

## LETTER OF THANKS

THE CHRISTMAS 2001 FIREFIGHTING CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS ONE OF THE MOST PROTRACTED CAMPAIGNS ON RECORD NECESSITATING THE DEPLOYMENT OF NEARLY 50,000 PERSONNEL INCLUDING 5,200 FROM ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES OF THE COUNTRY AS WELL AS NEW ZEALAND.



Dear Service Members,

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my sincere appreciation for your efforts during the 2001/02 fire season, particularly the Christmas and New Year campaign.

The Christmas 2001 firefighting campaign has been identified as one of the most protracted on record necessitating the deployment of nearly 50,000 personnel including 5,200 from all states and territories as well as New Zealand. There were many thousands of people also assisting the firefighting effort in areas of welfare, catering and other logistical support, not to mention those firefighters on heightened levels of standby in areas not directly affected by fire. All those involved, directly or indirectly, were equally important.

In my many field visits during the operation there were so many common messages from those involved, not only in the front line firefighting effort

but in the Incident Management Team and support areas. The common message revolved around how impressed everybody was with the level of coordination, cooperation and commitment by Service members and other agencies at all levels of the campaign. These have been the opinions expressed also by our colleagues from interstate and New Zealand where the Service has been praised for the assistance and support provided to visiting firefighters. The seamless integration of so many people and organisations across a large number of major fires, is testimony to the adoption of standard incident management systems, training programs and qualifications, and commitment to professional and safe working practices.

The prevailing weather conditions, coupled with dry lightning activity and other ignition factors resulted in some 27 Section 44 declarations incorporating 48

local government areas between Christmas and late January. With so many people in the field and despite the terrible weather conditions and significant number of fires consuming approximately 750,400 hectares and a fire perimeter of 4400 km, there was no loss of life or serious injury as a direct result of the firefighting efforts. This most pleasing result should not detract from the tragic loss of one of our colleagues Group Captain Bob King who, whilst inspecting his property after being released from a shift, had a fatal accident.

We should also take the time to reflect on those individuals and communities who lost so much as a result of the bushfires, particularly those volunteers and staff of the Service and sister agencies who continued to work despite their personal hardships. Conversely of course, it is important to acknowledge that a far greater number of communities were saved as a direct result of the firefighting

effort and programs including community education, hazard reduction and local planning.

As with all events, particularly a campaign of this magnitude there will also be areas identified for improvement. The extensive debrief process currently underway, and the incident reporting process, will allow us to identify areas for improvement and to reflect on the significant progress that has been made by our organisation.

Once again, thank you for your untiring efforts during this recent firefighting campaign and for the continuing support to improving the capabilities of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Best wishes.

**Shane Fitzsimmons**  
Assistant Commissioner  
Operations



## FIRE REPORTS

# 13 SHOALHAVEN



### Shoalhaven Fire

24 December to 21 January

#### Area of fire

83836 Hectares

#### Perimeter of fire

338 Kilometres

THE FIRE WAS INACCESSIBLE TO THE FIRE CREWS, THE FIRE BEING DOWNHILL TO THE WEST OF THE HYLANDS LOOKOUT, A SITUATION REGARDED AS UNSAFE FOR DIRECT ATTACK.

### Fire Origin

The Hylands fire is believed to have been a result of a lightning strike probably between midnight and 2.30am on 24th December, 2001. The fire did not become evident until 1412 hours and 4 brigades were responded immediately. The units on arriving found that the fire was down a steep incline from Hyland Lookout and that it was not safely accessible for fire crews.

### 24 December, 1458 hours

The initial situation report prior to the declaration indicated that the fire was not accessible to the fire crews, the fire being downhill to the west of the Hylands Lookout, a situation regarded as unsafe for direct attack. The heel of the fire was inaccessible.

A further situation report was forwarded at 1700 hours on the 24th December indicating that the Rural Fire Service at that time had 24 personnel and 5 tankers on site at fire in the vicinity of Deans Gap Road. The fire crossed Deans Gap Road so the night time activity was based



Photograph by South Coast Register

around backburning along Braidwood Road to contain the likely head of the fire under the forecast conditions for Christmas Day. The weather conditions being experienced during the night together with the topography inhibited any chance of gaining access to the fire front and made it difficult to get sufficient depth with the backburning operation.

### 25 December

From early morning a NPWS bulldozer worked with the 36 RFS personnel in trying to consolidate the backburning line along Braidwood Road. By 1030 hours the fire had jumped the Braidwood Road and the fire, at that point in time, was estimated to have burnt approximately 900 hectares. 47 RFS personnel were involved in the firefighting effort. Attempts to contain the fire to the west of the Parma Fire Trail failed while crews attempted to stop the northern and southern extension of the fire in the vicinity of Braidwood Road.

By 1100 hours the fire had

crossed the Parma Fire Trail and it was obvious that it was going to impact on the Falls Creek and Tomerong areas. The fire was spotting up to one kilometre ahead of the main fire front as it moved in an east/south easterly direction under the influence of turbulent west/northwesterly winds. Police began alerting the residents in Turpentine Road and in the vicinity of the Princes Highway through Falls Creek. The fire intensity continued to build and residents who had previously indicated that they were prepared to stay with their properties now started calling for assistance to evacuate. At 1100 hours additional resources were requested through State Operations and by 1400 hours properties under threat were at Turpentine Road, Princes Highway and Hawken Road Tomerong.

By 1751 hours the fire had run right through to Huskisson and Vincentia, jumped the Currumbene Creek and was then threatening the village of Myola with local brigades fighting the fire in that area. Elsewhere, the RFS resources had grown to in excess of 21 tankers plus 2 NSW Fire Brigade units but there was still insufficient resources available to stop the destruction of structural assets.

As night fell large numbers of residents and tourists became stranded in Huskisson with the whole area plunged into darkness because of the loss of power poles during the main run of the fire.

### Tuesday 26 December

Property remained at risk throughout the Huskisson, Vincentia, St Georges Basin, Tomerong and Woollamia areas. Throughout the day local RFS units in conjunction with 'out of area' resources concentrated on securing structural assets across the area and extinguishing the running fire edge close to assets.

The heel of the fire continued to move west crossing Wombat Flat Fire Trail. In the vicinity of Yerringong Road there was difficulty in holding the fire in the floor of the valley.

### 27th December

Overnight there was extensive





Photograph by Adam Hollingworth



backburning from some fire trails and direct attack in some areas where grass fuels were more predominant. The fire had moved on to a ridge west of the Princes Highway and slightly south of Tomerong township. This once again proved to be an area that required many personnel to help control the fire.

During daylight hours the fire caused problems both in the south west and the north west with numerous breakouts in areas of limited accessibility.

The initial areas affected by the fire as this stage were still without power. This affected householders and visitors to the area but it also made it difficult for firefighters who had to rely on portable generator sets and all fuel supplies for fire vehicles had to be delivered to the fireground by council tankers and fuel contractors to keep the fire fleet operational.

#### 28 December

Staffing levels on the fire continued at a rate of approximately 350 personnel

per shift with most of these resources being drawn from the local RFS and visiting RFS units. NPWS personnel were also heavily involved with up to 30 personnel on most shifts.

The fire presented difficulties, moving in a south westerly direction on the southern side of Braidwood Road. As the fire progressed down towards Wandandian crews were deployed to individual properties for protection of assets. Despite the problems with extinguishment, the fire behaviour was not as extreme as previously experienced.

#### 29 December

During the night there was insufficient breeze to move the smoke from the area. This situation remained almost until midday rendering the use of aircraft impossible. The fire edge could not be checked until the breeze came up in the afternoon and dissipated the smoke.

Heavy plant was deployed on the Yarramunmun Fire Trail and off the Braidwood Road to enable tankers to access the fire or to carry out backburning when conditions permitted. As the day progressed conditions deteriorated and it became very difficult to control the backburning. Threat to individual properties was

alleviated by deploying tanker and personnel resources to them on an individual basis.

#### 30 December

The fire continued to present problems in the Wandean Gap area despite extensive use of plant to prepare fire trails for backburning in this area. Fuel levels were heavy in close proximity to the trails and as a result it took much longer to undertake the backburning than was previously anticipated. The result was that as the day developed spotting occurred from the main fire well down towards the backburn causing some concern about the potential for spotting beyond the established line.

Preliminary work was carried out in advising residents of Wandandian and Sussex Inlet Road of the potential for the fire to still make a run and affect premises in these areas. This work was further reinforcement of advice that had begun in previous days.

Throughout the day indirect attack was used to try to hold the fire up on the ridge above Wandandian but even with aircraft resources deployed for water bombing particularly in the Tianjara Range area, the fire continued to cause problems.

