boara Brigade), Simon Mclsaac (Wambanumba Brigade) and Alex Tout (Murringo Brigade), pictured with Assistant Commissioner Dominic Lane at the State Championships in 2010. Photo by Anthony Clark, Media Services.

STAR IN THE RANKS

NSW RFS members at Llandilo Brigade are exceptionally proud of their 'star' probationary senior firefighter - Sarah Earl.

Sixteen-year-old Sarah is not just a dedicated firefighter, she is also blitzing it as a singer in the Penrith area. The photo here shows her performing before the game at the NRL Penrith Panthers home game at the Credit Unions Australia Stadium.

In 2010 Sarah performed twice at the NRL Panthers, as well as the Penrith Working Truck Show and was awarded First Place at the Penrith District Show Search for a Star Talent Quest. In true volunteer spirit she also offers her singing services at the local NSW RFS events.

Sarah joined the Llandilo Cadets in June 2007, she has been Junior Captain and has completed her BF training. In September 2010 she became a probationary senior member. Sarah was the team captain at the 2008 RFS Championships at Tweed Heads and is the Captain of the team representing Llandilo Brigade at the Dubbo Championships.

Sarah feels at home at Llandilo Brigade, given that her grandfather, dad and cousin are all active members as well. Proud grandfather and Llandilo Captain Perce Denton said: "Sarah has an exceptional voice and talent and is a great ambassador for our Service."





Mother and baby on bank of Chobe River in Kasane. Photo by Sandra Huer

THE INTERESTING PLACES

By Grant Wargren,
Group Captain,
Hornsby/ Ku-ring-gai District

THE NSW RFS SENDS YOU TO...

A disastrous fire season in Botswana in 2008 followed by an even more devastating season in 2010 sparked an international response. As well as the death of 12 villagers, the country lost around 11 million hectares in 2008 and near to 13 million hectares in 2010.

Encouraged and supported by the State and Federal Governments, the NSW RFS has embarked on five-year partnership with Botswana titled the Botswana Fire Management Program.

Now in its second year the program has seen 33 NSW RFS members (including 19 volunteers) visit Botswana to offer training. Here two members share about their experience of being part of the program.

When I joined my local Bush Fire Brigade in 1977 I never expected the NSW RFS to send me much past the greater metropolitan area of Sydney. In fact our old Studebaker truck probably would not have made it much further! But here we are in 2011, and the Service is sending crews all around Australia and even internationally, not only to fight fires but to train firefighters.

In February 2011 three of us, Superintendent Bryan Daly, Inspector Steve Prior and myself, Group Officer Grant Wargren, departed for Botswana to undertake training on fireground management and ICS (Incident Control Systems) for members of the Department of Forest and Range Resources, police, military, Department of Wildlife and others in Botswana.

Our first stop was Maun in the north west of Botswana. We had a week there and ran several two-day workshops which were attended by a great diversity of people, some of whom had driven half way across the country to attend - so keen is their desire to learn. They were an interesting bunch. Some were field staff who fought the fires in 2008 and some were highly-ranked civil servants, responsible for the administration of whole districts.

The three of us Australians certainly had our eyes opened to the issues facing the locals. Now let's forget the fact that you get the occasional lion, elephant or leopard rushing out of the bush when you have a fire, there are other larger challenges...

The first of these is communications. Can you imagine how interesting it would make fire management if the incident controller at the fire could only give one SITREP (Situational Report) each day and had to drive 250km to get radio coverage so he could make that report? Well that is one of their challenges.

Another is the equipment available. Next time you think of complaining about a hard days firefighting have a thought for the Botswana locals whose main firefighting tools are beaters made out of an aluminium handle with a thick piece of rubber on the end. (See photo)

After our week in Maun, we headed to the capital of Botswana, Gaborone, where we conducted a further two workshops. One of the workshops was attended by the President's Scientific Committee for Disaster Management and the other by police and some members of the military. These workshops were very different to the ones in Maun and gave us an insight into the higher level challenges the country faces in putting together an effective fire management structure. One key discussion focussed on how to develop a culture of volunteering in Botswana. It will no doubt be the subject of future cooperation between the NSW RFS and Botswana.

All up it was a fascinating trip and gave us a real insight into the issues facing Botswana. I hope that it also provided a constructive introduction for them on how to organise a fireground and how the ICS used by the NSW RFS so successfully, can assist them. More specialised training in ICS is planned for the coming years.

On the weekends there were some great opportunities to see some of the wonders of Botswana. We managed to spend a few very long days seeing the local wildlife, driving around fire breaks and seeing the sights on offer. It was a wonderful experience and certainly not one that any of us ever even dreamt of when we first joined up.

