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**Operational Services**  
**Regional Services**  
**Infrastructure Services**  
**Membership and Strategic Services**  
**Executive Services**

# review of the reporting year

# operational services

*The Operational Services Directorate delivers frontline services to the community and carries out a number of key functions through its decentralised arms along with districts and regions. Its core responsibilities are the preparation and prevention of and response to bush fire.*

*It also promotes important safety information to the public and manages State-wide public warnings, delivers important programs for vulnerable communities, coordinates bush fire risk management plans and hazard reduction as well as manages Development Assessment and Planning.*

*In the reporting period a new group was added: Operational Business Systems.*

*The Directorate now comprises:*

- Response and Coordination
- Coordinated Risk Management
- Community Resilience
- Operational and Mitigation Support Services
- Customer Service and Support
- Operational Business Systems



## *Hazard Management*

Hazard reduction encapsulates a range of activities but it is predominantly carried out by burning or mechanical/manual works. Hazard reduction used in conjunction with building design, defensible space and community engagement contributes to a comprehensive suite of strategies for hazard management.

In 2011/12 Mitigation Crews were established in Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Tamworth, Wyallda, Dubbo, Taree, Cessnock, Sydney, Mudgee, Wingecarribee, Oberon, Nowra, Mogo, Bega, Wagga Wagga, Cooma and Orange. These crews undertook a total of 2,178 works. Of these, 1,013 were mitigation works, 1,165 were AIDER jobs and there was a total of 7,487 kilometres of bush fire hazard vegetation also managed.

A number of mitigation grant funding programs, including a Commonwealth/State program were delivered to support land managers, local councils and NSW RFS brigades to achieve critical hazard reduction works and the upgrading of strategic fire trails. In total, 896 hazard reduction activities and 139 fire trail activities were undertaken in the reporting period.

Another important aspect of reducing risk to the community is the hazard reduction complaints process. In 2011/12, 1,943 bush fire hazard complaints were received and investigated with 55 percent of these deemed to be a hazard, requiring treatment from the land owner.

## *Hazard Reduction Performance Reporting*

The coordination of hazard reduction reporting requires the integration and analysis of data from land management agencies and local councils. This enables reporting for the *NSW 2021: A Plan to Make NSW Number One*, Bush Fire Coordinating Committee and Section 74 reporting requirements under the *Rural Fires Act 1997*.

In the 2011/12 reporting year, the Service's commitment to hazard reduction remained steadfast with the continuation of government funding totalling \$34.4 million. During this time, the Government also announced its desire to see a policy for significant increases in the amount of hazard reduction works carried out in the State.

► *Details of the NSW RFS performance appears in Appendix A.*

## **Protection of Vulnerable Communities**

### *Community Protection Plans*

Working with local communities the NSW RFS is helping landowners become fully prepared and resilient.

► *Details appear in the Key Focus Area chapter.*

### *Hotspots Program*

This award-winning program brings together land owners and fire authorities to consider the best way to manage land for both biodiversity and fire management.

► *Details appear in the Key Focus Area chapter.*

### *Neighbourhood Safer Places*

A Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP) is a place of last resort for people to gather during the passage of a bush fire.

► *Details appear in the Key Focus Area chapter.*

### *Assist Infirm Disabled and Elderly Residents (AIDER)*

► *Details appear in the Key Focus Area chapter.*

### *Planning and Development Assessment*

During the reporting period a total of 5,009 assessments were undertaken.

► *Details appear in the Key Focus Area chapter.*

## *Training*

In 2011/12 Operational Mitigation Support Services trained 52 volunteer firefighters in Remote Area Firefighting, increasing the NSW RFS capability to 148 Remote Area Firefighters, 134 of which are helicopter winch certified.

2012 also saw the complete rewrite of the Community Safety Assistant (CSA) training package to align it with current NSW RFS messages and tools such as bush fire risk management plans.

An extensive counter terrorism awareness campaign was conducted for the NSW RFS by the NSW Police Force Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command. Over 600 volunteers and staff attended information sessions across Regions North, West and East. Additionally, Counter Terrorism exercises were conducted at Glen Innes, Molong and Berowra Waters.

During the reporting year, the NSW RFS also commenced the training of volunteers in Category 1 Urban Search & Rescue (USAR) operations with 100 firefighters across the Greater Sydney area having successfully completed training.

The Aviation Section provided an extensive aviation training and recertification program for aviation specialist functions during the reporting period. Personnel from both NSW and interstate fire and emergency service agencies participated in the aviation training opportunities. Many of these people were actively deployed to fire and flood operations throughout the season.

Four Fire Reconnaissance Train-the-Trainer workshops were conducted in 2011/12 with the aim of better equipping trainers to deliver workshops in their own areas. The Introduction to Fire Intelligence course was also developed and conducted at four locations across the State.

Furthermore, a suite of courses were developed and conducted in the State Operations Centre, in particular, the State Operations Exercise which was conducted on 18 August 2011 at NSW RFS Headquarters in Lidcombe. The Exercise simulated 11 serious bush/grass fire incidents and with an extreme Fire Danger Rating. Apart from providing skills maintenance, the Exercise was also designed to challenge the system of warnings to determine the extent to which the organisation can currently conduct 'information operations'. The Exercise resulted in some positive learnings for incorporation into operational practices and procedures.

## *Response and Coordination*

In early 2012, unprecedented rainfall led to one of the most significant flood emergencies across the State, extending across much of northern, southern and western NSW.

Significant support was provided to the NSW State Emergency Service during this time with approximately 2,260 volunteers deployed. Our contribution included response and recovery operations, aviation, planning and public liaison functions, Impact Analysis and Assessment Teams, Incident Management Teams and door knocking thousands of homes and businesses to deliver flood evacuation warnings. In addition to this, 235 volunteers were deployed to the Public Information and Inquiry Centre in Sydney, handling over 14,000 enquiries from around NSW.

To accommodate both volunteers and evacuees, base camps were established and maintained at Barellan, Hay, Coleambally and Deniliquin. Air bases were also established and managed at Moree, Lightning Ridge, Narrabri, Gunnedah, Walgett, Narrabri, Bourke, Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Urana and Deniliquin involving some 72 personnel.

During these operations the State Air Desk facilitated 740 aircraft deployments and at one time, the Service deployed 400 beds which are normally used for NSW RFS Base Camps, via RAAF Hercules to evacuation centres in Moree.

A dedicated helicopter, positioned at Walgett for the purpose of fire protection and other emergency situations allowed firefighters and emergency personnel to be transported to remote properties isolated by flood water.

Throughout the campaign, NSW RFS volunteers showed their versatility and adaptability in trying and difficult conditions. The Service received generous feedback from locals who were affected by the floods, expressing their appreciation for the professionalism and commitment shown by volunteers in assisting their communities.