#### 31 December

Between midnight and 0600 hours the number of crews on the fire line were minimized because of the difficulty in accessing the area and the backburning had been completed. During the day the resource level was once again increased as crews monitored the main fire slowly working down towards the backburn. During the afternoon, under some gusty north/westerly winds, the fire broke containment lines in the Turpentine Sector. The fire behaviour became wild and erratic and all crews had to be withdrawn from the fire trails. Wherever possible aircraft were deployed to limit the fire spread toward the east while at the same time the fire in the Yarramunmun Creek area made a rapid run up to and over the Yarramunmun Fire Trail.

Twenty fire appliances from the Queensland Fire Service arrived in the area and were split between day and night shifts. In anticipation of the weather deteriorating they were familiarized with the area particularly addressing safety concerns.

#### 1 January

Crews worked through the night on mop up and patrol principally in the areas of Braidwood Road, Wandean Road and the 12 Mile

THE NIGHT-TIME STRATEGY FOCUSED ENTIRELY ON PROPERTY PROTECTION AND EXTINGUISHMENT OF VARIOUS STRUCTURAL ASSETS.



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

Road. During the day weather conditions developed with strong north/westerly winds firstly causing short distance spotting and then, later, going to long distance spotting to the west of Wandandian. Resources had to be concentrated at Wandandian and Jerrawangala for property protection as the spotfires spread. During the afternoon the fire impacted upon the rural residential properties in the Wandandian area and by 1747 hrs the Wandandian Staging Area was under siege from fire with all Services having to concentrate on protecting assets in that area. At the same time the fire crossed the Princes Highway to the north of Sussex Inlet Road and all available resources then had to be deployed for property protection on a house to house basis. The pace continued through the scheduled 1900 hr changeover and this had to be placed on hold until conditions finally moderated. The night-time strategy was then set for continuing to maintain property protection around properties along Sussex Inlet Road and for the properties in Wandandian. Heavy plant was also moved to the area and began work along the rear of the structural assets in Sussex Inlet Road.

### 2 January

Traffic throughout the fire area was at a standstill other than for emergency service vehicles and the whole area was once again left without power. The nighttime operation of consolidation along the northern side of Sussex Inlet Road was successful and continued into the day. Once again weather conditions were poor necessitating residents along the Bendalong (Red Head) Road being warned that they should consider whether they would wish to stay with their properties or not should the fire develop and impact upon that area. Much of the activity during the morning centred upon this consolidation and in particular the use of heavy plant to assist in securing assets.

A new fire was reported west of Inyada Drive between the villages of Bendalong and Manyana and this was regarded as suspicious.

The fire quickly developed and required additional assistance for local units from that area.

During the afternoon the fire west of Jerrawangala made a run, jumped the Princes Highway and continued through on the southern side of Sussex Inlet Road. This fire impacted directly on the village of Sussex Inlet. There was significant loss of property both in the village and along Sussex Inlet Road. Eventually the fire joined with a flareup on the northern side of Sussex Inlet Road so that crews had fire on either side of them as they tried to protect all the residential properties. Police carried out extensive evacuations along Sussex Inlet Road and from the villages of Sussex Inlet, Badgee, Cudmirrah and Berrara.

As night fell the fire spotted across Sussex Inlet into the Jervis Bay Territory to the north of Badgee and to the east of the southern edge of Sussex Inlet village. Shortly after this occurred a southerly change turned this fire in a northerly direction.

The night-time strategy focused entirely on property protection and extinguishment of various structural assets.

### 3 January

At 0700 hrs briefing strategies were determined in conjunction with Booderee National Park personnel to restrict the spread of the fire within the Jervis Bay Territory. This required the provision of additional resources through the deployment of firefighting units and aircraft to work in conjunction with the onsite resources of Booderee National Park and Wreck Bay Brigade. With the road still closed to the "Leases" on the northern side of Sussex Inlet, additional resources were taken by boat from Sussex Inlet to Christians Minde to secure the structural assets in the area.

The properties in the Swanhaven, Sussex Inlet and Badgee areas were secured as well as the properties along the Sussex Inlet Road. The fire to the west of the Princes Highway south of Sussex Inlet Road intersection continued to be a problem throughout the



*Photograph by South Coast Register*

## EVEN WITH AIRCRAFT RESOURCES DEPLOYED FOR WATER BOMBING PARTICULARLY IN THE TIANJARA RANGE AREA, THE FIRE CONTINUED TO CAUSE PROBLEMS.

day. The fire crossed 12 Mile Road and continued to travel to the south west on either side of the Braidwood Road. The fire entered the Tianjara Firing Range and on the advice of the Department of Defence no action was taken to pursue the fire in that area due to unexploded ordnance. The warning regarding aircraft flying over the area was strictly enforced.

The north western extremity of the fire continued to be a problem. Given the extreme burning conditions that were being experienced there was concern that the northern run of the fire must be stopped by the use of aircraft to ensure that the fire, under adverse weather conditions, would not cross the Shoalhaven River creating major problems in the northern end of the City.

The use of aircraft for this purpose was extremely invaluable. It was not seen as a permanent solution for suppressing the fire but it certainly held until a storm brought significant rain.



Photo courtesy of South Coast Register

WITH MOST OF THE CONTAINMENT LINES ESTABLISHED TO THE EAST OF THE HIGHWAY THE MEDIUM HELICOPTERS, WORKING CLOSELY WITH GROUND CREWS, CONSOLIDATED THOSE LINES.

#### 4 January

Throughout the day resources were fully occupied with structural protection, mostly in the area of Luncheon Creek, Hilltop and the Bendalong Manyana area.

#### 5 January

The fire in the Yarramunmun area made a major run down to Boolijah Creek in the Stoney Hill area. The fire progressed under the influence of the south westerly wind to within 2.5km of Sassafras Village having travelled across the Tianjara Firing Range, causing the detonation of various munitions.

As the day progressed the need for property protection in the Sassafras area increased and backburning began with the support of heavy plant on both the southern and northern extremities of the development.

By nightfall approximately 50% of the Tianjara Range area which totals 36 square kilometers was well alight and had the potential to carry the fire unhindered into the head of the Clyde River

Gorge. While no action could be taken directly to counter this because of the unexploded ordnance, plans were introduced for the implementation of various options that might be available, subject to certain weather conditions, as the fire left the range.

#### 6 January

The day was spent trying to consolidate the containment lines including the safety of structural assets within the containment area. Forecast conditions for the 7 January necessitated heavy concentration on this work. A major concern continued for the uncontained western perimeter with many kilometres still inaccessible to ground crews.

All aircraft resources were assigned to the strengthening of the containment lines.

#### 7 January

Forecast weather conditions did not fully develop until late in the afternoon though difficulties were being experienced early in the day in holding on the

containment lines. During the afternoon the fire made a major run from the vicinity of the 12 Mile Road and the Princes Highway causing problems along the Bendalong Road and in the Fisherman's Paradise area. Additionally, the main fire made a run from the Mondayong area towards Cudmirrah and Berrara. Once again the residents were evacuated from those villages.

The erratic fire behaviour also caused the containment lines to be broken long the Bendalong Road west of the village and for a period of time the villages of Bendalong, Manyana and Cunjurong were isolated from assistance by other resources. This fire behaviour was witnessed by the attendance in that area of the NSW RFS Commissioner.

#### 8 January

Weather conditions moderated and the entire day was spent consolidating the containment lines that had been established overnight after the previous day's activity. Firstly around the developed areas east of the



DURING THE AFTERNOON, UNDER SOME GUSTY NORTH/WESTERLY WINDS, THE FIRE BROKE CONTAINMENT LINES IN THE TURPENTINE SECTOR.



Highway and then later in the day concentrating on the southern edge of the fire from the Highway through to the portion of the 12 Mile Road that runs through the Tianjara Firing Range.

The first of the heavy helicopters was deployed to the Shoalhaven and this proved effective in being used in conjunction with the other aircraft resources available at the time.

**9 January**

Three 'Air Cranes' were deployed within the Shoalhaven fire this day in addition to other rotary wing aircraft.

With most of the containment lines established to the east of the Highway it was mainly the medium helicopters used to consolidate these lines by close work in conjunction with ground crews. The heavy aircraft were used very effectively to virtually extinguish the northern fire edge west of Danjera Dam. Close proximity of the fire to stored water enabled the aircraft to work to their full capability.

Heavy plant was also used to

prepare the Ettrema Trail for use as a containment line in conjunction with deployment of firefighting units.

