

## RFS STANDARD DESIGN BRIGADE STATIONS



Along with the Standard Design Fire Control Centres there are also Standard Design Brigade Stations.

In an effort to establish consistent quality facilities across the State the designs include one truck stations up to stations that can house four trucks and include an office and catering facilities.

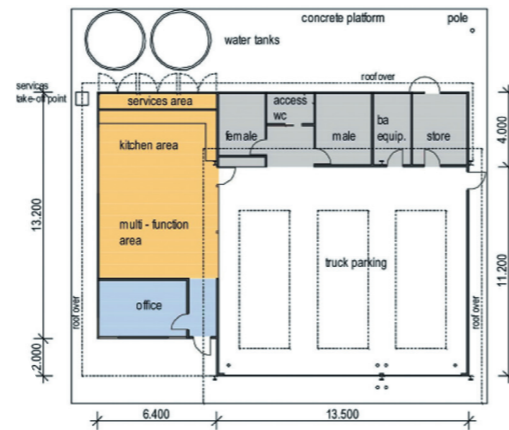
The adaptable system allows for expansion over the years as the stations grows. The modular design means that building a new station can be staged if necessary.

Similar to the Fire Control Centres, the buildings are durable and robust and designed specifically for the RFS. They

meet OH&S obligations and have been carefully planned to best meet volunteer needs. They require very little maintenance and what maintenance there is can be planned.

Probably the greatest advantage for brigades is that building design costs are virtually non-existent. Full architectural drawing sets for all versions are available now and are provided at no cost.

Brigade stations built after 1 July 2009 are to use the RFS Standard Design. Service Standard 5.1.11 sets out the conditions and provides advice on how to get started. For more information contact John Muirhead in Infrastructure Planning.



Architectural plan for a three bay station

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“This similarity of design across the range of available Stations and Fire Control Centres will allow the RFS to take advantage of smart procurement processes into the future,” Mr Anderson said.

“Savings are able to be generated through the letting of bulk purchasing contracts for everything from roofing to light fittings and door handles.”

The RFS Standard Design includes improvements in functionality, as well as the cost efficiencies that come along with standardisation. Years of firefighting expertise have been incorporated into the designs. In particular lessons learned from the construction and design of the RFS Headquarters were transferred directly in to the Standard Designs.

John Muirhead, who is now the Coordinator of Infrastructure Planning, said the improved functionality will please the volunteers.

“I would say these designs are everything we need without going overboard,” he said.

The simple building design, based on a column and pier arrangement, can be constructed by local builders thus boosting the economy in the local area.

“It is a modular design which is entirely without brick,” Mr Muirhead said, “It is really a massive metal frame which means it can be easily extended and is virtually maintenance free. In theory, you could unbolt the whole building and relocate if you wanted to!”

The modular design is not only simple but flexible. Mr Muirhead said that in the case of the Fire Control Centres it was important that the design could handle both small and large numbers of people.

“An FCC is really the hub for any District or Zone and it’s a place where major incidents are run,” he said, “so it’s likely that people from other parts of the State will come to help out in a major incident.”

When the Standard Designs have been rolled out across the State, it will mean that staff or volunteers can walk into any centre around the State and be familiar with the way it works.

They will even know how the phone system operates. Standard Communications specifications have been generated as part of the Standard Design. That means the same telephone and radio equipment will eventually be in every RFS building which will make a big difference to maintenance and repairs costs.

With the Standard Design not only will staff and volunteers know where everything is the facilities will also be able accommodate them easefully. John Muirhead cited the air-conditioning specifications as an example of the flexibility.

“The air-conditioning is specified to handle the different loads. You could have ten people working there day to day and then in Summer it’s 45 degrees outside and there are 100 people working out of the Fire Control Centre.

“It’s the same with meals. We need a place for the staff to eat as well as a place to feed a crowd.”

Short term cycles aside, the Standard Design is also quite simple to extend. The modular design means that extra wings or modules can be added to accommodate more people or more sophisticated activities. Best of all, the architectural drawings for these extensions have already been done.

While Canobolas Fire Control Centre was opened in November 2008 (see pages 33-34) a second Standard Design FCC has since been opened in Albion Park, south of Sydney. Construction has also started in Coffs Harbour and a further five new Standard Design Fire Control Centres will be built over the next 12 or more months.



## THE FUTURE HAS A NEW LOOK

Photo by Brett Bowden

Ever since the first RFS Standard Design Fire Control Centre (FCC) was officially opened in Canobolas in late 2008 demand for new FCCs across the State has increased. In fact, in the next 12 months seven more Fire Control Centres are in the pipeline.

Why the sudden rush on new RFS Fire Control Centres?

Assistant Commissioner Keith Harrap, Director of Infrastructure Services says that the RFS Standard Design Project is behind it.

“Now that the Canobolas FCC is built people can see what they are going to get,” he said, “And they are impressed.”

### The Standard Design Project

The idea of common design themes, or standard designs, for all RFS buildings was first mooted in 2004. It was sparked by the design and the construction of the new RFS Headquarters at Homebush Bay.

“We wanted to take what we learned from building the Headquarters at Homebush Bay and share it with the rest of the RFS,” Group Manager Fixed Assets and Infrastructure, Mr Tim Anderson said.

“We thought that the way the Headquarters building functioned, the layout, the materials used and the thought that went into the design could all become part of common design themes used across the State.”

Since that time architectural plans and standards for all new RFS buildings have been generated by the RFS in partnership with NSW Government Architects. The Standard Design Project was

championed by Assistant Commissioner and Executive Director for Strategic Services, Mr Mark Crossweller along with Mr Tim Anderson, in his former role as Director of Strategic Services and Infrastructure.

Since then a range of RFS experts have produced countless draft plans and drawings for new standard design Fire Control Centres and Stations. Drafts were exhibited around the State for feedback and the final designs have received support from across the RFS.

Key to the Standard Design Project is a view that the same tools and the same facilities should be available to all volunteers.

“There is enormous variation in the standard and type of building that houses the local RFS,” Mr Anderson said.

“This is largely due to the history of the RFS. We were once 142 fire agencies governed by many local councils - each with their own budget, priorities and style. We have now been brought together into one Service.

“It was this variability in infrastructure throughout the State that really drove the Standard Design Project,” he said. “We have found that some areas have well appointed and maintained stations, while other areas have far more modest facilities.”

The Standard Design Project will eventually affect all RFS buildings and it is estimated that it will roll out over the next 20 years. The impact of the project on the entire Service will be massive according to Mr Anderson.

“The buildings are modern and practical. They are places people can be proud

of,” he said. “It will improve operational efficiency, it will enhance communication between members and it will also make the organisation more attractive to new recruits.”

Improved and standardised facilities reflect the community’s commitment to the volunteers who are the life-blood of the RFS.

“It’s for the volunteers, they deserve it!”

### Not just a pretty face...

The Standard Design Project is not about creating on-off buildings, it is about establishing an overall system for RFS facilities. It started with making the buildings work, but it did not stop there!

The whole purpose of the Standard Design project was to create a system designed to bring maximum benefit to the RFS and its volunteers.

“You can not learn from one-off buildings, they are built and that is it,” Mr Anderson said, “But with the Standard Designs we are able to learn and improve the buildings every time we build one. We can learn and improve the designs and continuously take advantage of new materials and construction processes.”

The Standard Design is energy efficient using passive solar energy, maximum cross ventilation, rainwater tanks and construction materials that are recyclable.

In addition, a common design allows the reuse of drawings and specifications saving money on every new construction.

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