► *For a review of the operational activity from around the State see the Year in Brief Chapter.*

# regional services

*The Regional Services Directorate is responsible for the administration and management of more than 440 staff across 50 districts and four regional offices across the State.*

*Regional Services provides fire protection to the community through the Rural Fire Brigades which are made up of more than 70,000 volunteers across the State. The Directorate supports brigades administratively and operationally and develops the capability of local Brigades.*



Working closely with the regional staff, the Directorate oversees the allocations and annual budgets for District and Regional offices including infrastructure enhancement programs to improve and standardise operational capability.

The Directorate develops policies and procedures, monitors asset distribution and management, oversees brigade and personnel management, interagency and local government relations, service agreements, professional development and issues management of day to day operations to ensure consistent service delivery across the NSW RFS.

In the reporting period, the regional services Directorate focussed on the following key State-wide projects.

## *Regional Forums*

Regional Services Director, Dominic Lane travelled around NSW in the reporting period consulting face-to-face with hundreds of volunteers.

► *Details appear in the Year in Brief chapter.*

## *Roadside Vegetation Program*

A very successful program to reduce hazard on roadsides was conducted by the Regional Services Directorate.

► *Details appear in the Year in Brief chapter.*

## *Aligning Districts and Regions to NSW RFS functions*

Regional Services established the District and Regional Realignment Committee (DRRC) in 2010 to provide recommendations to the Director Regional Services, and ultimately the Commissioner, about the proposed realignment of functions within the regions and districts to more closely align them with the Headquarters functional arrangements. The project concluded in the reporting period

with the establishment of the Next Generation DRRC Steering Committee and four Regional Sub-committees to undertake State-wide staff consultation and assist in determining the shape, capacity and capability of Regional Services staff and volunteers into the future.

## *Regional Services Consultative Committee*

The reporting period also saw a considerable amount of work undertaken by the Regional Services Consultative Committee (RSCC). The RSCC was established in March 2011 under Service Standard 1.1.18 RFS Consultative Committees by the NSW RFS and the Rural Fire Service Association (RFSA) to provide advice to the NSW RFS on matters pertaining to Regional Services across Regions and Districts.

The Committee consists of both staff and volunteer members. Its primary roles include providing a forum of consultation for the development of NSW RFS initiatives, discussing and proposing solutions to significant issues in relation to the interaction between staff and volunteers at the District and Regional levels and consulting and providing advice on any high-level agency issues involving brigade management, stakeholder consultation and service delivery and support to volunteers across Districts and Regions.

During the 2011/12 financial year RSCC met on three occasions (including three scheduled meetings and three extraordinary meetings) and led major organisational reviews including the NSW RFS Rank Review and NSW RFS District Support Brigade Review.

► *Details of attendance at the Committee appear on Appendix L.*

# infrastructure services

*The Infrastructure Services Directorate facilitates a State-wide, strategic and planned approach to the management of assets owned and operated by the Service. The Directorate takes the lead in the planning, approval, acquisition, construction, maintenance and disposal of the Service's infrastructure.*

*The Infrastructure Services Directorate comprises:*

- Fixed Assets and Infrastructure
- Mobile Assets and Infrastructure
- Fleet Services
- Engineering: Equipment Research and Development
- Engineering: Appliance Design and Construction
- Communications Systems
- Information Communications and Technology



Following a strategic analysis of the resourcing and organisational structure of the previous Engineering Services area in this reporting year, an organisational realignment took place with a view to increasing the capacity and capability of the previous Engineering Services Unit. This saw the creation of two new dedicated areas for Equipment which include all firefighting equipment and PPE/PPC and Appliance Design and Construction which better reflects the changing demands in the area.

## **Fixed Assets and Infrastructure**

In the reporting period, \$3.5 million was spent on newly built and refurbished buildings throughout the State.

► Details appear in the Key Focus Area chapter.

## **Waste Reduction**

The Service continues to be committed to reducing the amount of waste to landfill and improving procurement procedures to ensure the Government's targets in this area are achieved. In the reporting period, a waste audit was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the waste minimisation and recycling strategies currently in place. Data was also compiled on the amount of paper recycled and office equipment wastes, including toner cartridges and printer ribbons. Paper avoidance strategies continue through the extensive use of email, computer generated forms and the internet as well as double-sided printing and photocopying of documents.

The NSW RFS engaged the BinTrim Program, an Office of Environment and Heritage Program, to advise on reducing waste to landfill and increasing recycling.

Recycling at the NSW RFS Headquarters in Lidcombe based on

the office waste stream assessment included:

- 4,726 kg paper waste
- 1,838 kg co-mingled (glass bottles, aluminium cans, PET)
- 100 percent of all used toner cartridges
- 100 percent of obsolete computers and computer monitors through the recycled through Reconnect Program

## **Mobile Assets and Infrastructure**

The Mobile Assets and Infrastructure now consists of four business units, Communications Systems and two aspects of the Engineering area, Appliance Design and Construction and Equipment Research and Development and Fleet Services under a single overarching governance structure.

These new functional areas will provide the Service with the capacity to keep abreast of worldwide developments and provide leadership in the areas of fire vehicle design and construction and to continue to lead Australia and the world in the level of protection provided by its firefighter protective clothing.

## **Engineering: Appliance Design and Construction**

### *Tanker Replacement Program*

During the reporting period, the Unit managed the Tanker Replacement Program and handed over 177 new and refurbished tankers to the NSW RFS Brigades across NSW. Some delays were experienced in delivery of new tankers due to two separate contracted fire body builders moving into administration. The NSW RFS worked with the builders and liquidators to facilitate the completion of those 33 affected vehicles.

A milestone was reached with finalisation of the design followed

# infrastructure services

by a process operational testing for the standard Category 13 appliance. This brings together benefits and learning from a number of previously constructed variants and consolidates specifications and drawings for a consistent appliance. This 6x4 wheel drive, automatic transmission, single cab, 11,000 litre heavy bulk water carrier tanker was built during the reporting year and now forms the Service's Standard Cat 13 Vehicle.

While significant focus has been on standardising and replacing the firefighting fleet, work during the year took place on operational support vehicles, with the development of a medium sized logistics support vehicle, and the commencement of the heavy firefighting vehicle prototype. This prototype Category 6 vehicle will be a 6x4 wheel drive, automatic, single cab, 9,000 litre with a remote controlled monitor and is expected to enter production next year. The Service's engineering team worked collaboratively with the State Mitigation Support Services (SMSS) to assess, develop and produce varied appliances for SMSS to suit their varied work arrangements.

The program of inspection and handover of new appliances from the contract builders and the inspection of second hand appliances for the second hand appliance transfer program was ongoing during the year. Review and revision for the Service Standard 5.1.4 Appliance Construction and Service Standard 5.1.6 Second Hand Appliance Transfer Program was undertaken and approved during the reporting year.

Tenders for construction of Category 1 and 11 vehicles were reviewed, released to market and awarded to vehicle builders, as part of the three year contracted build process for firefighting platforms. Specification and drawing review for Category 7 and Category 9 vehicles was undertaken in preparation

for the tender release, which will take place in August 2012.

