



NSW Rural Fire Service

Mid Lachlan Valley Team



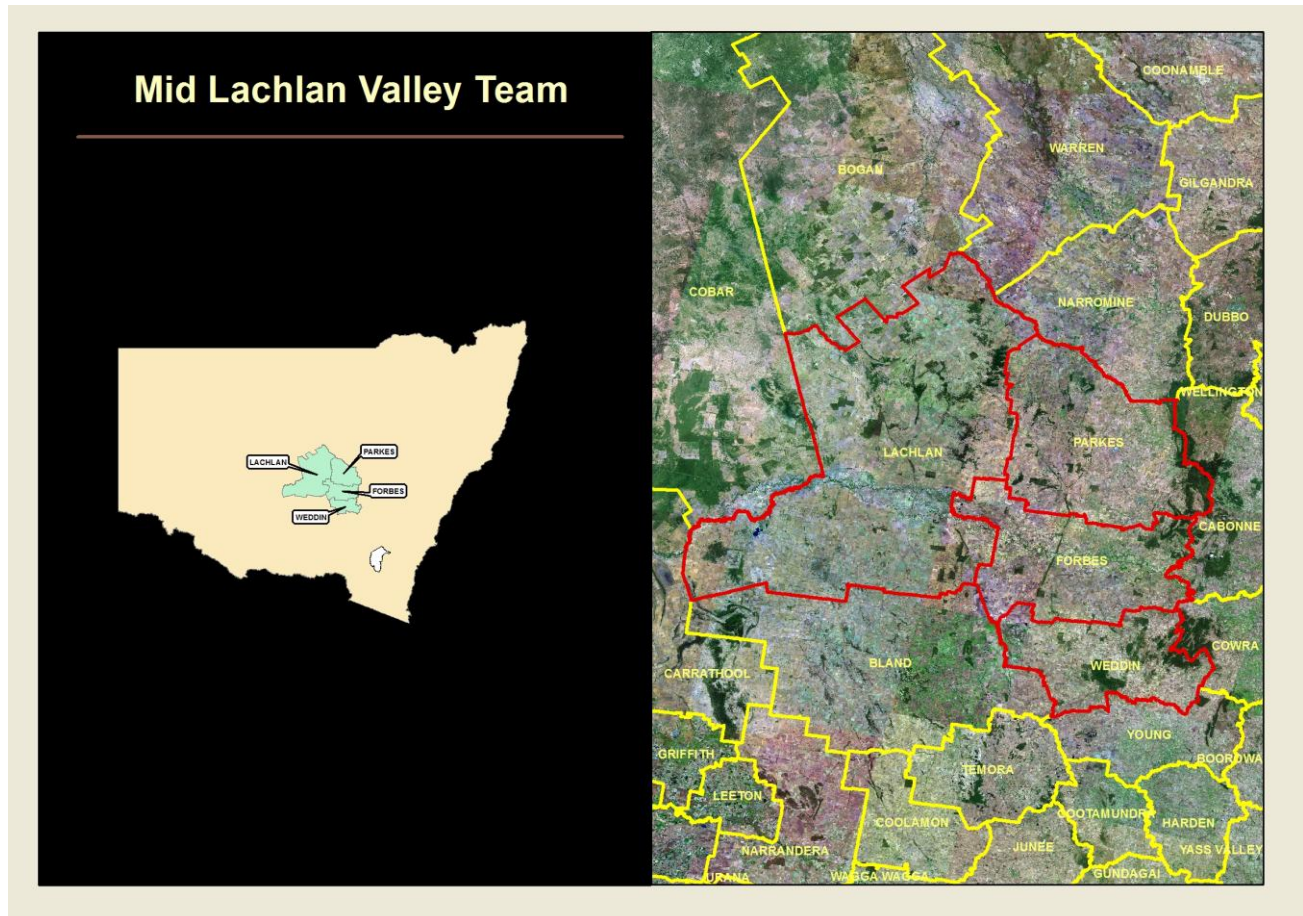
2011/2012 Annual Report

OUR VISION

A safer community.

OUR MISSION

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



Executive Overview

The 2011-12 year proved a busy one for the MLVT staff and volunteers. The fire season was again negated somewhat by the heavy rains during summer. Late winter and spring were fairly dry and considerable hazard reductions were able to be undertaken during this period. No major incidents requiring a Section 44 Declaration were required.

More volunteers took up training throughout the year and another exercise was held to help hone volunteers and staff skills for any incidents they may face.

Our Service continues to focus on mitigation and community involvement which is detailed in the RFS Corporate Plan.

