



RFS

Media release

New training centre strengthens firefighting capabilities in The Hills

10 December 2024

The Hills Rural Fire Service (RFS) District will officially open a new state-of-the-art training facility at Sackville North tonight, a significant milestone in supporting the training and operational needs of RFS volunteers across The Hills and neighbouring Districts.

RFS Deputy Commissioner Peter McKechnie, will join special guests to inspect the \$1.37 million centre, funded through a combination of sources including \$250,000 from the 2019/20 fire season donations and \$400,000 from the RFS and Brigades Donations Fund.

Deputy Commissioner McKechnie said the facility will improve the training of RFS members who play a vital role in protecting communities.

"Our volunteers are the backbone of the RFS, dedicating their time and effort to safeguard lives and property," Deputy Commissioner McKechnie said.

"This new facility ensures they receive the best possible training in a modern, realistic environment.

"The Hills Training Centre is a vital asset that highlights the Service's commitment to excellence, preparedness, and community safety."

The facility features a training room equipped with wireless internet, video conferencing capabilities and essential radio systems. It also houses structural firefighting hot cell and warm cell structures for realistic training scenarios, along with safe work on roofs training.

Amenities such as a kitchen, BBQ area, accessible restrooms, PPC washing and drying facilities and a backup generator are also onsite.

Deputy Commissioner McKechnie said the need for a dedicated training centre was driven by the District's growth and the increasing complexity of fire and emergency incidents.

"The strategic location at Sackville North enhances the facility's ability to serve as a forward command point during large-scale emergencies, ensuring efficient coordination across agencies," he said.

The site, co-located with the Sackville North Brigade station, has evolved over a decade, with the latest construction phase completed in July 2024.

As a special tribute, the training centre room has been named in honour of Group Captain James (Jim) Smith AFSM (Retired), whose extraordinary contributions over 50 years have left a lasting legacy.

"As a Captain of Middle Dural Brigade for 16 years and 25 years as Group Captain, Jim's dedication to the RFS and his community is exemplary," Deputy Commissioner McKechnie said.

"Jim was integral to the development and completion of this Centre and the facility stands as a testament to his vision and service."