The team continues to contribute to continuous improvement practices and has reviewed its design and drafting practices, maintains an awareness of reviewed legislation where it applies and continues its participation in accident investigation and a program of vehicle safety and mechanical audits.

## Engineering: Equipment Research and Development

Equipment Research and Development provides expertise in the development of specifications, design, selection and evaluation of fire equipment and personal protective equipment.

The Service has recently awarded contracts under the 292 Firefighting Equipment Tender which encompasses approximately 1,000 individual items of equipment, ranging from items as small and simple as a hose coupling, hoses, branches, nozzles to the complexity of a thermal imaging camera, breathing apparatus sets, cylinders etc. The estimated value of the tender is in the vicinity of \$15 million over the three year life of the tender.

The Unit also developed a new Bush Fire Helmet Specification which will improve the versatility of the basic helmet to allow it to be used in areas other than firefighting reducing the number of task specific helmets that an NSW RFS member needs to be issued with and have available. Although the specification is just the first part of an overall tender process, it is anticipated that the new specification helmet will be available in the later half of 2013.

## Communications Systems

During the reporting year, the team focussed on the two key projects in this area, being the P25 radio network upgrade and the paging systems upgrade.

State-wide Radio and Paging upgrades have progressed significantly.

Network audit, design, planning and preparation activities are now complete. Technology choices have now been determined and the first radio network is currently being commissioned. This also coincides with commencement of State-wide re-profiling efforts as State-wide spectrum plans have finally been approved by ACMA. A number of other radio networks upgrades around NSW are underway.

Significant radio tower infrastructure upgrades are underway. This includes collaborations with a number of radio towers operated by other government agencies.

The majority of NSW RFS Fire Control Centres have received and are now using their upgraded paging server platforms. The paging Simulcast technology is progressively replacing older technologies to provide a consistent and standardised paging platform across the State.

## Fleet Services

During the reporting year, Fleet Services oversaw the procurement, disposal and management of the Service's passenger fleet vehicles.

Fleet Services sought compliance with the State Government Green Fleet emissions under its Environmental Performance Score (All Corporate Vehicles) (EPS) index which is:

	NSW RFS	Target
EPS (All corporate passenger vehicles)	13.40	13.50
EPS (All corporate light commercial vehicles)	8.98	9.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.19</b>	<b>11.25</b>

## Information Communications & Technology

Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) Unit provides planning, advice, management and implementation of all communications technology for the NSW RFS.

In the reporting period ICT embarked on a two-year program to build the capability for running all its operations from either of two geographically separated computing facilities. The project provides better redundancy and higher availability of NSW RFS information systems.

Part of this improved redundancy involves the additional redundant links which are provided via Telstra's NextG® network to the NSW RFS data centres at a Fire Control Centre level. There were several failures of the primary links to the District offices in the reporting period, however incident operations continued to be supported through these redundant NextG links.

The Unit significantly improved the mapping technology which supports NSW RFS applications, especially those used for risk and incident management (i.e. BRIMS and ICON). The state-of-the-art technology provides a better,

faster, and resilient mapping capability. The improved functionality includes:

- 3D drape of current incident activity – allows better insight into the actual location of the fire
- Improvement of technical components within MapDesk, allowing it to be shared with other NSW firefighting, mitigation and suppression agencies.

The NSW RFS now has full live synchronisation of GIS data at over 70 sites across NSW, the only agency in NSW where staff have access locally to all of the NSW government's spatial data and imagery, updated nightly.

The new MyRFS platform provides members with access to the SAP HR interface, including personal information, training and qualifications and brigade management tools.

ICT assisted the recent SAP HR project working to integrate the SAP HR module into existing NSW RFS operational systems such as FireZone and Contacts.

# membership & strategic services

*The Membership and Strategic Services Directorate comprises:*

- *Membership Services Group*
  - *Membership Coordination Unit*
  - *Health, Safety and Welfare*
- *Chaplaincy and Family Support*
- *Volunteer Relations and Workforce Planning*
- *Learning and Development*
- *Corporate Planning, Research and Governance Group*



## **Membership Services Group**

### *Membership Coordination Unit*

The Membership Coordination Unit (MCU) manages the NSW RFS membership related functions for both salaried and volunteer members. This involves the induction of all new volunteer members and the provision of human resources services for salaried members. Other roles include management of sector wide human resources policies and initiatives, the suite of employee relations functions, performance management advice and assistance, case management and contract administration.

In the reporting period, a total of 5,627 volunteer membership applications were received and assessed by the MCU, with 3,918 of these applications received from new members. The balance of 1,709 applications processed included staff criminal records checks, existing volunteer members who applied for transfer/re-join/dual/triple membership and those requiring a child-related activities check. Additionally, 303 Junior Membership applications were processed.

The new Volunteer Membership Application form was launched which streamlined the application process and consolidated a number of previous forms into the one application document.

The use of SAP HR as the corporate database for management and maintenance of salaried and volunteer member information was further developed in this reporting period with additional functionalities implemented.

On 22 December 2011 the Service entered into an Interim Award for major incident conditions. The Award was made with the consent of the Public Service Association and provided certainty in the arrangements during major incidents.

### *Trainees / Apprentices*

The NSW RFS works with a number of Government Training Organisations (GTOs) to employ a range of trainees/ apprentices to ensure there is an entry level pathway for people to enter our workforce.

In the reporting period the NSW RFS had 17 trainees / apprentices across the State working in a range of study fields such as Business, Administration, Frontline Management and Mechanical Apprenticeships.

### *Volunteer to Career*

Approximately 73 percent of members currently employed with the NSW RFS are drawn from the Service's volunteer membership. Volunteer members are encouraged to pursue a career in the Service.

The RFS is a valued partner of the NSW RFS in conducting the Volunteer to Career Program (V2C) which is held over a weekend. This is the fifth year that this successful program has been run. In the reporting period, V2C programs were held in two locations – Coffs Harbour in August and Regentville in September 2011. To date 421 volunteer members have attended the program and 21 percent of V2C attendees have gained some form of employment with the NSW RFS across a range of employment types.

## **Health, Safety and Welfare**

The Health, Safety and Welfare section provides information, advice and support on Health, Safety and Welfare to all members of the NSW RFS. Functions include health and safety system management determining legislative compliance, health and safety risk management, incident and injury management, workers compensation and return to work, counselling and member support.

# membership & strategic services

There were two significant changes to health and safety and workers compensation legislation in NSW in the reporting period. Firstly, the *OHS Act 2000* and OHS Regulation 2001 were repealed and replaced with the *Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act 2011* and WHS Regulation 2011 which commenced 1 January 2012. Secondly, the NSW Government introduced changes to workers compensation laws via the *Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Act 2012*. The Service has supported members through these changes by:

- Updates and communications via MyRFS web pages, presentations, a fact sheet and online updates to the NSW RFS intranet
- Information and advice via phone and email
- Responses and feedback to Safe Work Australia on draft Codes of Practice (stemming from the new WHS legislation) and the Draft Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022
- A submission to the NSW Workers Compensation Parliamentary Inquiry
- Review of the NSW RFS Health and Safety Management System and ongoing improvements to the system.