**10 January**

Conditions were favourable for the consolidation and reinforcement of containment lines. Aircraft were used extensively for supporting ground resources in ensuring complete extinguishment around the perimeter to a depth that virtually guaranteed that there could be no spotting under adverse weather conditions. Quite often this meant mopping up for up to 200 metres.

All containment lines to the east of the highway held. Breakouts continued to occur west of the village of Conjola even under mild conditions. A huge amount of work was put into containing the spotfires utilizing both heavy plant and air support.

To the west, the fire continued to spread south of the village of Sassafra and to a lesser extent on the northern side of Braidwood Road.

The fire within the Tianjara Firing Range impacted the area over a period of days. It had travelled south and fallen over the edge of the escarpment into the Clyde River Gorge. Since the next fallback line to the south was 5km away, the spread of the fire was limited by use of water-bombing from aircraft. This strategy proved successful over a number of days.

**11 and 12 January**

No change from the above strategy.

**13 January**

Weather conditions seemed quite favourable and it was intended that the fire would be contained in the west by backburning along the Ettrema Trail. The machinery was still working on the trail construction. During the afternoon there was a wind shift from the north east which accelerated the main fire up towards the trail. The crews that had been working on the trail upgrade decided to withdraw but in so doing were subjected to a fire overrun situation. Some of the NPWS staff involved



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

SHORTLY AFTER LUNCH ON THE 21 JANUARY ANOTHER SEVERE STORM DEVELOPED IN THE SOUTH WEST. IT WAS DECIDED TO WITHDRAW ALL RESOURCES FROM THE FIREGROUND IN ANTICIPATION OF HEAVY RAIN.



Photograph by Central Coast Sun Weekly/Phil WHearn

in this situation had extensive fire experience and showed great initiative in making safe.

At the height of the incident these personnel involved became concerned that they could not contact a helicopter that was directly above them, despite the fact that both the vehicles and the aircraft were being monitored from Fire Control. As a learning outcome for crews working with air support it is worth noting that, due to the wave propagation characteristics of the radios, problems should be anticipated when the aircraft is directly overhead. In this situation communications would have been more effective working through an 'Air Attack Supervisor' who would be monitoring the situation without being directly overhead.

As a result of the overrun situation the fire continued towards the west and initially it seemed that it may travel through to the Tolwong Road. Subsequently this proved to not be the case.

#### 14 January

Aerial observation indicated the fire that crossed Ettrema Trail the previous day, had not travelled very far before slowing and in some areas self extinguishing. This was largely due to the presence of rocky outcrops etc. The strategy was set for Service personnel and NPWS staff to pursue the fire and extinguish the edge. This was achieved in conjunction with air support and the strategy proved to be very effective over the next two days.

#### 15 January

Work continued during the day around the perimeter of the fire. Numerous vehicles were deployed along the Ettrema Trail consolidating the work that they had undertaken on the western side resulting from the burnover situation. On the eastern edge of the main fire was being extinguished in some areas, while tactical backburning was involved in tidying up the edge in other areas.

Early that evening a severe storm occurred in the Sassafras area,

so intense that it extinguished most of the fire edge north and south of the Braidwood Road. The rain extended right throughout the fire area.

In the Ettrema Trail area it became difficult to extract the vehicles and in fact the plant items were stranded for some days as a result of the downpour.

#### 16 – 21 January

The resourcing on the fireground was reduced after the storm and remained that way through until the S44 declaration was lifted in late afternoon of 21 January. In between times aircraft were used in conjunction with the limited personnel to move people around to extinguish hotspots and in particular tall trees that had the potential to continue to burn and perhaps fall across the control line.

Shortly after lunch on the 21 January another severe storm developed in the south west. It was decided to withdraw all resources from the fireground in anticipation of heavy rain.

Later that day heavy rain fell throughout the fire area, hence, the request for the Section 44 to be lifted. The Commissioner acceded to this request and the appointments pursuant to the Declaration under Section 44 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* terminated at 1700 hrs on the 21 January.







## SPOTFIRE DOES THAT HURT, MATE?

Photograph by Matt Black



On day five of the Mt Hall (Blue Mountains) fire, the crew of Hazelbrook 1 was tasked with two other tanker crews to prepare strategic lines south of Valley Heights and Springwood.

Late in the afternoon while cutting a hand-trail from Martins Lookout track across a deep valley to Yondell track, crew member Gary slipped on a steep slope. His downward progress was stopped by a tree.

In some pain, Gary walked out the 150 vertical metres to Yondell and out to our PC and changeover crew. While Gary assured me his injury was relatively minor, as crew leader I was naturally concerned for his well-being.

On the drive back out the rugged Yondell track, the PC was crammed with 11 firefighters plus gear, and was towing a trailer. At a particularly steep section of the track, the PC faltered. Leaving just the driver in the vehicle, numerous attempts were made to traverse this nasty section.

While this was going on, Gary sat down. His pain increased, as did the size of his lower left leg. My concern for him was growing. Against the macho image of the firefighter, he did not argue with my suggestion that we get an ambulance to meet us at the end of the tar on Yondell Avenue, Springwood.

After some lengthy radio messages, the ambulance was arranged. Finally the PC was able to take a long run at the stubborn hill and bounced its way spectacularly to the top.

We finally made it to the tar, having taken about 30 minutes to travel the three kilometres. By this time the ambulance crew were waiting – having gone a bit of the way down the track looking for us.

Wherever you go in the Blue Mountains you run into someone you know. As I approached the ambulance, I welcomed the driver as Frank, a friend from Lawson. After the obligatory chat, we focussed our attention on the patient.

The quick visual assessment of the leg that now resembled a tree trunk came up with the learned assessment: ‘something’s wrong with that leg’.

On arrival at Nepean Hospital’s Emergency Centre, the yellow “hero suits” worn by Gary and myself certainly attracted a lot of attention, interest and speculation. Emergency Centre staff stopped, asking about the fires. Ambulance officers came and went, stretchers full with patients then returning empty to their vehicles for another job.

Ambo John began to strike up a conversation with Gary as he laid back on his stretcher – half sitting up, legs outstretched. Standing at the end of the stretcher, John grabbed Gary’s toes and exclaimed “Oh, how ya going mate!!” as he pushed and pulled Gary’s feet vigorously.

Gary yelled out in pain like a screaming banshee. I rolled about laughing amongst the injured, bloodied and bruised. John worryingly inquired “does that hurt, mate?”

Ambo Frank took John’s arm. Between giggles, Frank saying “he’s got a bad leg!”. A loud and animated discussion followed about the injury not being obvious.

“Well, if he was my patient, I would have cut his overalls down here, and had his leg bandaged from here to here. It would have been bloody obvious he had a leg injury!” said John, pointing to the pain ravaged leg. “How was I to know?”

John then went about offering profuse apologies to our Guardian in Gold.

Every time John came in to Emergency over the hours with his stream of patients, he sheepishly sidled past Gary asking how his leg was, and offering the latest treatment advice – bringing goodwill and cheer in an otherwise serious place.

The hero suit (fire brigade overalls) did not increase our priority in being attended to. It still took us 5 hours to get out of the emergency room!

Next time I see Ambo John, I will say “do you remember...”

**Tony Jarrett**  
**Hazelbrook Rural Fire Brigade**

Rural Fire  
Service Approved

# ANCILLARY AND LEISURE APPAREL

Embroidered Garment	Price	Qty.	Colour	Size	Cost	
Dress V Neck Jumper <small>with Epaulettes, Shoulder &amp; Elbow patches + pen pocket</small>	\$85.00		Navy			
Fully Fashioned V Neck Jumper	\$62.00		Navy			
Polo Shirt - Lemon(L), Navy(N), White(W)	\$29.00					
T-Shirt - White(W), Navy(N)	\$18.00					
Sloppy Joe	\$29.00		Navy			
SPECIAL! 12 or more garments, Brigade name embroidered under logo for FREE!						
<b>AVAILABLE SIZES</b>	S 90	M 95	L 100	XL 105	XXL 110	3XL - 6XL 115 - 130 (Add \$2 per garment)
For large orders please add clearly printed lists as required						
Brushed Cotton Cap <small>(25+ Caps \$8.00 ea., 100+ Caps \$7.50 ea.)</small>	\$8.50		Navy			
Sports Bag with 3 external zip pockets Individual/Brigade names <small>(printed on separate sheets)</small>	\$35.00 plus \$8.00		Navy	Length 50cm Height 30cm Width 20cm		
<b>Plus postage &amp; packing per address</b> <i>(Includes badges if part of order)</i>					<b>6.60</b>	

Total \$

## EMBROIDERED BADGES

Actual size

### Name Badges or Brigade Badges

Size 3.0cm x 9.0cm (approx.)

