



District Information Pack

Far West

The Far West Team covers the local government areas of Cobar, Central Darling, Bourke, Brewarrina and the vast Unincorporated Area of NSW, a total area of 260,000 sq kms. The main cities & towns include Cobar, Nymagee, Euabalong, Mt Hope, Wilcannia, Ivanhoe, Menindee, Tilpa, Bourke, Brewarrina, Tibooburra, Enngonia, Louth, Byrock, Wanaaring, Goodooga and Angledool.

The population across the whole area is approximately 40,000, which includes almost 20,000 people in Broken Hill.

The town of Cobar is the next major regional centre outside of Broken Hill (West) and Dubbo (East).

The Barwon Darling Rural Fire Zone is an area of 60,000 square kilometres which comprises of the Bourke & Brewarrina Rural Fire Districts. There are two major townships located within the Zone, Bourke having a population of 2500, with surrounding settlements and rural properties having a population of around 500, Brewarrina having a population of 1300 with the surrounding settlements and rural properties having a population of around 700. Primary Production is the main industry within both LGAs (Grazing of sheep, cattle, goats and farming of cereal crops, cotton and fruit).

The Central Darling LGA is the location of the town of Wilcannia is the centre of local government while the villages of Menindee, Ivanhoe, White Cliffs and Tilpa are also located in the council area.

As a percentage of the Far West, the Unincorporated Area consists of the largest land mass. Over that area there are 9 brigades with a volunteer base of approximately 250 personnel. The biggest issue facing these brigades is the distances between them across that area. A number of these brigades have interaction across State boundaries – predominantly Silverton with South Australia and Tibooburra with SA, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Large isolated grazing properties make up 90% of the total area and national park estate covers approximately 5% of the area, although noted that National Parks are currently acquiring large parcels of land to add to their portfolio.

There are 49 rural fire brigades in the Far West, including a number of village brigades and many remote rural brigades with 110 firefighting vehicles and six support vehicles.

The District experiences on average per year, 140 bush, grass or forest fires of which 3 could be considered significant with major wildfire events occurring every 5-7 years.

The Cobar area has on average 40 bush fires per year, with most of these being minor fires of less than 1000 hectares in area. Several major fires have occurred over the past 40 years, including the summers of 1974/75, 1984/85 and 2000/2001. These fires have followed exceptionally wet seasons which resulted in a heavy body of both winter and summer fuels

The main sources of ignition in the Cobar area are:

- lightning associated with summer storms
- farm machinery and illegal ignitions

Bush fires on a large scale are an irregular occurrence in the Barwon Darling area. Such events usually only occur after a prolonged period of above average rainfall. Information on fire history in the area is lacking in detail, with the last known large scale fire occurring in the 1980's in the Brewarrina area. The larger fires usually originate from electrical storms associated with hot, dry north westerly winds.

The Central Darling area has on average 40 bush fires per year, with most of these being minor fires of less than 1000 hectares in area. Several major fires have occurred over the past 40 years, including the summers of 1974/75, 1976/77 and 1983/84. These fires have followed exceptionally wet seasons which resulted in a heavy body of both winter and summer fuels.

Most of the fires occur in the open plains type country that is easily accessed by earthmoving and farming plant and is usually brought under control quite quickly. Large scale wild fires usually originate from electrical storms associated with hot dry north westerly winds which tend to switch to south westerlies. Low humidity and high temperatures are usual forerunners to these events. Careless machinery operation and burning off have also been the cause of fires, as well as strong winds bringing down power lines.

Bushfires on a large scale are an irregular occurrence in the Unincorporated area. Such events usually only occur after a prolonged period of above average rainfall. Such conditions occurred in 1950-51, 1955-56, 1975-76, 1984-85. These large scale wild fires usually originate from electrical storms associated with hot, dry north westerly winds. Temperatures often exceed 40°C with relative humidity of less than 10% with dry westerly winds. There are frequent dry electrical storms during the bush fire season.

Primary Fire Control Operations are managed out of the Cobar office, which is supported by the Bourke and Brewarrina Office. There is also an office located in Broken Hill.

Two other Fire Control Centres are located across the District in Ivanhoe & Wilcannia, which are only used during incidents as required and would be classed as Forward Operation Points.

