



## District Information Pack

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### South West Slopes

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South West Slopes Zone is located approximately 110km North-East of Wagga Wagga and approximately 105 km North-West of Canberra. Incorporating both the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council (CGRC) and Hilltops Council Local Government Areas. (Combined population: 29,639).

The land covered under the South West Slopes Bush Fire Risk Management Plan is 1,112,000ha (11,120sq km), containing five (5) main population centres (Boorowa, Cootamundra, Gundagai, Harden and Young) with an additional twenty (20) smaller towns (Bendick-Murrell, Bribbaree, Coolac, Frogmore, Galong, Jugiong, Kingsvale, Koorawatha, Milvale, Monteagle, Murringo, Muttama, Nangus, Reids Flat, Rugby, Rye Park, Stockinbingal, Tumblong, Wallendbeen and Wombat).

Population changes associated with the stone fruit industry, large numbers of property owners travelling out of area for harvesting operations and seasonal work, and an ageing population have been identified as potentially impacting on the ability of certain sections of the community to prepare themselves for bush fire.

The area has a varied annual number of Bush/Grass/Scrub fires and is often based on the grass fuel load, weather and seasonal outlooks. History has provided that there is an irregular pattern of major fires. The area has on average 97 bush, grass, and scrub fires per year, of which two on average can be considered to be major fires. The main sources of fire include ignitions from:

- harvesting operations and farm machinery
- lightning
- escape from legal and illegal burning operation
- accidental ignitions involving vehicles and equipment

There is an Airbase at Cootamundra with an Aviation brigade suitable for light fixed wing operations. There is also an Airbase at Young airport, which has a container and water tanks.

The nominated Incident Management Facility is the South West Slopes Zone Fire Control Centre. The Primary Local Emergency Operations Centre is also located at the South West Slopes Zone Fire Control Centre.

## 1.1. Contact Information

<b>District Office Address:</b>	4559 Burley Griffin Way Harden NSW 2587
<b>District Office Phone:</b>	02 6386 3170
<b>After Hours Contact:</b>	Via State Operations on 02 8741 5400
<b>A PSN Radio Channel:</b>	144 SWS A
<b>B PSN Radio Channel:</b>	244 SWS B
<b>PMR Channel:</b>	2239 SWS P- <b>Primary Dispatch Channel</b>
<b>ESO Conversion Chart:</b>	Please see file in folder for relevant conversion information
<b>Fire Weather Forecast Area:</b>	Southern Slopes
<b>Local Government Area:</b>	Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional, Hilltops

## 1.2. Topography

The landform ranges from , 844m elevation at Mount Darling in the Reids Flat area to 196m at Hillas Creek in the Muttama area.

There are vast differences across the area, with some areas predominantly flat and open, with many pockets of hilly and undulating scrubby terrain, which can be difficult to access via vehicles.

## 1.3. Vegetation

South West Slopes Zone has a majority of open grassland (cropping and pasture) with scattered timbered areas throughout the zone and pockets of pine plantations (predominantly towards Adjungbilly).

Grasslands typically begin to cure during the month of October in the North Western (Bribbaree/Stockinbingal) aspect of the zone and moving in a South East gradient throughout October-November with grass fuels typically progressing in the later stages of curing in December / January. The grass fuel loading is varied and follows cyclical weather/rainfall patterns with some years being a maximum average of 1.5 T/ha and some seasons leading to promoted grass growth in excess of 6 T/ha.

Timbered areas are often having minor levels of ladder fuels and often are more representative of wooded grasslands than a dense forested area.

There is a variety of soil types from rich loam river flats to granite/shale.

## 1.4. Climate

The typical / average climate in the South West Slopes area is temperate climate with winter / spring rainfall averaging 600mm and the bush fire season generally runs from October to March although prolonged dry periods has seen the South West Slopes extend the bush fire danger period into April.

Prevailing weather conditions associated with the bush fire season in the South West Slopes area are North-Westerly to South-Westerly winds accompanied by high daytime temperatures and low relative humidity. There are also frequently dry lightning storms occurring during the bush fire season.