The Service continued its participation on the RFS Workers Compensation Working Group which met on a regular basis to consider relevant issues.

During 2011/12, the Health, Safety and Welfare Unit coordinated and participated in a number of key programs and projects, to further enhance the health and safety management system and overall performance. Some of these include:

- An OHS audit conducted by an external provider during the latter part of 2011, to analyse the NSW RFS Health & Safety Management System and its implementation in the NSW RFS against the Draft Work Health & Safety (WHS) laws and Australian Standard 4801 Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems
- The establishment of a working group to assist in the transition to the new WHS laws. The working group comprised both cross Directorate and RFS representation
- Participation in internal events, forums and work groups including: Manual Handling workshops and distribution of health and safety materials, a Fatigue Management in Training presentation at the Learning and Development Forum, and NSW RFS Health & Safety Committees
- External events such as the Mid Sized Agency Forum, Australian Fire & Emergency Services Authorities Council – OHS Technical Group, WorkCover Industry Reference Group, Public Sector Rehabilitation Coordinators Network and the RFS Workers Compensation Working Group

- Commencement of the preliminary stage of a new Manual Handling Program. 'Manual Handling Tips: Tankers and Equipment' concertina pocket cards were developed in conjunction with an external health provider, the Health, Safety and Welfare Unit and several brigade members. The cards were distributed to volunteer members to assist in raising awareness and education about correct manual handling techniques. This program was initially released at Region East Exercise 2012, and supported by Manual Handling Awareness Workshops conducted by an external health provider

Detailed NSW health and safety performance reports are provided on a regular basis to the NSW RFS Corporate Executive Group and the Audit and Risk Committee.

All injury, property damage and near miss incident reports were reviewed to ensure appropriate actions were identified in order to prevent a recurrence.

The NSW RFS was not subject to any prosecutions under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000* or *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* during this reporting period.

# membership & strategic services

## Counselling and Support

The Critical Incident Support Services (CISS) provides counselling and support to all members of the NSW RFS on a 24 hour, seven days per week basis. This includes peer support, trauma specialist interventions as well as the Member Assistance Program and the Employee Assistance Program.

Utilising the findings of an international consensus project to identify key features and guidelines for Peer Support programs has strengthened and increased the flexibility of CISS initiatives. The enhancement of critical incident stress management for psychological growth, and developing the workplace capacity to respond in times of critical need were significant components incorporated into the wellbeing strategies for volunteers and staff.

Recruitment of additional Peer Support members occurred to increase the team number to nearly forty personnel across the State.

In the reporting period, links were made with the Centre for Rural & Remote Mental Health and the use and promotion of beyondblue.org, the Black Dog Institute, Lifeline, and Relationships Australia has extended the scope to improving the options to gain improved

emotional and mental health wellbeing for our people.

A critique of the referral mechanisms to the external provider was reviewed to ensure a smooth and effective engagement of services takes place. The number of clinicians available throughout NSW has remained steady and the use of telephone counselling remains a valuable tool to assist people in remote localities.

## Chaplaincy and Family Support

The NSW RFS Chaplaincy is a unique ministry that is made up of various denominations and has been on active duty for more than 16 years.

The network consists of Major Ian Spall, Senior Chaplain and Major Kerry Spall, Senior Family Support Chaplain and 48 Volunteer District Chaplains and Family Support Volunteers. Following their retirement in September 2011, Majors Ron and Carol Anderson have accepted to undertake Voluntary Chaplaincy Support to the Service.

During the reporting period, five Volunteer District Chaplains / Family Support Volunteers have been inducted into the NSW RFS and five have relinquished their roles. The Chaplaincy Service travelled a total of 75,280

kilometres (Senior Chaplains 56,236km; Associate Chaplains 16,428km; and the Salvation Army vehicle 2,616km) during the year to carry out its ministrations. During the extensive flooding of NSW in the early months of 2012, Chaplains offered support to brigade members who attended flood affected areas of the State.

This year, Senior Chaplain Ian Spall accompanied the inaugural 'Courage Under Fire' Kokoda Trek.

► *Details appear in Year in Brief chapter.*

► *Full details of the activities of the Chaplaincy and Family Support Network are included in the Appendix C.*

## Volunteer Relations and Workforce Planning

Volunteer Relations and Workforce Planning is responsible for researching, developing and promoting initiatives that actively promote a diverse, flexible and adaptive membership – including youth development and aboriginal services. The team is also responsible for managing workforce plans and developing and managing position descriptions.

During the 2011/12 period, the team completed 'community profile' documents for each NSW RFS District. This document provided a demographic overview of local communities as well as a profile of local NSW RFS membership data. The purpose of the community profile is to assist Districts to conduct localised workforce planning.

In support of the community profiles and recruitment generally, the team produced a suite of resources to support brigades in their recruitment of volunteers in their local area.

### Support offered by the Counselling and Support Unit

	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
CISS number of requests	257	274	319
CISS number of personnel assisted	1,018	1,214	2,366
Member Assistance Program	387	293	326
Employee Assistance Program – internal	119	88	148
Employee Assistance Program – external	29	19	31

NB: These figures do not account for pre-incident information and education sessions provided throughout the year. The number of hours relating to CISS does not account for training and supervision of CISS personnel.

# membership & strategic services

In January 2012, the Service rolled out the NSW Government's Capability Framework for Headquarters staff members. The Unit held a series of Capability Framework information sessions at Headquarters in Lidcombe and provided similar information to volunteers during the Volunteer to Career (V2C) programs.

## Youth Development

Volunteer Relations and Workforce Planning is responsible for the strategic direction and programs associated with youth development in the NSW RFS.

Throughout the reporting period, the Unit continued to support the NSW RFS Young Members Group. The Young Members Group was established in 2010 and is represented by all four Regions and has a mix of female and male members. In the reporting period four new members joined the Young Members Group.

The Secondary School Cadet Program continued its success throughout the 2011/12 period.

► *Details appear in the introduction.*

During 2011/12, the Volunteer Relations & Workforce Planning team organised a Youth Coordinator Course for 15 participants. The course provides the opportunity for NSW RFS members who work with young people to obtain components of Certificate IV in Youth Work.

## Aboriginal Services

In February 2012, Surf Life Saving and the NSW RFS partnered with Youth off the Streets to deliver emergency service training to young people in Narrandera and Walgett. The Youth Indigenous Program is led by Surf Life Saving and reached around 100 of the State's most disadvantaged young people. The NSW RFS Youth Development Officer, along with members of the Young Members

Group, were instrumental in delivering the fire safety component of the program.

Throughout the 2011/12 reporting period, support was provided to the Bush fire Resilience Project for Aboriginal Communities.

► *Details appear in the Year in Brief chapter.*

In July 2011, 10 NSW RFS members attended the Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways – Traditional Aboriginal Fire Management Workshop.