1.1. Contact Information

District Office Address:	Railway Parade North Cobar NSW 2835
District Office Phone:	02 6836 1226
After Hours Contact:	Via State Operations on 02 8741 5400
A PSN Radio Channel:	111 FARWST A
B PSN Radio Channel:	211 FARWST B
PMR Channel:	Zone 21 ANLG VOTE – Primary Dispatch Channel
ESO Conversion Chart:	Please see file in folder for relevant conversion information
Fire Weather Forecast Area:	Far Western
Local Government Area:	Cobar, Central Darling, Bourke, Brewarrina, Unincorporated

1.2. Topography

Cobar

The topography is generally flat to undulating country comprising large grazing properties, with increasingly large areas to the south being cleared and cultivated. There are no natural barriers to fire, with man-made breaks being the major highways including the Barrier Highway and the Kidman Way, and an extensive Shire road system.

No major rivers run through the Shire but the Darling and Lachlan Rivers form part of the northern and southern boundaries.

Barwon Darling (Bourke & Brewarrina)

The topography is mainly flat to undulating except in the eastern part of the Bourke Shire where it has several mountain ranges. Fuel types are predominately grasslands.

Central Darling

The topography is generally flat to undulating country comprising mostly very large grazing properties, with more intensive farming & cropping in the Menindee Lakes area. Man-made breaks include the major highways including the Barrier & Cobb Highways and an extensive Shire road system.

The Darling & Paroo Rivers run through the Central Darling Council area as well as a myriad of lakes and ephemeral creeks.

1.3. Vegetation

Native vegetation reflects the low and variable rainfall, soil type and topography. The rangeland types of western NSW are:

- Belah – Bluebush
- Bimble box-pine
- Downs Country
- Gidgee – Brigalow
- Mallee
- Mitchell Grass Plains
- Mulga

Long-lived plant species dominate the rangelands providing stability to the system, while short-lived plants are an important basis for animal productivity. Grazing industries rely on natural landscapes and native vegetation except in small pockets where dryland or irrigated cropping is undertaken.

1.4. Climate

The climate is characterised by high summer temperatures, low and erratic rainfall and evaporation rates that greatly exceed rainfall. Average annual rainfall varies between 450mm in the north-east to 150mm in the north-west corner.

Severe dry periods are an important feature of the climate and have a frequency of recurrence of about 1:8 to 1:10 years.

Significant droughts have occurred in 1845, 1864, 1895-1905, 1911-17, 1928-30, 1940-46, 1965-67, 1978-mid 1980s, 1993-94 and most recently in 2001-2009.

The vastness of the division is such that the impact of droughts is not uniformly felt across the region.

1.5. Average Weather Data

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Cobar MO recorded by the BoM (last updated 25 July 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	27.8	29.4	30.3	30.2	29.8	28.8	26.8	24.3	22.0	21.4	22.7	25.4
Min Temp (°C)	19.8	21.8	23.1	23.7	23.5	22.5	20.3	17.2	14.3	13.2	14.1	16.8
Rainfall (mm)	34.3	90.8	184.1	277.8	308.6	274.2	146.7	103.9	60.1	41.8	30.1	19.6
3pm Temp (°C)	26.0	27.5	28.6	28.6	28.3	27.5	25.8	23.4	21.2	20.5	21.5	23.8
3pm wind (km/h)	21.9	22.2	21.6	21.6	21.9	23.0	22.4	21.2	20.5	19.8	20.1	20.7
3pm RH (%)	64	65	67	70	73	72	72	71	68	68	66	64

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Brewarrina Hospital recorded by the BoM (last updated 7 July 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	29.0	32.4	35.1	36.2	35.0	32.3	27.5	22.5	18.7	18.3	20.7	24.9
Min Temp (°C)	12.9	16.2	19.0	20.9	20.4	17.5	12.6	8.5	5.6	4.5	5.7	9.0
Rainfall (mm)	29.6	35.4	38.5	49.9	47.1	41.4	29.4	30.4	32.7	28.0	21.4	24.9
3pm Temp (°C)	27.5	30.7	33.3	34.3	33.1	30.7	26.4	21.6	17.9	17.4	19.8	23.6
3pm wind (km/h)	10.5	9.9	9.4	8.9	9.6	8.5	7.3	6.4	7.4	8.3	9.5	10.2
3pm RH (%)	28	29	27	31	35	32	36	44	50	46	38	32

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Wilcannia AWS recorded by the BoM (last updated 31 May 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	27.4	31.2	34.0	25.5	24.7	31.4	26.3	21.3	17.7	17.1	19.5	23.6
Min Temp (°C)	11.9	15.3	17.9	19.7	19.2	16.2	11.5	7.7	5.3	4.1	5.5	8.4
Rainfall (mm)	25.9	21.1	25.3	26.8	25.3	24.5	18.3	23.9	22.7	17.9	17.5	16.7
3pm Temp (°C)	26.4	29.9	32.6	34.2	33.6	30.5	25.5	20.6	17.1	16.6	18.9	22.7
3pm wind (km/h)	15.9	16.1	15.7	15.1	13.7	13.4	12.1	11.6	12.5	13.6	15.9	16.8
3pm RH (%)	30	28	27	27	29	32	37	46	53	49	41	34