AFRICA TIME

By Sandra Huer, Senior Deputy Captain, Oaks Flats Brigade

Imagine the challenge of fighting fires in a largely desert landscape, where lions may snack on you, elephants and rhinos may stomp on you and crocodiles are usually lurking nearby whenever you need water? It's even worse when the only tools you have to actually fight fires (and fend off predators) are beaters, shovels and branches from the closest tree!

These are just some of the many challenges I came to appreciate after spending two weeks in Botswana as part of the NSW RFS program being assisted by AusAID.

I was like an excited school kid after receiving confirmation that I was selected as a part of the project and would be given the opportunity to explore and experience a vastly different culture and way of life. My preconceptions of Africa were of deserts, poverty and a lack of running water and infrastructure. As a result I think I packed half my local chemist shop! But as it turned out, I was misinformed - Botswana is developed and wealthy.

The Botswana Fire Management Program is focusing on developing firefighting capability, strategic fire management and fire line decision making in Botswana. To achieve these goals NSW RFS members have delivered training in ICS, basic firefighter skills, and are assisting to develop an entirely new fire management structure within Botswana's Department of Forestry and Range Resources (DFRR).

The project is being implemented by using a progressive layered approach, with individual teams travelling to Botswana and building on the previous team's work. The real challenge is how to

impart 100 years of firefighting management experience without the natural and gradual organisational learning that the NSW RFS has experienced.

The current success of the project, marked by the training of over 1,000 firefighters across the country and significant money being invested by the Republic of Botswana, will only really become apparent once effective control and containment of fires occurs.

Animals are a large part of the psyche of the community and provide income and employment through tourism. Driving in Botswana can be interesting, dodging donkeys, goats, cows, baboons and elephants on the roads.

The Batswana people live harmoniously with the animals and animals roam freely in and around villages and towns. A particularly unique-to-Africa story was relayed to me while I was over there. One day a large Mamba snake was apparently known to be crossing the main road between two large towns in the north of Botswana. To protect the snake, the road was closed for 40 minutes. I cannot imagine that happening in Australia.

I spoke to some firefighters in northern Botswana and asked them what it was like to fight fires amongst predatory animals such as lions that might

like to eat you. One of them earnestly replied: "When you put out the fire and turn to realise a lion is under the tree watching you, you know he is your friend if you haven't been eaten." I guess that is a simple, but sound enough, basis for friendship.

The Batswana people are very proud and friendly, they want to get to you know you. When walking around in towns we stood out because of our strange uniforms and white faces, but people would stop and want to know who we were and what we were doing in Botswana. I felt proud to explain about the role of Australia and the NSW RFS in particular.

BELOW LEFT: Next time you think of complaining about a hard days firefighting, have a thought for the Botswana locals whose main firefighting tools are beaters made out of an aluminium handle with a thick piece of rubber on the end. **BELOW CENTRE:** Russell Perry, from Murray District, training a group in the field. **BELOW RIGHT:** Albert Setso, District Manager Forestry and Range Resources with Duncan Nawala, plant operator, with the only real tanker in north east Botswana. Photos courtesy of Sandra Huer, Grant Wargren and Russell Perry.



Photo Competition: IT'S WHO WE ARE

In the last issue of the *Bush Fire Bulletin* we asked you to grab your good quality camera, and start taking photos that capture the cultural icons of the NSW RFS.

The photo competition is part of the ongoing partnership between the NSW RFS and Ausgrid (formerly EnergyAustralia).

The winning photos will be used in marketing and education programs and will be profiled in the *Bush Fire Bulletin* and in the publications of Ausgrid.

What is an icon?

Icons evoke feelings of pride and support for our organisation and are things that are important to us, or loved by our members.

So with this in mind, we have identified our winners!

The prizes

All the prizes for this competition were kindly donated by Ausgrid. Martin Harris, Manager - Community Investment & Partnerships at Ausgrid commented on the winning photos:

"Ausgrid is proud to once again support the NSW Rural Fire Service photo competition. The finalists this year are an outstanding representation of the theme NSW RFS Icons."

the
winner

**\$1,000 photographic
equipment gift voucher**



**Photo by Jerry Retford,
Bucketty Brigade
Location: Bucketty,
Hunter Zone**

The photo of members of the Bucketty Brigade was taken on an early morning foot patrol in fairly inaccessible terrain in Bucketty, in the Lower Hunter Valley.