## 1.5. Average Weather Data

**Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Young 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)	22.2	26.1	29.3	32.0	30.4	27.3	22.7	17.7	13.9	13.0	14.6	17.9
Min Temp (°C)	5.5	9.4	12.0	14.9	14.6	11.4	6.7	3.3	2.2	1.1	1.4	3.0
Rainfall (mm)	49.8	72.2	56.2	47.9	51.7	53.9	36.2	41.7	64.4	58.2	52.3	50.3
3pm Temp (°C)	20.4	24.2	27.4	30.0	29.0	26.1	21.8	17.0	13.1	12.0	13.6	16.7
3pm wind (km/h)	20.4	24.2	27.4	30.0	29.0	26.1	14.5	13.5	13.7	14.1	15.4	16.1
3pm RH (%)	44	38	31	31	34	35	40	51	63	63	55	51

**Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Cootamundra Airport recorded by the BoM (last updated 23 July 2024)**

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	22.4	26.2	29.4	32.0	30.4	27.3	22.6	17.5	13.9	13.0	14.6	18.4
Min Temp (°C)	6.3	10.5	13.1	16.1	15.5	12.5	7.4	3.5	2.2	1.2	1.5	3.5
Rainfall (mm)	48.3	65.7	52.6	53.1	51.7	55.7	36.8	37.7	60.0	57.6	57.8	51.2
3pm Temp (°C)	21.0	24.8	27.9	30.3	29.3	26.3	22.0	17.0	13.4	12.1	13.9	17.2
3pm wind (km/h)	9.1	16.7	10.0	16.5	9.4	14.9	7.0	11.7	6.1	13.1	8.0	15.8
3pm RH (%)	46	39	36	33	38	38	43	53	66	65	61	53

**Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Murrumburrah (Historical Society) recorded by the BoM (last updated 24 July 2024)**

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	24.0	27.8	30.9	32.1	32.0	27.9	22.5	17.5	13.8	13.5	15.4	19.7
Min Temp (°C)	5.8	9.2	13.3	14.2	13.6	10.9	6.6	3.3	1.7	0.8	1.3	3.3
Rainfall (mm)	55.1	47.7	51.9	50.5	42.9	51.4	47.9	47.0	55.9	55.0	54.7	49.9
3pm Temp (°C)	No data available											
3pm wind (km/h)												
3pm RH (%)												

## 1.6. Known Radio Comms Blackspots

There are no known GRN/PMR blackspots

## 1.7. Hazards

### 1.7.1. Transportation

South West Slopes Zone has numerous key transportation routes including;

- The Hume Hwy which runs North to South between Sydney and Melbourne (connecting as a major artery road with Yass, Goulburn and Sydney to the East and also Wagga Wagga through the Sturt Hwy)
- The Burley Griffin Way running East to West (Connecting Harden with the Hume Hwy to the East and Temora to the West)
- Nangus-Gundagai Road running East to West (Connecting Gundagai with Junee to the West)
- Gocup Road running North to South (Connecting Gundagai with Tumut to the South)
- Olympic Highway (Connecting Cootamundra with Junee to the South West and also connecting Young with Cowra to the North East)
- Henry Lawson Way (Connecting Young with Grenfell to the North)
- Milvale Road (Connecting Young with Temora to the South West)
- The main Southern Railway with passenger trains (XPT) between Sydney and Melbourne

The movement of this traffic is significant and valuable to the economy. Trucks and specialised vehicles travel through this area carrying various amounts of dangerous goods.

### 1.7.2. Agriculture

Agriculture is the primary industry throughout the South West Slopes Zone. This is varied between cropping (both cereal and oilseeds), livestock, stone fruit and vineyards. These industries culminate with massive industrial locations including grain silo's, warehouses and open storage spaces. There is also an influx of tourism and seasonal workers in conjunction with the 'cherry season' in November – January. This has an increase in vehicles on the road and often unpredictable traffic that create unsafe

traffic conditions and stop with minimal notice to visit a business selling cherries along the road network or to stop to take photos of tall bloomed canola.

### 1.7.3. Grass Fires

The Agricultural hazard directly effects the potential of grass fire ignition. These grass fires are often seasonal based on curing of finer fuels and often driven by wind speed and temperature. Local history has shown that these fires are fast moving and often follow the weather. These fires often cumulate after drought years where some farmers have lowered stock/cattle numbers followed by strong years of rainfall where the animals/machinery can't keep up with the amount of ground fuel growth.

### 1.7.4. Mining

There are some quarrying and mining operations that produce crushed rock and lime for agricultural use. During the mining operation there is explosive blasts which close portions of road to ensure safety, these blasts often only last for a window of a few hours in which the safety radius is met. There is arrangement if during an emergency these blasts can be put on hold/delayed to ensure traffic is able to pass through these locations.

## 1.8. land management authorities

Land Manager	% of Area
National Parks & Wildlife Service	2.1
Department of Primary Industry	0.6
Local Government	0.5
Forest Corporation of NSW	1.3
Private	95.3
All other	0.2

For more specific data on the South West Slopes Zone, please follow the link to the South West Slopes Bush Fire Risk Management Plan [here](#).

*Note: This link will only work with internet coverage.*

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or further information regarding the South West Slopes District Information pack, please contact the Operational Improvement team via **email at [operational.improvement@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:operational.improvement@rfs.nsw.gov.au)**