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Ivanhoe Aerodrome AWS recorded by the BoM (last updated 25 July 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	27.0	30.5	33.3	36.9	34.1	20.3	16.9	20.3	16.9	16.7	18.8	23.1
Min Temp (°C)	11.9	15.8	18.2	20.7	19.35	16.2	12.1	8.0	5.8	5.0	5.8	8.6
Rainfall (mm)	18.6	30.2	18.4	25.6	22.7	25.9	23.0	24.6	29.5	17.7	20.3	20.0
3pm Temp (°C)	25.1	29.2	31.1	34.0	31.8	28.9	25.1	19.6	16.1	15.6	17.7	21.8
3pm wind (km/h)	19.9	19.1	18.6	18.4	17.9	16.8	15.9	15.4	16.3	16.4	18.4	19.4
3pm RH (%)	25	24	20	20	26	27	32	44	53	49	39	31

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Broken Hill Airport AWS recorded by the BoM (last updated 25 July 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	25.6	28.8	31.7	33.8	32.5	29.1	24.4	19.1	16.0	15.6	17.9	21.9
Min Temp (°C)	11.6	14.8	17.4	19.4	18.5	15.4	11.4	7.7	5.7	4.9	5.6	8.4
Rainfall (mm)	25.4	21.6	20.6	29.3	18.7	21.6	20.6	19.5	15.2	16.7	18.0	21.3
3pm Temp (°C)	23.5	27.0	29.3	31.4	30.1	27.4	23.3	18.4	15.2	14.6	16.8	20.2
3pm wind (km/h)	21.0	20.2	19.6	18.7	19.4	17.9	17.2	16.8	18.1	18.4	19.7	20.9
3pm RH (%)	28	26	25	25	28	28	32	43	49	48	38	34

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Tibooburra Airport recorded by the BoM (last updated 25 July 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	29.1	32.5	35.5	37.9	36.1	32.8	27.7	22.2	18.5	18.4	20.9	25.6
Min Temp (°C)	15.2	18.8	21.6	24.1	22.8	19.8	15.1	10.2	7.3	6.5	7.9	11.7
Rainfall (mm)	15.5	23.4	14.7	25.2	25.4	27.9	12.9	15.8	16.8	11.1	9.0	18.3
3pm Temp (°C)	27.5	30.7	33.2	35.7	34.0	31.1	26.7	21.4	17.8	17.2	19.9	24.6
3pm wind (km/h)	20.7	20.6	20.7	19.3	19.1	19.1	17.5	16.4	18.5	19.5	20.2	21.5
3pm RH (%)	19	19	17	17	22	22	26	33	40	40	29	22

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at White Cliffs AWS recorded by the BoM (last updated 25 July 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	28.38	31.9	34.8	37.3	35.4	32.4	26.8	21.3	17.6	17.8	20.2	24.7
Min Temp (°C)	14.7	18.1	20.8	23.6	22.1	19.1	14.0	9.6	6.5	5.7	7.1	10.8
Rainfall (mm)	21.2	30.7	22.5	30.8	26.6	35.7	18.7	19.7	20.4	15.5	13.1	15.7
3pm Temp (°C)	No data available											
3pm wind (km/h)												
3pm RH (%)												

1.6. Known Radio Comms Blackspots

Unincorporated

- Entire area except immediate areas around Broken Hill.
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Central Darling

- North of White Cliffs, west of Wanaaring.
- South of Menindee. North East of Menindee.
- West of Darnick.
- South and east of Mossgiel.

Bourke/Brewarrina

- Large Black spot along Arthur Hall VC Way between Brewarrina and Coolabah.
- There is also an area on Hungerford Road near the Queensland border.
- There is also a small area between Enngonia and Weilmoringle.
- Brigades have also had radio problems (able to transmit but half the time the messages are unreadable) around Lednapper up at Enngonia, the Cuttaburra Basin near Yantabulla, and on the eastern point of Culgoa National Park up along the river country.

Cobar

- Along the Cobar/Central Darling LGA border can be patchy.