Gold badges now Proban backed

**PRICES** Note: No "Minimum" order

1 to 99 Badges (Any) \$3.30 each

100 plus Badges (Any) \$3.00 each



Note: Red on Navy background badges are also available.

Please print Name or Brigade	Colour			Qty.	Cost
	Please Tick				
eg. JIM LEWIS	White on Navy	Red on Gold	Red on Navy		
<i>(For larger orders please attach clearly printed lists)</i>				Plus postage & packing per address	<b>\$4.00</b>

Payment can be made by cheque, money order, Bankcard, Visa or Mastercard.

**Fax Credit Card orders accepted.**

Total cost \$ \_\_\_\_\_ including postage & packaging. Allow 28 days for delivery.

Total \$

(Please ✓)  Bankcard  VISA  MasterCard

Card No: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ **Contact No.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cheques - Please make payable to Blue Mountains D.M.P. Enterprises Pty. Ltd.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Print name & address clearly**

All Council orders accepted



Please send all orders to  
**Blue Mountains**  
**D.M.P. Enterprises Pty. Ltd.**  
27 Byrne St.,  
Lapstone NSW 2773  
ABN 44 092 928 919



Phone: (02) 4739 8619  
Fax: (02) 4739 5417  
www.local.com.au/dmp





## STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS



EACH DAY OF THE BUSHFIRE CRISIS, AN AVERAGE OF ABOUT 400 SES VOLUNTEERS FROM ACROSS THE STATE WORKED TO ASSIST THE RURAL FIRE SERVICE, WITH HUNDREDS MORE ON STANDBY.

Nearly 2,500 State Emergency Service volunteers joined in the bushfire response, leaving families, jobs and Christmas dinner to help out at bushfires from the Queensland border to the South Coast, and west into the Blue Mountains. Each day of the bushfire crisis, an average of about 400 SES volunteers from across the state worked to assist the Rural Fire Service, with hundreds more on standby. They performed a wide variety of tasks:

- assisting with road closures and traffic control
- transporting people, equipment and food by vehicle and flood boat
- assisting with communications and logistics
- removing and securing damaged trees
- tarping partially damaged structures
- staffing call centres
- assisting with evacuations and doorknocks
- providing food and drink to firefighters
- assisting with air operations (including tasking and communicating with aircraft and filling buckets for water bombing).

SES volunteers train constantly in a wide variety of skills, and this versatility gave them the ability to assist wherever they were needed. "Every volunteer on one of our crews in the field has, at a minimum, training in general rescue, teamwork, working with the public, first aid and radio communication," said Mim Humphries, SES Deputy Division Controller for the Sydney Southern Division, who coordinated SES assistance from the RFS Incident Management Centre at Picton.

"Our volunteers' storm-damage training also came in handy, as they often had to tarp and secure partially damaged buildings," Ms. Humphries continued. "Our chainsaw operators were busy removing and securing trees that posed a danger. We even had some of our flood boat operators stationed near Bundeena, ready

to evacuate people if necessary, and on many of the reservoirs in the fire-affected areas, helping with transport and communications. Our operations centre and logistics staff used their training in incident management, operational procedures and working with the media. We used all our skills to help the firefighters."

"Our training program is designed to produce volunteers who are versatile and resourceful," said Brigadier Philip McNamara, SES Director General. "Our volunteers respond to floods and storms — their core role — but they also carry out road-crash rescue and vertical rescue, and help the Rural Fire Service, the NSW Fire Brigades and the Police whenever they're needed. In any given week, an SES Unit could find itself responding to a sudden storm, a bush rescue, a crime-scene search and a road crash, as well as helping out with a community event and speaking to a Scout group."

Many SES volunteers commented that the SES and the RFS are used to collaborating: RFS volunteers assisted the SES in Sydney's severe storms in November and December, and the two organisations have a long history of working together, from large emergency operations such as the Thredbo disaster and the Sydney hailstorm to local community activities like parades and shows. "The people of New South Wales can be very proud of their emergency services volunteers, and how well they work together in a crisis," said Brigadier McNamara.

Steve Cliffe, Deputy Local Controller of Wollongong City SES, added, "We're happy to help out. An emergency of this size needs everyone to work together."

**Laura Goodman**  
SES Media Officer



## FIRE REPORTS

# 14 CESSNOCK/WYONG



### Cessnock/Wyong Fires

24 December to 23 January

**Area of fire**

11,680 Hectares

**Perimeter of fire**

153.3 Kilometres



### Executive Summary

The request for the Declaration was originally made because of fires burning around the township of Kurri Kurri. A total of eight separate fires were attended by brigades on 24 December most of which were impacting on the Kurri Kurri and Cessnock townships. These fires necessitated a significant effort by brigades from both the Rural Fire Service and the NSW Fire Brigades to protect residential and commercial properties threatened in the area. Remarkably, no houses were lost on that or indeed any other day, which is testimony to the professionalism and dedication of fire crews from all participating services.

Due to fire behaviour and the rapid escalation of incidents, additional resources were responded to fires immediately rather than waiting until a situation report was given requesting them. Whilst in some cases this resulted in brigades being called off before arrival,

it did ensure that fires were tackled while small, and that sufficient units were available for property protection if required. In excess of seventy fires were attended by fire services during the Declaration period.

The Big Yengo fire originated in, and remained within, the confines of the Yengo National Park. This fire is believed to have started as a result of a lightning strike and ultimately consumed some 11,000 hectares of bushland.

Previous fire history suggested that this fire would sweep through the Laguna and Bucketty area and then enter the Wyong Rural Fire District. As such, a joint declaration with Wyong was implemented. Due to the threat of this fire affecting rural communities considerable planning was carried out in order to produce a Structure Protection Plan for the most vulnerable areas. Several different strategies were used in combating the Big Yengo fire,

including backburning from existing trails and the development of new containment lines.

**REMARKABLY,  
NO HOUSES WERE  
LOST ON THAT OR  
INDEED ANY OTHER  
DAY, WHICH IS  
TESTIMONY TO THE  
PROFESSIONALISM  
AND DEDICATION  
OF FIRE CREWS  
FROM ALL  
PARTICIPATING  
SERVICES.**



Ultimately, a change in weather conditions caused backburns to be extinguished in some places and to be extremely patchy in others. This left small pockets of fire which necessitated a review of the strategy to that of close confinement using a combination of vehicle based ground troops, Remote Area Fire Teams (RAFT) and aerial firefighting (helicopters). This change in strategy was ultimately successful and resulted in the affected area being kept to 11,000 ha, rather than the potential 100,000ha.

#### Chronology of Events

##### Events leading up to the Declaration

**12:47** Call received to assist NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB) with bush alight at 126 Cessnock Road, Weston (Main Road fire). The report received from the NSWFB Communications Centre was that the fire was in Rural Fire Service (RFS) area and that it would require the attendance of at least three additional appliances to contain. Three RFS appliances were responded to assist.

THREE RFS MEMBERS AND ONE NSWFB MEMBER WERE TAKEN TO HOSPITAL SUFFERING FROM HEAT EXHAUSTION AND SMOKE INHALATION.

**12:54** Call received to bush alight McLeod Street, Kurri Kurri (Loxford fire). Louth Park 7 was responded along with two other RFS appliances.

**13:00** Whilst responding to McLeod Road, an RFS appliance found another fire at Bowditch Avenue, Kurri Kurri and requested additional three appliances. Two RFS and two NSWFB responded. Later it was discovered that this fire was another flank of the McLeod Road (Loxford Park) fire.

**13:10** Call received to Chitter Heap alight, Archery Lane, Hebburn Number 2 Colliery. One RFS appliance was responded.

**13:11** Report from McLeod Road (Loxford Park fire) that four properties under threat. Two of the appliances responding to Bowditch Avenue fire are diverted.

**13:13** Call received to bush alight, Torrens Road, Abermain. One RFS appliance responded.

**13:20** Strike Team assembled at Fire Control Centre for rapid response. This Strike Team upon assembly was immediately deployed leaving the local district with minimal resources in reserve to attend any subsequent outbreaks. Adjoining districts were requested to supply resources under the District Assistance Plan.

**13:42** RFS brigade advises no fire found Torrens Road, Abermain.

**13:44** Another fire was discovered near Kurri Kurri Cemetery (Hospital Rd fire) by an appliance *en-route* to the Main Road fire.

**13:43** Additional assistance was requested for property protection at Kurri Cemetery (Hospital Road fire). Additional three RFS appliances and one NSWFB pumper responded.

**13:58** Call received to bush alight, Dixon Road, Kurri Kurri properties under threat. Two RFS and one NSWFB responded.

