Large Air Tankers (LAT) and Very Large Air Tankers (VLATs) arrived in NSW for the 2015/16 fire season. Faster airspeed and larger fuel tanks enable LATs and VLATs to deliver more suppressants in a shorter time frame than the aircraft currently in use in Australia to date. They can reach almost any location in NSW within an hour while carrying a full payload and the capacity to immediately contribute to the local firefighting effort.

A lead plan accompanies the air tanker on their missions to assess the fireground and determine the most effective firefighting tactics. The LAT/VLAT program is on trial for two years. Here is a profile of the aircraft that were used for the 2015/16 fire season. An assessment will be done of the 2015/16 trial to determine which aircraft will be used in the 2016/17 fire season.
The Southern Belle DC10 arrived in NSW in October 2015 as part of the two year trial of Very Large Air Tankers in NSW. With cruising speeds of up to 650kph, it can reach any location in NSW within an hour and is capable of dropping 44,000 litres of water or suppressant (gel or retardant).

Full payload air tankers can reach almost any location in NSW within an hour. Maximum payload range of 1,950km or three hours flying time from airbase.

The Southern Belle DC10 has a cruising speed (loaded) of 650kph.
**Large Air Tanker**

Thor Hercules L100 arrived in NSW in September 2015. Fast and capable of releasing 15,450 liters of water or suppressant (gel or retardant).

- **Four-engine turboprop cargo aircraft**
- With 18,000 HP
- **Drop rate** is computer-controlled by the flight crew in order to produce the desired coverage levels over the fire lines.
- Can drop 15,450 liters of water or suppressant at a time.
- **Containment lines** 30 wide and up to 350 meters long.
- A drop of the whole 15,450 can take 2.2 seconds.
- **Cruising speed**: 545 KPH
- **Operational**: Anywhere
- **Can travel for up to 4 hours**
- **Cruising speed up to 500 KPH**

**Lead Plane**

**Bird Dog**

One of two Bird Dogs available to the NSW RFS. Fast and adaptable these intelligence-gathering aircraft assess the fireground, determine the best flight path and then lead the huge air tankers across the fireground showing them where to drop their load of gel or retardant using a smoke generating machine.

- **Rockwell Turbo Commander**
- **Very fast**: Can match the speed of the air tankers.
- **Maximum downward visibility due to high wings**.
- **Smoke generating machine used to mark out the flight path and determine wind drift for the air tankers**.
- **Pressurised cabin**.
- **Sophisticated communications and tracking equipment**.
- **Operational**: Anywhere
- **Can travel up to 4 hours**
- **Cruising speed up to 500 KPH**

**NSW RFS Air Support**