## Learning and Development

The Learning and Development (L&D) Unit has the responsibility for defining the manner in which training, assessment and associated activities are regulated and managed overall within the NSW RFS. The Unit provides training pathways from recruitment to senior levels and the systems and

processes used by various units of the NSW RFS to manage their training programs.

During the reporting period two L&D Professional Development Forums were held at Charles Sturt University in Bathurst. Over 130 salaried and volunteer learning and development members attended each forum. The inaugural forum was held in July 2011. The focus was on the changes to the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) and vocational education training (VET) regulatory environment as well introducing the Flexible Learning programs. The subsequent forum was held in June 2012 with the theme 'Linking People to Practice'.

In the reporting period the Service was audited by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) in order to maintain its status as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). The audit was completed successfully.

## Training Activity in 2011/12

Volunteers and their qualifications	11/12	10/11	09/10
Bush Firefighters	2,421	3,503	3,762
Village Firefighters	647	929	1,049
Advanced Firefighters	497	622	850
Crew Leaders <sup>1</sup>	500	1,140	211
Group Leaders	62	61	75
First Aid	1,761	1,957	2,043
Breathing Apparatus	202	239	170
Chain Saw Operators	592	574	614
Rural Fire Drivers	377	458	470
NSW RFS Instructors	346	148	145
NSW RFS Training Facilitators <sup>2</sup>	-	26	14
NSW RFS Training Coordinators	120	59	31
NSW RFS Assessors	129	87	53
Assessor Advocates	80	19	14

NB: Figures generated by SAP LSO database only cover qualifications generated by electronic databases within each reporting year and there may be a delay in the entry of some qualifications due to the system changeover (April 2012) from TRAIN to the LSO module in SAP.

1. Crew leader numbers have been adjusted to only count those with the full CL qualification rather than its individual components of CLW and CLV

2. Training facilitators were deleted from 2011/12 due to change to TAE qualification

# membership & strategic services

In the reporting period a draft Leadership Capability Framework was developed in partnership with the Corporate Planning, Research and Governance Group. This framework provided the architecture on positioning the development of leadership training in technical, regulatory and human interaction subjects against the various roles and levels of the NSW RFS providing leadership for both salaried and volunteer positions.

The delivery of online and blended learning in a flexible manner will be a growing field of training and assessment in the NSW RFS. In the reporting period, online Safety Induction, Volunteer Induction, Staff Induction and Organisational Risk Management Awareness training were introduced.

Several new training initiatives were rolled out during the reporting period including Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Level 1 for instructors. Other significant training initiatives include an updated approach to command and control training. Three new programs were introduced in this area:

- Command / Control / Communications (CCC) course covering the communications required to conduct large firefighting operations,
- An updated Incident Management Workshop (IMW) covering the management processes of Incident Management Teams (IMTs)
- Incident Controller Major Incidents (ICMI) program covering the skills and attributes needed by Incident Controllers of large challenging bush fires.

These programs were reviewed and validated externally to ensure they had appropriate content following the 2009 Black Saturday Fires in Victoria. The external reviewer considered these programs to be most comprehensive.

Instructors are presently being trained in these programs to facilitate their roll out in the coming year.

A major achievement during the reporting period was the introduction of the Learning Solutions Online (LSO) component of the SAP HR data management system. In total, 86 members were trained in its use. This component allows for the scheduling, online nominations and management of training and assessment events as well as the management of records and qualifications in an integrated data system.

## *Professional Development Committee*

During 2011/12 the Professional Development Committee (PDC) continued to support the professional development of staff members across the Service.

Over 110 salaried members have benefited from PDC funding in the reporting period. Support ranged from short courses and workshops through to higher education programs such as:

- Advanced Diploma of Management with 16 participants conducted by the University of Ballarat
- Develop a Prescribed Burn Plan Courses held at four locations across the State
- A Fire and Environment Course

A further 100 Learning and Development Staff members participated in a program to update their trainer and assessor qualifications to the new Training and Assessment (TAA) 10 standard.

## **Corporate Planning, Research and Governance Group**

The Corporate Planning, Research and Governance Group plays the lead role in the development of the NSW RFS Corporate Plan and provides guidance and advice to all Directorates and

business units in their functional area planning. The Group also coordinates the administration of the RFS / RFSA Consultative Committees.

## *Corporate Risk Management, Policy and Governance Unit*

### *Organisational Risk Management*

The focus in the reporting year was on continuing Organisational Risk Management (ORM) integration throughout business units and the further development of skills and knowledge in risk management across the Service. Some highlights include:

- Members from over 66 locations viewed a newly developed online ORM awareness e-learning module
- Over 60 members were involved in risk assessment workshops
- Actions to address all risks rated 'critical' and 'high' were incorporated into business plans and three 'high' rated risks were evaluated at a lower risk level as a result of the implementation of risk treatments
- Addition of a review of the Organisational Risk Register and the newly developed Directorate Risk Registers was added to the annual schedule and risk register reviews were undertaken with Directors and Managers in all Directorates for the 2011-2012 year
- Integration of ORM with strategic and business planning, quarterly management reporting, project management, the work of health and safety function and internal audit functions has occurred during the reporting period.

In recognition of its achievements in ORM, the NSW RFS was named runner-up in the Enterprise Risk Management category of the NSW Government Treasury Managed Fund (TMF) Risk Management Awards in September 2011.

# membership & strategic services

## *Business Continuity Management*

Work on Business Continuity Management (BCM) continued during the reporting period with identified work units in Headquarters and most District Offices publishing a Business Continuity Plan (BCP). An overarching Business Continuity strategy was endorsed and alignment of the Business Continuity Incident Management Team roles with the existing NSW RFS Incident Management Team structure occurred.

## *Policy*

The Unit is also responsible for the NSW RFS Policy Framework. Work has continued on managing the development and implementation of new policy documents and the review of existing policy documents to ensure they remain relevant to the administration and operation of the Service.

During the reporting year, the review or development of 66 policy documents commenced, 33 of these were published, five were revoked and nine new policy documents were published.

## *Corporate Governance*

In the reporting period, the Service adopted a Legislative Compliance Register to assist with demonstrating compliance with legislative requirements. A quarterly review process was adopted beginning from the first quarter in 2011/12. This review is conducted by each Director for their area of responsibility and regular reports are provided to the Audit and Risk Committee. Included in this process is the annual endorsement of the Legislative Compliance Register by the Audit and Risk Committee.

## *Consultative Committees*

More information and attendance at the Consultative Committees can be found on page 35 and Appendix L.