The crew had spent the previous day dry firefighting after a lightning strike had ignited a blaze in the area. They returned the next morning to walk the perimeter and mop up. At the end of the patrol of the fireground Jerry Retford took this photo.

"To me it really captures the heart of what it means to be part of a crew in the NSW

RFS," he said, "It is more than just going out there and doing our job of fire protection. To me this is about connecting on a genuine human level together, working hand in hand to protect and serve our communities and each other."

JUDGES COMMENTS:

This photo captures the spirit of support, friendship and

camaraderie that exists among our members. It also draws on other organisational values such as 'one team, many players, one purpose'. The bright yellow uniforms, the relaxed smiles and the sense of achievement are both striking and well balanced against the muted tones of the black and white environment.

2nd Prize \$500 photographic equipment gift voucher



Photo by Bert Clarke, Valley Heights Brigade
Location: Valley Heights, Blue Mountains District

Over a weekend in March 2010 several Blue Mountains brigades joined forces to conduct a hazard reduction north of Bonton Street, Springwood. Members of the Valley Heights Rural Fire Brigade are shown here. The firefighter on the right was attending his first fireground activity since becoming a qualified firefighter.

JUDGES COMMENTS:

This photo is imbued with a sense of discovery and connection with the environment. The rich brown earth combined with the blue light of the mountains inspires the members to continue their valuable hard work of protecting the community and environment.

Lightning Ridge Headquarters Brigade North West Zone and Bogan District, Region North
Photo by Larissa Polochacz, Glenhaven Brigade
Location: Bright, Victoria

Here we see Jacky Fok, Glenhaven Brigade, in The Hills District of Sydney in the driver's seat. This photo was taken by Larissa Polochacz, Glenhaven Brigade, in Victoria at the Bright Staging Area during the 2006 Victorian bush fires. They were part of the NSW RFS Region East Task Force deployed to Victoria in January 2006. It was the largest interstate deployment that NSW RFS had undertaken until that time and involved 500 volunteers fighting fires in South Australia and Victoria.

JUDGES COMMENTS:

This photo brings together a number of key icons of the NSW RFS such as the protective gear, radio equipment and a brigade member preparing to assist our Victorian comrades. From the truck window we see an array of trucks and feel the sense of collaboration and commitment to our core firefighting role.



3rd Prize \$300 photographic equipment gift voucher



Volunteer to Career Program

The NSW Rural Fire Service in conjunction with the Rural Fire Service Association will again be conducting the Volunteer to Career (V2C) program in 2011.

The V2C program was developed to assist volunteer members wanting to pursue a salaried career with the NSW RFS. Topics include:

- **What jobs are typically available in the NSW RFS?**
- **How can you make yourself more competitive for these jobs?**
- **How to apply for positions under the NSW Government processes?**
- **What do typical NSW RFS jobs involve?**

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Programs are held over a weekend in the following two locations:

- 1. Region North – Coffs Harbour 6 - 7 August**
(contact Glenda Brown ph 6643 - 2512 or glenda.brown@rfs.nsw.gov.au)
- 2. Region East - Cumberland Zone (Regentville) 10 - 11 September**
(contact Tracey McNamara ph 8741 5493 or tracey.mcnamara@rfs.nsw.gov.au)



* Download the application now from MyRFS www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au or contact your Regional Office for more information.

PLACES ARE STILL AVAILABLE. APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO EACH PROGRAM.

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE
www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

THE BUSH FIRE BULLETIN WANTS TO hear from you

ANNUAL PUBLISHING AUTUMN / WINTER / SPRING / SUMMER

The *Bush Fire Bulletin* is the official journal of the NSW RFS. We always welcome stories and photos from members.

We are looking for dynamic, colourful, engaging photos and stories that capture the life in the brigades.

It takes about three months to put together each *Bush Fire Bulletin*. So send in your articles in autumn for the winter edition, in spring for the summer edition

Contact the editor Jacqueline Murphy, on 02 8741 5480 or Email Bush.Fire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au

WHAT IS A GOOD PHOTO?

Remember to send photos which are high quality, high resolution and that you have permission to use.

For photos of children under 16, permission from parents or guardians is required.

If you have the photo from a local newspaper, please ask for their permission so we can acknowledge them correctly.

Photos that look best in print are 300dpi or about 1MB in size.



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Cover Photo Members of the Martins Creek NSW RFS brigade (front from left) Suzette Paton, Sue Coutts and Rachael Prummel, with (rear from left) Deputy Captain Keith White, and Group Captain Grahame Chevalley. Photo courtesy of the ABC Local: Anthony Scully