**13:59** Report received from Hospital Rd fire that properties were still under threat.

**14:00** The Executive Officer being of the opinion that fire activity was escalating and that

external assistance would be required, after conferring with the Bush Fire Management Committee Operational Executive, requested an immediate Declaration under Section 44 of the *Rural Fires Act, 1997*.

##### Post Declaration Period 14:00 hours 24 December onward

**14:09** RFS brigade advises that Dixon Road fire was linked with the Loxford Park fire and would be coordinated as such.

**14:13** Police closed Lang Street Kurri Kurri (Hospital Road fire).

**15:46** An observation fixed wing aircraft begins fire plotting on Kurri Kurri fires.

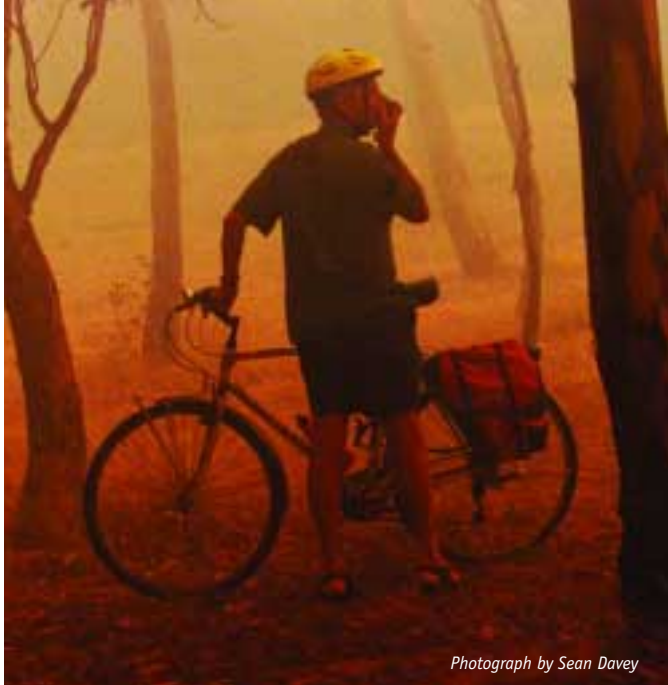
**16:19** Call received to bush alight near Cessnock Road, Cessnock. Fourteen RFS units and eight NSWFB appliances attended. Fire was threatening the urban area of Cessnock along with scattered rural properties. Containment took until early the



Photograph by Nick Moir



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth



Photograph by Sean Davey

next morning. Due to the exhaustion of local crews a Strike Team from Dungog was requested to continue the extinguishment process throughout the night.

- 16:22 Main Road fire - **contained**
- 16:30 Hospital Rd fire - **contained**
- 17:03 Loxford Park fire - **contained**
- 17:47 Chitter Heap fire - **contained**

#### 25 December

The Incident Controller was made aware of a fire burning within the Yengo National Park. Bulga IMT was, by arrangement, still managing the fire, believing it would be quickly contained. Four RFS units were sent to assist late in the afternoon.

Overnight containment lines were established. One breakout occurred resulting in water bombing – four appliances responded. Two helicopters obtained for reconnaissance and water bombing. At 12:10 Firebird 71 spotted a new ignition south of Kurri Kurri Hospital (Hospital

### UNITS FROM QUEENSLAND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE ARRIVED IN CESSNOCK. SENIOR OFFICERS WERE FAMILIARISED WITH THE AREA AND THE CURRENT STRATEGIES AND FIRE PREDICTIONS WERE EXPLAINED TO THEM.

Fire #2)– six units attended and extinguished. Three RFS members and one NSWFB member were taken to hospital suffering from heat exhaustion and smoke inhalation. Another new fire spotted from Firebird 71 – grass alight Oakey Creek Rd, Pokolbin – three RFS units attended. Two other minor fires occurred on this day.

Four RFS units including two CABA appliances sent to Sydney to assist in the Penrith area – arrangements were made with NSWFB to cover gaps in the Cessnock RFS District.

Bulga advised that the Yengo fire had broken containment lines and that some aircraft assigned to the Yengo fire have been withdrawn to Sydney due to other fire activity. It was agreed that Cessnock IMT would take over the fire on 26 December.

#### 26 December

Cessnock IMT assumed control of the Big Yengo fire. Following the breakout of the fire, an Incident Action Plan prepared by the Bulga IMT was implemented. This included a backburn to contain the northern flank of the fire. However, this backburn jumped containment lines along with continued fire spread to the South. This resulted in more appliances being sent to provide property protection at the Yengo Homestead. Resources were provided by NPWS and RFS.

Fire authorities attended nine other fires during the course of the day. As a multiple unit response system was in place, all fires were rapidly brought under control.

#### 27 December

Due to a lack of fire advantages, strategies were developed to establish dozer line of the northern side of the Howes Trail to contain the northern spread of the fire. This included putting dozer line across ridges to the Howes Trail (North). This strategy was unsuccessful, as the dozer could not traverse the terrain. Another dozer line was established to the west of the fire establishing a western and southern containment line. A backburn was also put in around the Yengo Homestead.

Three other fires occurred throughout the day including one at Buttai that required five appliances to contain. This fire was subsequently declared “out” later today.

#### 28 December

No viable containment lines were available to control the Big Yengo fire’s travel to the east into private property and ultimately into the Wyong District. As such, a comprehensive structure protection plan was developed which included officers from both the RFS and NSWFB attending all properties that would be impacted first in the event of the fire continuing on its current path. This plan assessed the preparation of individual properties and developed a pre-incident plan for implementation when required. The plan sectorised the area along with specified resource requirements. In the afternoon fire activity increased with erratic winds resulting in crews on the firefront being withdrawn.

Two other fires occurred in the area. Additionally, local RFS resources previously sent to Sydney returned to Cessnock. Due to the potential for fire impact on Wyong Rural Fire District, these two fires were added to the Declaration as at 18:00.

#### 29 December

The Big Yengo fire had moved three kilometres in six days with fuels being estimated at 10 tonnes per hectare. Fire behaviour began to accelerate on ridges and in some gullies. Fire prediction models indicated that any increase in wind speed would cause the fire to begin spotting and accelerate towards properties. Preparation of properties in the first impact zone continued with both RFS and NSWFB participating. Due to the lack of suitable containment lines and the prediction of high winds, a decision was made not to introduce any additional fire into the area. Efforts were concentrated on property protection and reconnaissance only. Three other fires occurred during the day requiring the attendance of five RFS appliances. Fires contained.



Units from Queensland Fire and Rescue Service arrived in Cessnock. Senior officers were familiarised with the area and the current strategies and fire predictions were explained to them.

Preparation of the Structure Protection Plan was confirmed. The Planning Team also established triggers to prompt implementation of the Plan. Four other fires were attended on, resulting in the deployment of eight RFS and NSWFB appliances.

### 31 December

Five new fire calls reported, the most significant being a call to bush alight at Sweetmans Creek. The ignition point of the fire was at the base of a hill and quickly spread threatening the house nearby. Four RFS appliances and along with one NSWFB unit attended the fire and subsequently saved the house.

The Big Yengo fire had fragmented and broken into a series of smaller groupings of active fire and small areas of

intensity. These conditions allowed the development of an initial direct attack strategy aimed at eliminating small spots of activity using water buckets with RAFT in support.

### 1 January

At 11:58 hrs, a report of bush and grass alight, in the Kearsley area, resulted in three RFS and one NSWFB appliances being responded. Upon arrival they found five separate fires and two spray cans apparently used as accelerants. Crews contained the fire and returned at 12:45.

At 15:30 hrs a report was received to bush alight at Pelaw Main. This fire resulted in the attendance of ten local RFS units along with two adjoining district task forces, as well as four NSWFB appliances. The fire started on the western side of the main road to Mulbring but quickly jumped the road and threatened a property on the East (Kurri Fabrications). Fire activity was extremely intense resulting in appliances being withdrawn to the road for safety. Two helicopters were used



*Photograph by Adam Hollingworth*

extensively during this fire to assist in suppressing the fire spread through water-bombing.

A previous fire, occurring twelve months prior, assisted in stopping the fire spreading to the north-east. Suppression efforts continued into the night and the following day.

In relation to the Big Yengo fire, due to more favourable weather, a combination of NPWS and RFS crews commenced mopping up areas that were easily accessible in an attempt to reduce the number of options open to the fire. Water bombing carried out throughout the day. Later in the

day, wind conditions and fire behaviour deteriorated resulting in all crews being withdrawn from the fireground.

A report was also received from Bulga IMT about the possibility of impact from the Bulga fire on Cessnock due to the fire crossing the Putty Road. Although the fire did travel a considerable distance, it did not cross into Cessnock, but continuing predictions of this fire entering Cessnock necessitated considerable preparatory work being undertaken in State forests immediately adjoining the local government boundary.