## *Corporate Planning, Research and Knowledge Management*

### *Corporate Planning*

In 2011/12, the Service implemented an enhanced corporate planning and reporting framework to build on organisational planning and reporting. Some highlights of the new Framework were:

- A new four year Corporate Plan, which focuses on six Key Focus Areas, supported by corporate objectives, strategies, milestones and targets
- The introduction of Directorate Business Plans, directly supporting the Corporate Plan
- Integration of business planning, risk management and key reporting requirements
- Development and rollout of standard planning and reporting tools and templates
- Quarterly reporting of key milestones, performance indicators and initiatives

### *Research*

The NSW RFS supports research to improve the understanding of fire and its effects on the community and the environment, leading to better policies, tools, methods and training materials. The NSW RFS also participates in national research through membership of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC), and research partnerships such as the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC).

► *Details of research activities can be found in Appendix R.*

## *Library*

The NSW RFS Library provides information services and research support to members across NSW. In 2011/12, the Library:

- Added an additional 453 new resources to the Library's core collection of fire-related information, bringing the collection to more than 9,000 print and electronic items
- Collaborated with a CSIRO research team from the National Fire Danger Rating Review and Research Project examining bush fire fatalities in NSW since 1952
- Developed a resources package supporting the new Incident Control Incident Management training, which could be accessed online by course participants

## *Committees and Key Policies*

The Membership and Strategic Services Directorate is responsible for a number of committees and key NSW RFS policies.

### *Joint Consultative Committee*

The Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) consisting of NSW RFS management and Public Service Association representatives met regularly during the reporting period to discuss various workplace and industrial issues.

### *Equal Employment Opportunity*

The NSW RFS is an equal opportunity employer and has implemented a number of strategies to eliminate discrimination in employment and promote equal employment opportunity (EEO) throughout the agency. Examples of these strategies include a focus in the reporting period on flexible training delivery methods to ensure the accessibility of learning and development opportunities to all NSW RFS members, particular emphasis

# membership & strategic services

being placed upon EEO principles throughout the recruitment and selection process and the development of appropriate position descriptions to ensure that applicants are not discriminated against during the course of recruitment.

Additionally, NSW RFS has a Multicultural Plan, a Disability Action Plan and an Aboriginal Services Strategy all of which support the principles of equal employment opportunity.

► *Further statistical data relating to EEO in the NSW RFS can be found at Appendix D.*

## *Disability Action Plan*

The NSW RFS Disability Action Plan extends beyond providing improved employment opportunities for people with a disability. The NSW RFS is committed to providing increased community participation and protection against bush fires for those with a disability. The plan focuses on:

- Providing work facilities that enable easy public access and facilitate the employment of people with disabilities
- Encouraging a diverse membership, including people with disabilities, through our approach to flexible membership
- Encouraging people with a disability to participate in management committees and forums
- Providing bush fire information to the community in a range of formats and channels useable by people with disabilities, and:
- Include specific arrangements for the protection of people with disabilities from fire in its operation plans, procedures and training.

## *Multicultural Plan*

The NSW RFS Multicultural Plan is based on the Community Relations Commission Multicultural Planning Framework. During the reporting period, the NSW RFS has made progress in the following areas:

- Reviewing the actions within the Multicultural Plan on a quarterly basis
- Including specific objectives within the NSW RFS Corporate Plan related to diversity and enhancing community resilience
- Developing community profile documents for each NSW RFS District containing key information about cultural diversity in local communities
- Including information on Translation Services in the NSW RFS Bush Fire Information Line Coordinators Manual which may be activated when fires impact areas of large numbers of known linguistically and culturally diverse groups
- Held preliminary meetings with other agencies with the view to developing education resources for linguistically and culturally diverse groups
- Produced a range of communication materials in other community languages as part of the *Prepare. Act. Survive.* public awareness campaign.

In the next reporting period, the NSW RFS will focus on providing our membership with comprehensive information and strategies aimed at increasing volunteering amongst linguistically and culturally diverse groups. The NSW RFS will also implement systems to better profile the diversity of our volunteer membership.

*The Executive Services Directorate provides key corporate and executive support functions in the administration of the NSW RFS.*

*Those functions include:*

- *Financial Services*
- *Program Audit and Inquiries*
- *Ministerial Liaison*
- *Professional Standards*
- *Executive Support*
- *Corporate Communications including Media Services*



## **Financial Services**

The Financial Services Unit prepares and monitors the budget for the NSW Rural Fire Service and in particular the Rural Fire Fighting Fund. The Unit also prepares regular financial reports for NSW Treasury and the Minister, ensures that costs relating to Section 44 (bush fire emergency) declarations are captured and recovered from NSW Treasury and provides efficient and timely payment to suppliers, councils and other organisations.

The Unit is also responsible for:

- the payment of salaries and wages to NSW RFS staff as well as ensuring timely preparation of business activity statements and Fringe Benefit Tax returns
- the management of procurement services for the organisation and coordinating the awarding of major contracts

The level of funding allocated to the Rural Fire Fighting Fund in 2011/12 was \$271 million, an increase of 5.5 percent over the previous year. The funding provided enabled the Service to continue:

- bush fire hazard reduction activities through a combination of work by fire mitigation works crews and by direct fire mitigation grants to land management agencies
- to upgrade the private mobile radio network to ensure volunteer firefighters have the latest and most reliable communication capabilities
- the various initiatives in response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission recommendations including Hotspots, vulnerable communities, Neighbourhood Safer Places and Rapid Aerial Response Teams

The Service's capital expenditure for 2011/12 amounted to \$7.8 million and funded, among other things, a Squirrel

helicopter to primarily assist in hazard reduction operations.

The reporting period, saw the awarding of major contracts for firefighting equipment through State Contracts 292.

The NSW RFS and Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) in partnership with the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authority Council (AFAC) and the support of the other fire agencies from around Australia and New Zealand, have for the past few years been working to achieve common specifications for firefighting and related equipment.

The majority of the contract has now been let and allows agencies from across Australia to procure firefighting equipment that meets nationally approved standards and specifications.

The Service also commenced work with other agencies in the Attorney General and Justice Cluster to review business practices and procedures so as to identify areas of commonality and ensure that where possible, procurement policy and practices can be aligned. The cluster agencies are also in the initial stages of identifying goods and services that can be procured in a more efficient and cost effective manner.

An initial Cluster tender process commenced for Operational and Corporate Uniform through a joint Total Apparel Management Contract. Agencies involved in the contract include Department of Attorney General (Office of the Sheriff), NSW Police Force, NSW RFS, FRNSW, State Emergency Service and Corrective Services NSW. The tender process will be managed by NSW Police Force who obtained accreditation from Department of Finance and Services. Other contracts commenced or awarded throughout the year include:

- Firefighting Foam, in collaboration with FRNSW

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- Radiant Heat Shields for all Firefighting Appliances for the NSW RFS
- Category 7 and 9 Medium Tankers Firefighting Appliances for the NSW RFS

## Program Audit and Inquiries

### *Corporate Program Office*

On 30 June 2012, the Corporate Program Office (CPO) completed its third full financial year of operation, continuing the work of implementing the project management framework for the NSW RFS. The CPO provided guidance and support to project teams in the delivery of 28 projects during 2011/12, managed support tools and templates, coordinated reporting and provided project assurance services.