Funding was again received to continue our tanker replacement program however cuts were made to new station constructions.

This report gives an overview of the achievements and business for the year.

Management

Staff

Permanent staffing levels remained steady at six however our Community Safety Officer Greg Jackson has retired as of the end of June 2012.

The State Government recently resolved to cut back public service jobs across most agencies and the Rural Fire Service has complied with that directive for the first of four years of savings. At this stage no staff losses have been required at District or Team level.

Financial

The Mid Lachlan Valley Team received a total allocation from the Rural Fire Fighting Fund of \$4,281,765 for the 2011/2012 year.

Each Council received the following allocation:

	Allocation for Council	Total Allocation including program charges	including Council's 11.7%	Net Cost to Council less program charges 11.7%	Strategic Plan Agreed amount
Forbes	\$1,162,047	\$2,176,230	\$255,866	\$152,757	\$161,217
Lachlan	\$1,207,935	\$2,424,511	\$288,631	\$178,983	\$194,866
Parkes	\$1,235,410	\$2,444,854	\$287,519	\$185,422	\$182,848
Weddin	\$676,373	\$1,227,742	\$145,491	\$87,936	\$106,068
Total	\$4,281,765	\$8,273,337	\$977,507	\$605,098	\$644,990

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

The actual Councils' contribution for the year was \$605,098.

Maintenance and Repair Budgets

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

	Forbes	Lachlan	Parkes	Weddin	Total
M&R Budget 11/12	\$77,178	\$79,000	\$66,100	\$59,800	\$282,078
Actual Expenditure 11/12	\$80,700	\$82,974	\$60,580	\$71,475	\$295,729
Surplus/over Budget 11/12	-\$3,522	-\$3,974	\$5,520	-\$11,675	-\$13,651
Surplus/over Budget 10/11	-\$8,089	-\$8,094	-\$22,069	-\$23	-\$38,275
Surplus/over Budget 09/10	\$16,905	-\$4,369	\$28,786	\$698	\$42,020

Brigade Stations

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

During 2011/12 new Fire Stations were completed to house tankers for the Bandon Brigade in the Forbes Council area. Planning is underway in Lachlan to start building transportable stations on private property and we are waiting on the Deed document to be finalised by Council. Trundle Village Station has commenced in the Parkes Council area and Bogan Gate is nearing completion with only the septic system to be installed and a driveway in front of the station. The extension at Quandialla has also commenced construction in Weddin. More stations are planned for 2012/13.

Brigade Consultation

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

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

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



Baratta Brigade Members receive Long Service Medals for their efforts over many years



Members of Brewer/Bootawa RFB receive Long Service Medals



Volunteer members from Cumbijowa open their Station extensions



Long serving members of Monwonga RFB received awards and opened their new Station



The Troffs and Tichbourne members received Long Service Medals at PSC



The Commissioner and Mayor Ken Keith presented Long Service Medals to East Parkes Members

Operations

The 2011/12 year again proved very challenging and busy for volunteers and staff with a total of 230 incidents reported and responded to across the area. These included bush and grass fires, motor vehicle accidents and structure fires. Brigades and staff also provided assistance to the SES, Council's and the community during the floods. This included transport of persons across flooded areas, rescue operations and liaison to the Incident Management Teams.

The numbers of incidents were similar to 2010/11 with another wet summer experienced reducing the number of bush and grass fires. Brigades still responded to a significant amount of motor vehicle accidents and some structural fires.

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

- North West Zone (Lightning Ridge Area) Floods
- Narrabri Floods
- Locally at Forbes, Lachlan, Weddin and Parkes Floods
- Cobar Fires

Incidents

Across our area Brigades responded to a total of 230 Incidents during the 2011/12 reporting period. The table below details the type of responses per Council area.

Council 2011/2012	Fires	MVA's	Others Good intent & False Alarms Etc	Totals	Previous Year Incidents
Forbes	28	10	21	59	60
Lachlan	22	3	22	47	47
Parkes	42	14	26	82	111
Weddin	26	4	12	42	32
Totals	118	31	81	230	250

Maintenance

2011/12 saw the MLVT continue a regular maintenance program across the Fire Fighting Fleet. The entire fleet was subject to an annual roadworthy inspection and any repairs carried out plus the normal annual maintenance routine.

Annual maintenance is ongoing and will continue in subsequent years.