1.7. Hazards

1.7.1. Transportation

Primary Transport corridors within the Far West are:

- Kidman Way
- Barrier Highway
- Mitchell Highway
- Kamilaroi Highway
- Cobb Highway
- Silver City Highway

The Rail network between New South Wales and South Australia runs through southern Cobar, Central Darling and Unincorporated. This carries a Sydney bound passenger service and the Indian Pacific passenger service from Sydney to Perth. Hazardous goods are carried on this line with multiple trips per day.

Broken Hill airport serviced by Qantas and Rex with multiple daily flights from Adelaide, Mildura and Sydney.

Most pastoral stations use planes for travel and agricultural purposes.

1.7.2. Human Settlement

The Unincorporated area has a population of around 680 people spread across 93,300km² which includes multiple farming properties/stations and 2 villages Tibooburra and Silverton.

Broken Hill is the largest and closest city to most areas in the Unincorporated area and Central Darling with a population of around 17,567 people.

The Central Darling area takes up 53,511km² with a population of around 2000 people. There are 4 main townships which are Wilcannia, Menindee, Ivanhoe and White Cliffs. There are also a number of smaller towns which include Darnick, Mossgiel, Sunset Strip and Tilpa.

Cobar Shire has a population of around 4,647 spread across an area of 44,065km². Cobar Township is the main hub in the area and has around 86% of the LGA population living there. The remaining population is spread out of agricultural properties and smaller townships such as Nymagee, Euabalong and Euabalong West, Mount Hope and Canbelego

Bourke Shire is around 43116km² in size with a population of around 3000 people. The majority do live in the township of Bourke with others located in smaller townships such as Byrock, Enngonia, Fords Bridge, Wanaaring and Louth.

The Brewarrina Shire has a population of around 2193 people over an area of 18874km². More than half of the Shire population live in Brewarrina. Smaller townships in the area include Gongolgon, Angledool and Goodooga.

1.7.3. Economic

The Far West District has a strong economy build on mining, agriculture, film, arts and tourism. The mining industry employs mostly on a week on week off basis with those not living in the area flying home every second week. All mining in the Far West is mineral based which a heavy focus on lead, zinc, silver, copper and gold. The agricultural focus of the Far West District is predominately livestock and cropping. There is also an increasing amount of properties being locked up for carbon credits.

1.7.4. Special Fire Protection Purpose

Our NSP has 14 locations within the Far West 3 in Cobar LGA at Ward Oval Cobar, Archie King Oval Murrin Bridge and Mt Hope Fire Station. 3 in Central Darling at Baker Park in Wilcannia, Burke and Willis Park in Menindee and Ivanhoe Sportsground. 3 in Brewarrina LGA at Weilmoringle Public School Playground, Brewarrina Showground and Goodooga Magpies Sports Oval. 5 in Bourke LGA at Fords Bridge Fire Shed, Louth Racecourse, Byrock Fire Shed, Enngonia Public school and M.A Davidson Memorial Oval in Bourke.

1.7.5. Energy and Utilities

There is major power infrastructure in and around Broken Hill being a 53 megawatt Solar Farm in broken hill and a 199 megawatt wind farm in Silverton. A 100 megawatt battery backup is being built in Broken Hill that will provide power to the mines and the community when the power grid is switched off.

Broken Hill water is a pipe network from Wentworth to Broken Hill some 270km it is operated by the state agency Water NSW. Other town water supplies come from smaller reservoirs around the area.

Cobar has a natural gas pipeline running from North West to South East with several monitoring stations. This is managed by APA.

1.8. land management authorities

Cobar

Land Manager	% of Area
National Parks & Wildlife Service	5.4
Forestry Corporation of NSW	0.08
Department of Lands	0.02
Local Government	0.10
Private	94.40

Barwon Darling (Bourke & Brewarrina)

Land Manager	% of Area
National Parks & Wildlife Service	9.6
Department of Lands	0.01
Local Government	0.10
Private	90.29

Central Darling

Land Manager	% of Area
National Parks & Wildlife Service	4.7
Department of Lands	0.02
Local Government	0.01
Private	95.18

Unincorporated

Land Manager	% of Area
National Parks & Wildlife Service	74.2
Department of Lands	2.8
Local Government	4.2
Private	15.9
All Other	2.9

For more specific data on the Far West District, please follow the links to the Cobar Bush Fire Risk Management Plan [here](#), the Barwon Darling (Bourke & Brewarrina) Bush Fire Risk Management Plan [here](#), the Central Darling Bush Fire Risk Management Plan [here](#), and the West Darling (Unincorporated) Bush Fire Risk Management Plan [here](#).

Note: These links will only work with internet coverage.

For further information regarding the Far West District Information pack, please contact the Operational Improvement team via email at **operational.improvement@rfs.nsw.gov.au**