During the reporting period the CPO coordinated five meetings of the Project Control Group, the peak oversight body of the NSW RFS project portfolio. The Group was responsible for monitoring the progress of a portfolio valued at approximately \$40 million and containing projects in the following categories: building construction, organisational development, software procurement, telecommunications infrastructure and legislative compliance. Activities of note were the roll out of SAP HR (Go Live June 2012) under arrangements with FRNSW and the ongoing upgrade of the NSW RFS radio and paging infrastructure through the Communications Upgrade Program.

### *Audit, Inquiries and Legal*

The Audit, Inquiries and Legal Unit manages the NSW RFS audit obligations under the NSW Treasury Internal Audit and Risk Management Policy. This involves coordinating the Internal Audit Program, overseeing compliance against the core requirements of the policy and supporting the NSW RFS Audit and Risk

Committee. The Unit also coordinates performance audits for bush fire trail maintenance and Bush Fire Risk Management Plans and the NSW RFS involvement in legal matters.

During 2011/12 the Audit, Inquiries and Legal Unit coordinated six audits from the NSW RFS Internal Audit Program. Those audits covered:

- Accounts Payable
- Occupational Health and Safety
- District Controls
- Management of Firefighting Operations
- Bush Fire Information Line
- Public Communications and Liaison

The audits generally found that the systems and controls currently in operation were effective, but made a number of recommendations for process and quality improvements. The implementation of those improvements is monitored closely and progress is reported to the Audit and Risk Committee on a quarterly basis. During the year 87 recommendations were implemented, 27 of which were in the high risk category.

During 2011/12 the Audit, Inquiries and Legal Unit coordinated the auditing of fire trail maintenance works funded in 2010/11 under the Federal Government Natural Disaster Resilience Program, administered by NSW RFS. The latest program of audits indicated high levels of compliance and overall good quality of works completed. A summary report of the 2011/12 bush fire trail maintenance audits was presented to the NSW RFS Audit and Risk Committee in February 2012 and indicated an overall trend of improvement.

During 2011/12 the Audit, Inquiries and Legal Unit conducted pilot audits in two local government areas to assess a new methodology for performance auditing of hazard reduction activities. A sample

of hazard reduction works completed under the Blue Mountains and the Great Lakes Bush Fire Risk Management Plans were audited for quality and completeness. Previously these audits had concentrated on documents alone rather than field work.

### *Court cases*

During the year the Unit had extensive involvement in the State's defence of the large *Warragamba Winery* case, which followed a fire that started near Mt Hall on 24 December 2001. The matter involved 15 claims and was heard over almost 90 court days from October 2011 to May 2012. Many NSW RFS members were required to give evidence and the Unit provided an officer to support witnesses on every occasion. Judgement was delivered on 26 June 2012 in favour of the State.

During the reporting year, the NSW RFS was also involved in major litigation following the bush fires that affected NSW and the ACT in January 2003. Hearings of those claims commenced in the ACT Supreme Court on 1 March 2010. Final submissions concluded on 25 November 2011. Approximately 100 claims remained at 30 June 2012 against the ACT Government and the State of NSW. The matter is awaiting judgement.

The Unit responded on behalf of the NSW RFS to requests from the Office of the NSW State Coroner, to numerous subpoena requests and to requests for information about legal processes. The Unit also managed the NSW RFS response to other civil litigation, including instructing the early settlement of several disputes.

### **Records Unit**

The reporting period saw the first stage of the Information and Recordkeeping Project which aims to improve records management across the NSW RFS.

This included a rewrite of Policy and Standard Operating Procedures, delivery of training and awareness program, a proposal for improved record management software and sentencing of old records.

After a prolonged introductory period, the processing of Development Applications has gone 100 percent digital.

## Ministerial Liaison Unit

The Ministerial Liaison Unit (MLU) ensures the provision of high quality written material to the Minister in response to requests for information on matters relating to the NSW RFS. The Unit prepares draft correspondence for the Minister and Commissioner, and briefing notes on relevant issues.

In the reporting period the MLU dealt with over 120 pieces of correspondence, and processed 240 briefing notes and submissions.

The Unit also processes applications for Government information, under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*. A total of 47 GIPA applications were received and responded to, including a number of applications transferred from other agencies. The MLU achieved 100 per cent compliance with the statutory timeframes for determination required by the *GIPA Act*. One decision was the subject of an internal review, which supported the original decision. There were no external reviews instigated by the Office of the Information Commissioner in this reporting period, indicating a high degree of satisfaction with the reasons given for determination.

In keeping with the spirit of the *Act* and the NSW RFS commitment to transparency, the publication guide and disclosure log have been added to the NSW RFS public website, as well as the relevant forms and advice on how to

access information held by the agency. The NSW RFS has also dealt with a number of requests for information on an informal basis.

► *Further statistics on GIPA can be seen in Appendix I.*

The MLU also deals with alleged breaches of privacy under the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW) (PPIPA)*. In the reporting period 2011/12, there were no reported breaches under this Act.

## Professional Standards Unit

The Professional Standards Unit (PSU) develops policy, procedures, educational programs, systems and strategic initiatives to enhance Corruption Prevention and uphold the highest standards of professional ethics within the Service.

During the reporting period, the PSU received, managed and coordinated over 81 complaint and/or conduct matters, with 14 of these being formally investigated. Of the total number of matters managed, eight required external reporting to oversight agencies under legislative compliance requirements and 27 matters involved liaison with an external agency.

As part of developing workforce capabilities, the PSU is involved in a number of training initiatives. From June-December 2011 the Unit presented sessions on the role of the PSU to 85 staff members across five locations around the State and assisted in formal Induction Training for 101 staff members.

At the commencement of 2012 the PSU developed a new competency-based Code of Conduct & Ethics training program which, thanks to the efforts of the Learning and Development Unit, will soon be part of the broader NSW RFS Learning and Development training scope. This program has now been

presented to over 120 staff members and the program will continue to be rolled out to all staff members and a tailored program for Group Officers around the State during 2012/13.

A total of 65 staff have attended Staff Members on Corruption Prevention in Procurement course during the reporting period.

The PSU has implemented new policies published for staff members on Conflicts of Interest, Gifts and Benefits, Fraud and Corruption Prevention and a new Service Standard for all Members on Public Interest Disclosures in the NSW RFS.

## Public Interest Disclosures

As part of managing Public Interest Disclosures within the NSW RFS, the Unit is also responsible for providing statistical data through external reporting to the NSW Ombudsman's Office on all Disclosures received and dealt with.

► *Full details of these can be seen at Appendix J.*

The NSW RFS has developed a Service Standard for all Members SS 1.1.30 Public Interest Disclosures in the NSW RFS which provides comprehensive information on reporting serious wrongdoing. The Service Standard includes information on all aspects of lodging a Public Interest Disclosure (PID) and the manner in which the NSW RFS will assess and investigate all PIDs.