**FIRE ACTIVITY WAS EXTREMELY INTENSE RESULTING IN APPLIANCES BEING WITHDRAWN TO THE ROAD FOR SAFETY.**



*Photograph by Adam Hollingworth*

MORE THAN SEVENTY FIRES WERE ATTENDED BY FIRE SERVICES DURING THE DECLARATION PERIOD.



Photograph by Sean Davey

## 2 January

Fire threatened Yengo Homestead. Water-bombing and ground crews protected property. No other containment actions carried out due to predicted weather conditions.

Work continued mopping up the perimeter of the Pelaw Main fire during the morning. A flare up occurred within containment lines and was extinguished.

A new ignition was reported near the Loxford Park fire, which occurred on the 24 December. Three RFS appliances along with a Lake Macquarie Task Force responded and contained the fire.

Five RFS and five NSWFB appliances responded to Wollombi Brook (Bulga IMT area) for possible property protection. Reports from aircraft (Spotter 30) indicated that the Big Yengo fire was crowning and heading towards properties. Another report (which was later found to be misunderstood) was that the Big Yengo fire had crossed the Yengo track and

was less than two kilometres from impacting upon properties. Because of this, local brigades were responded along with ten RFS and five NSWFB appliances in accordance with the previously prepared Structure Protection Plan. Units remained in place for two hours while further air reconnaissance was carried out. Although the Big Yengo fire increase its activity, it did not expand significantly.

Extensive trail clearing occurred due to the ongoing threat that the Bulga fire would enter Cessnock. This clearing occurred in State Forest areas and some private property. Brigades attended another three minor fires, all of which were extinguished.

## 3 January

In the afternoon, a new fire occurred on George Booth Drive. RFS and NSWFB appliances attended and extinguished the fire. Two other new fires occurred throughout the day.

In light of more favourable conditions and the movement of the Big Yengo fire over the previous days detailed mapping and planning occurred to examine containment strategies.

## 4 January

Big Yengo fire – RFS crews undertook property protection at Werong Creek. ARMS mapping of the entire fire perimeter was a priority for the Planning Team. Heavy plant was tasked to prepare fallback lines in the Wollombi area should the fire breach the containment lines.

IT WAS AGREED THAT SMALL APPLIANCES (CAT 9) COULD TRAVEL DOWN THE CREEK ITSELF USING CHAINSAWS TO CUT THE TIMBER. TWO RFS CAT 9'S WERE TASKED.



**5 January**

Big Yengo fire - after a meeting with local RFS captains, it was decided to implement a backburn from the access road to Werong Creek down Yengo Track towards the properties at Wallabadah in an attempt to halt the easterly progress of the fire. This involved a burn of approximately 15km and was resourced with twenty RFS appliances.

**6 January**

Big Yengo fire – backburn that was put in the previous night was evaluated. Variable results. A joint strategy was agreed with Bulga IMT that a backburn would be put in from Drews Creek (West of Wollombi Brook) down to Paynes Crossing and then along Werong Creek to Yengo Trail.

Prior to putting in the backburn along Werong Creek (planned aerial incendiary) aerial observations confirmed the need to clear fallen timber dry Werong Creek. It was agreed that small appliances (Cat 9) could travel down the Creek itself using chainsaws to cut the timber. Two RFS Cat 9's were tasked.

The aerial incendiary run was later cancelled and the burn was not completed.

**7 January**

Ten millimeters of rain fell overnight causing significant problems with the previous day's backburning operations and extinguishing a considerable amount of the burn along with a substantial amount of the actual firefront. Fire was no longer active along ridges and was confined to small pockets of burning areas. Consequently, the immediate threat to properties in the Wallabadah and Boree areas eased considerably.

Extremely low cloud cover prevented morning air operations. Predictions were for further overnight rain and it was decided that future strategies would be made following the result of any predicted overnight rain. FLIR flight requested for the following morning.

**8 January**

No further rain fell during the night.

Big Yengo fire – rain had reduced much of the fireground to scattered smoking trees. Unfortunately, priority resource requirements elsewhere in the State meant that remote area crews were not available to extinguish hotspots.

**9 January**

Big Yengo fire – aerial resources had increased allowing for direct attack on the selected hot spots on the fire edge. Air Base was established at Big Yengo Station providing logistical support for air attack activities on the northern and western fire perimeter.

**10 January**

Big Yengo fire – increased numbers of remote crews and aircraft allowed the implementation of a close containment strategy. Air attack on FLIR identified hot spots followed by insertion of NPWS and NRE (attached to Bulga IMT) remote area crews who were used to push the fire back to burnt country on the northern and western divisions.

Aerial incendiaries were used to deepen containment lines on the eastern division previously backburned by RFS crews.

**11 January**

Big Yengo fire – previous day's strategies were continued. Ground crews from the RFS, NPWS and NRE prepared containment lines in the Finchley, Oscar, India Sectors and carried out a backburn along the Burton Sector.

**12 January**

Big Yengo fire – the strategy of close containment was proving successful.

**FIRE THREATENED  
HOMESTEAD AT  
BIG YENGO FIRE.  
WATER BOMBING  
AND GROUND  
CREWS PROTECTED  
PROPERTY.**

**13 January**

Big Yengo fire – close containment strategies on the northern and western perimeters of the fire were amended to include to construction of additional helipads in the Quebec and Burton Sectors. This permitted the insertion of NRE RAFT crews by rappelling. Prepared containment lines were patrolled by NRE crews and further clearing of fuel occurred as required.

**14 January**

Additional helipads were constructed along the Howes Valley Creek Sector by NRE rappel crews to allow the deployment of NPWS RAFT Teams with air support to blackout FLIR identified hotspots. The same containment strategies utilised throughout the week were used during the day.

**15 January**

RFS crews continued to operate a remote airbase at Big Yengo Station to support the ongoing aerial water bombing of hotspots found by FLIR on the Werong, Howes Valley Creek, Quebec and Finchley Sectors. RAFT crews supported by aircraft, continued to blackout hotspots near remote pads throughout the fireground.

**16 January**

Backburning operations were completed by RFS crews around properties bordering Wallabadah and Sandy Arm Creek. A dozer line was prepared by contractors above Stockyard Arm Creek.

**17 January**

An additional three helipads were constructed in Yokey Division to allow NPWS RAFT crews to extinguish hotspots previously identified by FLIR. Quebec and Hotel Sectors were classified as contained by the IMT.

**18 January**

Oscar Sector was classified by the IMT as contained.

**19 January**

NPWS RAFT crews were inserted into Yokey Division to mop up remaining hot spots, supported by aerial water bombing. Romeo Sector was classified by the IMT as contained. Ambulance crews continued to be situated at Big Yengo Station in case of injuries.

**20 January**

Many crews were stood down, as most Sectors were deemed safe.

**21 January**

Fire deemed to be at patrol status. Air recon every three hours to ensure fire did not threaten containment lines.

**22 January**

Aerial recon confirmed that fire was contained with no active fire observed.

**23 January**

Aerial recon continued to 1800 hrs when the fire was declared safe.



*Photograph by Sean Davey*



## 'BLACK CHRISTMAS' FIRES



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

### Shoalhaven

Our shift started at about 0600 Tuesday. The fire was like any other fire that we have been to, monitor and black out the edges of a burn that was put in the night before on Braidwood Road. When our officers briefed each other on the changeover I heard our Deputy tell our Senior Deputy that everything would hit the fan mid morning and to be cautious and alert. We continued with our tasking for about 3 hrs, with no luck. There were masses of logs on the edge from where a Pipeline had been put through not so long ago. Even after placing over 2000lts of water with foam, the logs were still reigniting. At about 0930 the wind picked up from the west, we had been monitoring the weather since 0700, humidity was falling quickly and the temperature was rising fast. We started to call for more resources but at the time they were not available so with the units that we had (one Cat 1, two Cat 2's and two Cat 7's I saw) we patrolled the hot spots for spot overs.

**THE VIEW THAT WE HAD OF THE FIRE WAS AMAZING WATCHING THE SMOKE FORM HUGE MUSHROOMS IN THE SKY, LIGHT CLOUDS OF SMOKE FORMING INTO ROLLING BALLS OF RED, ORANGE AND YELLOW GASES, PUSHING HUGE PLUMES OF BLACK SMOKE INTO THE SKY, THIS WAS A SIGHT THAT I WILL NEVER FORGET.**



At 1020 the first spotfire occurred and within 15 minutes there were about five spotfires. The fire was spotting deep into the unburnt fuel. With the wind gusting up to 40km/hr from the West all the units pulled out very quickly and retreated to the staging area to be deployed for property protection. By 1100 this was in place.