Tanker Upgrading

The 2011/12 year saw \$1,880,830 allocated for new fire fighting appliances, \$198,000 allocated for second hand appliances and \$83,000 for support vehicles across the MLVT. As a result the following brigades received the replacement vehicles, which were procured as either new or refurbished tankers. In addition Group Officer / Volunteer vehicles were purchased to assist with coordination activities at larger incidents as well as provision of transport for volunteers to attend training and meeting activities.

COUNCIL	BRIGADE	TANKER
Forbes	Corinella	Cat 1 New
	Wirrinya	Cat 1 New
Lachlan	Burgooney	Cat 1 New
	Mogandale	Cat 1 New
	Barrata	Waiting on Cat 6 New
Parkes	Triangle	S/H Cat 1
	Bruie Plains	Cat 1 New
	Tichbourne	Cat 1 New
	Tullamore	S/H Cat 1
Weddin	Weddin HQ	Cat 1 New
Group Vehicles	Parkes 16 E	Toyota Hilux New
	Forbes 16 C	Toyoya Hilux S/H
	Lachlan 16 D	Toyoya Hilux S/H
	Lachlan 16 E	Toyoya Hilux S/H
	Weddin 16 B	Toyoya Hilux S/H

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



Lachlan 16 E acquired from Sutherland District

Aviation

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

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



Air Support Infrastructure

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

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

Community Safety

Hazard Reduction

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

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

Since 1 July 2011 and up to 30 June 2012 the Community Safety Staff of the MLVT carried out the following works.

	Forbes	Lachlan	Parkes	Weddin	Total
Development Applications 79BA / 100B	1	0	2	0	3
Permits Section 87 & 88	38	80	11	37	166
Hazard Reduction Complaints	0	0	20	6	26

The number of permits issued was well down on the previous year and a significant amount of burning was undertaken after the bush fire danger period was ended. The number of hazard complaints also decreased.

Burning Activities

Following the summer rains grass growth was again prolific on many roadsides, railways, TSR's and blocks with no stock present. Numerous hazard reductions have been undertaken in these areas to reduce fuel loads and brigades have been extremely supportive in carrying out these works.



Roadside burning being undertaken along the Newell Highway in Back Yamma area



Burning blocks at Greenthorpe



Getting a briefing before burning at Parkes



Getting rid of a heap of fuel at London Road

Learning and Development

Another successful year of training has been conducted within the Team and externally by staff and volunteers.

Two of our staff and one volunteer attended a four day course that is part of the new incident management procedures that covers communications, providing a more efficient way of undertaking the operations role called Command Control Communications, some of our other staff have previously completed the course.

We conducted several basic fire fighter courses around the team area that are a great benefit to our new members giving them the basics on fire behaviour, communications, safety and the operation of the tankers. This is the first of the mainstream courses delivered in RFS that can lead to further training of higher qualifications.

We are also running the Grew Leader Grasslands courses aimed at the brigade officers that gives them better understanding of how to run a fire and how to delegate different roles that makes running a larger fire much easier. This will remain high on our priority list for Deputy Captains, Senior Deputy Captains and Captains to complete.

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

- Condobolin High Cadets Program
- Command Control and Communications
- Village Firefighter
- Bush Firefighter
- Crew Leader Grasslands
- First Aid Assistance
- Parkes High School Cadets Program
- MVA information afternoon
- Bush Fire Awareness
- Combined Agency Exercises (NSWFB, NSW Police & Ambo's)
- Brigade familiarisation afternoon
- Tanker handover training

We are planning to hold several local exercises in 2013 as the last planned exercises were again rained out and we believe these are a valuable tool to hone the skills of the volunteers and field officers. We can also use these as an opportunity to assess for Basic Fire Fighter Grasslands. We held one very successful exercise at Greenethorpe in 2012 and will endeavour to hold another four in 2013.

We have also conducted a number of hazard reduction burns across the area and believe these are great hands on training.

The training committee is about to meet again that comprises of trainers from across the area to validate the training of the past 12 months and plan for next year's training season and to catch up on new things in training.

We are currently going through the processes to upgrade our instructors to the new qualifications for Rural Fire Instructor.

Some of our courses were cancelled because of wet weather or lack of nominations these courses will be re scheduled this coming training season. We try to accommodate every participant by running courses through the week and different times of the year so as not to clash with farming practises where possible.



Members Practice their New Skills at Weddin Basic Fire Fighter Training



Crews Respond to a “Motor Vehicle Accident” at the Greenethorpe Exercise



Condobolin Cadets with their Certificates after completing the Program





Village Fire Fighter Training Ground Condobolin

Conclusion

2011/2012 was again a challenge for the Mid Lachlan Valley Team and significant achievements were made during the period.

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