## Consumer Response and Complaints

The NSW RFS recognises the need for, and is committed to, providing the community with an opportunity to provide feedback on our performance and to have suggestions or complaints addressed in the most appropriate manner with a preference for resolution at the front-line wherever possible,

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and with an appropriate process for escalation, should the need arise.

Complaints sent to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services are received by the Ministerial Liaison Unit. These are directed to the appropriate Director for response and action.

The NSW RFS Commissioner also receives feedback and suggestions by email and letter. These are responded to directly or forwarded to the appropriate Director or business unit for action.

Complaints received through the NSW RFS website or MyRFS, the extranet for NSW RFS members are handled in two ways. The majority of suggestion and complaints are technical and these are handled by the Online Communications Team. Other correspondence is immediately directed to the appropriate business unit.

## Executive Support

### *Corporate and International Relations*

The Botswana Fire Management Program finished the third of its five-year program in 2011/12. All milestones were met or exceeded.

► *Details appear in the Key Focus Area chapter.*

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Service and the Asia Disaster Preparedness Centre.

► *Details appear in the Key Focus Area chapter.*

The Service hosted delegations from Korea, India and China.

During 2011/12 the Unit provided commercial training to approximately 800 personnel from both the public and private sectors. All courses were conducted by our nationally accredited instructors and predominantly covered Bush Fire Awareness and

Fire Extinguisher training. The Unit extended its training to conduct Safe Working on Roofs training to Corrective Services NSW providing them with the knowledge and skills to work safely on roofs in a variety of operations. The Unit also participated in the review and amendment to the Service Standard relating to Commercial Training – Service Standard 6.1.3 Training in the NSW RFS.

### *Committees and Awards*

The Committees and Awards Unit provides executive support to the statutory bodies established under the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and *Fire Services Joint Standing Committee Act 1998* and to committees established by the Minister and the Commissioner of the NSW RFS.

Details of the Committee membership and attendance are set out in Appendix L. The Unit also administers the Commissioner's Internal Bravery and Service Awards as well as coordinating nominations for external awards.

During the reporting period, 2,423 Long Service Medals nominations were processed for both staff and volunteers. Also 207 National Medal/Clasp nominations were processed and 13 Australian Fire Service Medals were awarded. On St Florian's Day 2012, the Commissioner issued 19 Internal Bravery and Service Awards to members and units.

► *Full details of Internal and External Awards processed can be seen in Appendix N.*

### *Events*

The Unit managed the following major events with and for the NSW RFS. The AFAC & Bushfire CRC Conference was held in August 2011 in Sydney and involved 120 delegates and a NSW RFS Exhibition Site. The Australian

National Fire Cadet Championships, held at Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation Centre from 4-7 October 2011, were an outstanding success with a record 30 participating teams from across Australia and New Zealand. Established in 2007, the championships are held every two years and are designed to bring together cadets from across the country to have fun, participate in friendly competition and promote the values of emergency service volunteering.

Two NSW RFS teams jointly took out first place in the Championships – Oakville Cadets and South West Cadets, closely followed by Western Australian team Serpentine Jarrahdale Sierra.

► *Details appear in the Year in Brief chapter.*

The Unit managed the NSW RFS involvement in the Volunteer Memorial Annual Commemoration Service and the Big Issue Street Football Festival.

### *Sponsorships*

Ongoing and new sponsorships and partnerships were managed throughout the reporting period including the Ausgrid Energy Partnership and the McDonalds Volunteer Reward Promotion.

### *Protocols*

A new State Protocol Officer was appointed this year with two deputies. For the first time a volunteer holds the position. The Protocol Team is going through a rebuilding process with the retirement of some key personnel.

► *Details appear in the Year in Brief chapter.*

## Corporate Communications

The Corporate Communications group plays a critical role during operational periods, with responsibility for Public Liaison during incidents and the

dissemination of information to the community through channels such as the NSW RFS website, mass media, social media and local networks. This work extends to non-operational periods where the group assists with the delivery of safety and preparedness messages. The group also manages the Service's corporate communication activities including publications.

The group delivered two major public awareness campaigns during the reporting period. The *Prepare. Act. Survive.* grass fire awareness campaign was successful in raising community awareness about the dangers of grass fires, specifically targeting rural and regional areas. A separate campaign targeting bush fires was carried out State-wide. This was the final year of the three-year campaign introduced following the Victorian bush fires, with a new campaign being developed across the reporting period.

### *Media Services*

As well as providing emergency information on the two Emergency Warning bush fires of the season, the group supported the State Emergency Service during the unprecedented flood activity across the State with the deployment of 10 trained personnel to assist with public information and warnings.

Recognising the importance of accurate, timely and consistent information during major incidents, a new Public Liaison Officer training program was developed. This program provides participants with a national competency Manage Information Function at an Incident.

More than 400 media personnel were accredited under the Service's ongoing media training program, which provides media personnel such as journalists and camera operators with basic bush fire safety knowledge. In all, more than 25 separate training sessions

were provided across regional and metropolitan areas.

The Media Services Unit provided support to local media initiatives. Across the year, more than 150 separate media releases were issued highlighting the role of volunteer brigades and raising community awareness.

### *Online Communications*

As part of an ongoing initiative to enhance online communication activities, a significant re-launch of the NSW RFS website was carried out, providing an improved layout to give a high priority to emergency information and awareness activities. Scoping and development work was also conducted on MyRFS, a dedicated volunteer website.

The Service recognised the growing importance of social media as an effective communication method by developing a Service Standard and toolkit to assist members with the use of this area of communication. At the same time, the use of the Service's social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter continued to grow.

### *Organisational Communications*

The Organisational Communications Unit delivered a number of major coordinated communication projects across the year. This included the preparation of communication materials on the introduction of new taxation requirements for brigades, the NSW RFS Rank Review, new health and safety legislation and the 2011 Australian National Fire Cadet Championships.

Three editions of the *Bush Fire Bulletin* were published. To supplement this important method of communicating, and to celebrate the Bulletin's 60th anniversary in 2012, a new electronic newsletter was introduced. The eBulletin is delivered monthly and was developed

following consultation with members where 89 percent of those surveyed were in support of increasing regular communication delivered by email.

Broad ranging graphic design services were provided including NSW RFS Open Day, the 2012 Australian Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Conference and the ongoing Volunteer to Career program.

### *Annual Report – External Costs and Availability*

The Organisational Communications team is also responsible for the production of the Annual Report. The total external costs incurred in the production of this report were \$4,000 + GST. The report is accessible on the NSW RFS website [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) and copies may be obtained by emailing [organisational.communications@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:organisational.communications@rfs.nsw.gov.au) or from the NSW RFS Headquarters, 15 Carter St, Lidcombe, Sydney.

FRONT COVER PHOTO:

Part of the Roadside Vegetation Program, this roadside burn was on the Barrier Highway, about 170km west of Cobar. The volunteer in the photo was one of the Region East (Firefighter Steve Skinner, Valley Heights Brigade) crew who came out to assist the local brigades. It was a very successful burn. Photo by Robyn Favelle



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