The view that we had of the fire was amazing watching the smoke form huge mushrooms in the sky, light clouds of smoke forming into rolling balls of red, orange and yellow gases, pushing huge plumes of black smoke into the sky. This was a sight that I will never forget.

At 1245 we were on property protection. The house that we were watching was in no real danger as the front had passed and the only threat was from the flanks. So we were moved on to the Log Cabin Service Station at Falls Creek. By this time the crown fire was over the highway and the highway was closed to all units. A short time later we responded quickly to beat the head of the fire around to our home town, St Georges Basin, the fire was impacting to the North of our town. We travelled down Jervis Bay Road; there was a lot of smoke in the area and people where everywhere. I have not seen so many people on that road before, there were cars trying to get out, some trying to get in and others who were just watching what was happening, but the one thing I will say is with all the traffic they managed to move to the side so we could get through. The public should be proud of this as normally it doesn't happen.

When we arrived on Island Point Road it did not look good, with fire approaching Warne Road. There were about 10 houses in the street and one of them was one of our officers, the same time there were homes on the Western side of the highway also under threat. We were the only unit in the area at that immediate time so we headed over to the Western side we met 2 other units and they needed help so we went up Battunga Drive, Tomerong. Most of the homes were safe but nearly all of the residents had lost their sheds. With one house still under immediate threat as the fire approached their shed and a small shack we went to work to save them and protect the house with only 2000lts of water and no one else to help us. We started to fight the shed fire and the shack, once the shack was safe, both lines moved on the shed. We just got the shed under control and we ran out of water and then 5-10 mins later we returned to find the shed was burnt to the ground. We continued to protect the house and at the end of the day we saved the house and the shack. We did a crew change at about 1800hrs.

If it wasn't for the residents in the street there would have been many houses lost.

St Georges Basin Brigade crewed the tanker 24hrs a day for 23 days.

With a total of 3000 man hours including Crew and Logistics

**Darryl Rowe and Angela Thornley  
St Georges Basin Volunteer  
Rural Fire Brigade**



# BUSHFIRE BULLETIN ADVERTISING RATES AND SPECIFICATIONS

• Subject to colour fall and availability, with separations to be supplied by advertiser.



Letters to the editor and articles can be sent to:

**The Editor**  
**Bush Fire Bulletin**  
**LMB 17 Granville NSW ,2142**  
 or  
**nichole.ingram@rfs.nsw.gov.au**

## ANNUAL PUBLISHING

- AUTUMN
- WINTER
- SPRING
- SUMMER

### Article Deadlines

One month prior to publication. Articles submitted on disk or e-mailed (preferred). Resolution of photos supplied on disk or e-mail must be saved at 100% actual size to be used at 300dpi. The editor reserves the right to with hold articles submitted.



### ADVERTISING RATES per issue (includes GST)

\$	1/4PG	1/3PG	1/2PG	FP	DPS	FP BACK
MONO	275	352	506	968	1650	1750
Black + 1pms	401	478	632	1100	1870	1970
Full colour	572	660	825	1265	1980	2200

### 12 months CONTRACT RATES

\$	1/4PG	1/3PG	1/2PG	FP	DPS	FP BACK
MONO	220	275	385	825	1320	1420
Black + 1pms	330	363	495	935	1430	1530
Full colour	495	550	715	990	1705	1900

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE A COPY OF  
 THE BUSH FIRE BULLETIN  
 DIRECT TO YOUR HOME?

Name .....

Address .....

### Cut out page and mail to:

**Bush Fire Bulletin**  
**NSW Rural Fire Service**  
 Reply Paid 67059  
 Granville, NSW, 2142  
 (No stamp required)



## FIRE REPORTS

# 15 MUDGEE

At approximately 1145 hrs on 24 December, a fire was reported on the Wellington Road near the properties "Rush Leigh" and "Loungie". The fire was running at approximately 3kph and was uncontrollable. Crews could only attempt property protection. Weather conditions were severe with strong westerly winds at 20 to 28kph gusting to 45kph and the temperature at 28°C, relative humidity 16%.

Terrain varied from areas of grassland to inaccessible rocky hills ranging from 500 to 600 metres above sea level. The contours of the land created changeable winds.

### 24 December

The fire was reported at approximately 1145 hrs by a local property owner who contacted the Mudgee fire Control Centre. Brigade units were activated and responded to the scene. Due to severe weather conditions, behaviour of the fire was very erratic and it was travelling at approximately three kilometres per hour.

As the fire intensity was so great, all fire units were directed to the task of property protection.

The fire was travelling in an eastward direction along both sides of the Wellington Road. The road was closed by the NSW Police and the electrical power was isolated for protection of the firefighters working in the area. A number of power poles were damaged by the fire.

Cutting the electricity caused some concern to local landowners as their water pumps were affected. However, the safety of the firefighters and the community was the priority



Photograph by Sean Davey

owing to the danger of fallen power lines or the shorting out of the power lines through smoke and debris.

A spotter plane was redirected, to fly over the fire and report on its status. At the time the plane arrived, the fire was making a run in open country on the northern side of the Wellington Road toward the Cudgegong River. By using the information from the plane, two helicopter water-bombers and ground crews were able to hold the fire at the Cudgegong River and control spotfires on the eastern side of the river.

On the southern side of the Wellington Road the fire was still burning out of control through inaccessible rocky and timbered terrain. This continued to be a threat to some properties.

At 1845 hrs, the fire was running a lot slower on the southern side of the Wellington Road due to the vegetation type and terrain.

**THE TERRAIN WAS VARIED FROM AREAS OF GRASSLAND TO INACCESSIBLE ROCKY HILLS RANGING FROM 500 TO 600 METRES ABOVE SEA LEVEL.**



Night shift field crews were organised to relieve the firefighters.

**Strategies**

- Ground crews were to contain and blackout the two active fire areas on the northern division in Sectors Alpha and Bravo.
- Ground crews were to extinguish tree fires at the Cudgegong River’s edge and blackout Charlie Sector.
- Ground crews to give property protection to properties in Zulu Sector near the property “Biraganbil”.
- A fire trail to be constructed with a bulldozer from the southern end of the “Biraganbil” Road in a south-westerly direction to a property on the map named “Moon Moon”.
- Ground crews were to blackout the remaining fire edge and patrol the fires edge at the western end of the fire on Sector X-Ray.

**Weather 24 December**

The weather conditions deteriorated after the fire had started. This caused the fire to spread and its behaviour to be erratic.

Two helicopters were operating independently during the afternoon, water-bombing hot-spots in an attempt to slow the fire and controlling spot fires. They also landed to cut fences and herd livestock to safety, saving some thousand head of cattle.

**25 December**

The Incident Management Team that had been requested arrived during the early morning hours.

Don Lewis, retired Group Captain, was brought into the IMT to advise regarding local knowledge of the fire area. A reconnaissance flight was carried out as soon as the aircraft was available, and showed that the control line that had been bulldozed had not sealed off the active fireground area.

**THE WEATHER CONDITIONS DETERIORATED AFTER THE FIRE HAD STARTED. THIS CAUSED THE FIRE TO SPREAD AND ITS BEHAVIOUR TO BE ERRATIC.**

DATE	TEMP	RH	WIND DIRECTION	WIND SPEED	WIND GUST	TIME
24.12.01	28	32	W	20	35.4	1200
24.12.01	28	22	WSW	19.3	41.8	1300
24.12.01	28.9	20	WSW	26	41	1400
24.12.01	29.6	16	WSW	25.7	46.7	1500
24.12.01	30	16	SW	24.1	45.1	1600
24.12.01	31	18	SW	20.9	51.5	1700
24.12.01	30.3	19	W	20.9	40.2	1800
24.12.01	30.2	20	W	16.1	40	1900
24.12.01	28.6	23	W	10	12.9	2000



*Photograph by Nick Moir*



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

DATE	TEMP	RH	WIND DIRECTION	WIND SPEED	WIND GUST	TIME
25.12.01	23.1	41	WNW	9.7	22.5	0800
25.12.01	27.3	33	WNW	11.3	30.6	1000
25.12.01	27.7	33	W	24	41.8	1200
25.12.01	29.7	26	W	19.3	46.7	1300
25.12.01	30.4	24	W	24.1	51.5	1400
25.12.01	30.9	23	W	25.7	49.9	1500
25.12.01	31.5	20	W	24.7	54.7	1600
25.12.01	31.6	17	W	25.7	61.2	1700
25.12.01	31.1	15	W	24.1	48.3	1800
25.12.01	29.2	16	W	20.9	41.8	2000

The Strategies were to:

- Install the dozer containment line between the southern end of the 'Biraganbil' road to the property 'Moon Moon'.
- Clear the track with graders between the property 'Moon Moon' travelling westward and then north back to the Wellington/Mudgee Road to the heel of the fire.
- Clear the property 'Biraganbil' road with the dozer to ensure a widefire break and also a containment line.
- Continue blacking out the fire edge where possible by ground crews and water bombing by helicopters.
- Water bomb hot spots in the inaccessible areas and spotfires as they occur.
- Place crews along the eastern side of the fireground to combat any spotfires or breakout.

**Strategy Results**

The strategies set for the day were successful, some spotfires occurred, but these were extinguished using the helicopters to water bomb, followed by ground crews

mopping up. The fire had a complete mineral earth break constructed around it by the use of the dozer and graders.

Three other fires occurred, caused through electrical overhead powerlines that clashed during the high winds. NSW Fire Brigades units and outlying RFS units extinguished the outbreaks.

Another reconnaissance flight located active fire in the high ranges. One area was to the south east and was the main concern with the predicted wind conditions.

The other area, the south west did not pose a great threat.

The strategy for the night shift was to have a dozer line starting from the western end of the original dozer line and travel southward along the base of the rocky outcrops of Biranganbil Trig Point, range around the southern point, then northward to the blacked out area southwest section, to seal off the area where fire was burning downhill.



Photograph by Nick Moir

**MUDGEE SUFFERED SEVERE FIRE WEATHER CONDITIONS WITH STRONG WINDS FROM THE WEST, HIGH TEMPERATURE AND LOW RELATIVE HUMIDITY.**

The southeastern section was to be backburned from the existing dozer track and blacked out.

**Weather 25 December**

Mudgee suffered severe fire weather conditions with strong winds from the west, high temperatures and low relative humidity.

**26 December**

A reconnaissance flight was completed in the early morning after which it was agreed that the ground crews needed to ensure that tree stumps within thirty metres of the perimeter of the fire were fully extinguished. Some trees were required to be felled.

Upon completion, the fire could be handed back to local control, weather permitting.

Helicopters continued to water bomb the rocky outcrops and worked with ground crews supplying water on split open trees. These helicopters were released during the afternoon.

By 1200 hrs the active areas of the fire had two separate mineral earth control lines in place, a forward line and a fallback line put in place by the dozer and graders. The fire was then declared safe with the exception of a small area at the southeast corner. This was slowly burning back downhill against the wind and could be handled by local resources.

The IMT was scaled down and a request to revoke the Section 44 was forwarded to State Operations.

**HELICOPTERS CONTINUED TO WATER BOMB THE ROCKY OUTCROPS AND WORKED IN WITH GROUND CREWS SUPPLYING WATER ON SPLIT OPEN TREES.**



Photograph by Sean Davey

**Resources**

The following resources were used during the Mudgee Section 44:

TYPE/DESCRIPTION	AGENCY	QTY
Bull Dozer	Mudgee Council	1
Grader	Mudgee Council	2
Front End Loader	Mudgee Council	1
Bulk Water Carrier	Mudgee Council	2
Bulk Water Carrier	Honeysett's	1
Aircraft Fixed Wing	RFS Contract	2
Aircraft Rotary Wing	RFS Contract	2
Category 7 Tanker	RFS Merriwa District	4
Category 1 Tanker	RFS Merriwa District	1
Group Vehicle	RFS Merriwa District	1
Category 7 Tanker	RFS Rylstone District	3
Category 1 Tanker	RFS Cobar District	1
Category 7 Tanker	RFS Wellington District	2
Category 7 Tanker	RFS Mudgee District	20
Category 9 Tanker	RFS Mudgee District	13
Category 1 Tanker	RFS Mudgee District	3
Category 2 Tanker	RFS Mudgee District	1
Support Vehicle Communications Bus	RFS Mudgee District	1
Personnel Field	NSWRFS & NSWFB	173
Personnel Support	All other Agencies	26

**Assets Damaged/Lost**

DESCRIPTION	QTY
Abandoned House (derelict)	1
Hay Shed	1
Caravan	1
Ford Utility	1
Sheep	32
Small Sheds	2



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth





## SPOTFIRE ALBION PARK RURAL FIRE BRIGADE



Like many other brigades Albion Park's fires season began well before "Black Christmas" with volunteers undertaking a number of shifts in the Picton area and specifically at the Nattai and Blue Gum Mountain fires. The Brigade was involved in the full range of bush fire-fighting activities from property protection and back-burning to patrolling.

It was quite an experience putting in a six-kilometre burn on the Sydney Water Road between Nattai Village and the river. The country was quite steep with spectacular views of the river. The resultant fire was quite hot and a keen eye was kept for spot-overs. Helicopters water-bombing nearby also kept the fire fighters alert.

Deputy Paul Strik and his crew working at the Blue Gum Mountain fire on Hoddle's Track cut a long trail in what can only be described as "bill goat country". Working with National Parks & Wildlife firefighters, members were slipping and sliding down to their start point with only rake hoes and each

other for support. The valley below was completely shrouded in smoke while helicopters buzzed by at eye level. It was a mighty effort in the hot conditions to complete the segment of track and some members are still surprised they survived the experience.

While some crews never stopped others drew the short straw. One night crew had a quiet night as the Nattai fires were winding down, even managing rest periods while not on watch. Fire fighter Bruce Powell spent some time snoozing in the crew refuge and John Gordon shared the back seat with Alan Smith whose snoring is legendary. It seems no one got any sleep inside or outside of the vehicle, except young Al. Another night crew enjoyed a sausage sizzle courtesy of Brigade Captain Fred Brown. However, while most folk tend to opt for an afternoon or evening BBQ, our lads lit the gas barbie (in a safe area of course) at 3 am!

The Brigade's Wollondilly experience came to an end on December 15th when the last

crew hauled the last hose off Blue Gum Mountain after a successful back burn that initiated the wrap-up of this particular fire. With Christmas fast approaching "The Park" bushies felt they had done their bit and were looking forward to spending the festive season with family and friends....

However the respite was short lived because at 11.30 hours on Christmas Day the brigade's Category 2, BA equipped, tanker responded to Regentville as fires exploded around Sydney on a scale that seemed to defy the imagination and would herald the beginning of "Black Christmas".

From this moment the next 10 days remain mostly a blur in the minds of the Albion Park volunteers. Heading north the crew noticed, among the many fires in the distance, a particularly large fire developing around Appin. Jokes were made about the poor fire-fighters that had to tackle it. No sooner had the comments been made than Albion Park 2 was diverted to Appin.

So fast was the fire travelling that, in the ten minutes it took the tanker to get there, the fire was gone and all that remained was to mop and patrol as spotfires were still a threat due to the constantly changing wind direction.

At 1800 a task force, including Albion Park 2, had assembled at the Appin Football ground when the word came to respond to The Oaks as houses were under threat. Under orders to save what they could the convoy rolled into a street in the adjacent suburb of Belimblah Park to be greeted by a scene of utter devastation. Nothing but one house was left unburned and dwellings and structures were in various stages of destruction. Quick action by the crew of AP2 saved this house whilst other crews dealt with what was left of the street.

Having done all they could Captain Fred Brown and his crew's next response at about 2100 was to Thurlmere where a similar scene greeted them. Firefighters David Armstrong and Matt Cooper described their time

in the town as 'surreal'. The place seemed to be surrounded by flame and was a hive of activity as evacuations took place. Emergency vehicles seemed to be everywhere. Through the middle of this chaos the crew saw property owners leading cattle and llamas through the town to safety. Surreal indeed!

Albion Park 2 and its crew spent the next 4 hours working non-stop. They assisted in the emergency evacuation of an aged care facility, undertook a search in BA for a missing senior citizen (found safe and well), saved a herd of cattle trapped in a burning paddock before detouring through an orchard to save a property owner's harvest. Spotfires were also high on the Park's list of things to do and there were plenty of those!

The crew was stood down at 0200 after more than 12 hours of fast and furious fire-fighting. All up they had covered over 400 kilometres in a never-to-be-forgotten day.

26 December saw the brigade tasked to the fires north of Wollongong. Crews began back burning along the Citra Construction track at Madden's Plains, south of Helensburgh from the Old Princes Highway to

the F6 Freeway. Later Deputy Terry Quinn and his night crew responded along with other RFS personnel to Garrawarra Hospital when it was reported that several buildings were threatened. However, such was the ferocity of the fire that by the time the Park's Category 1 had arrived there was nothing left to do but mop-up.

Albion Park's commitment to the fires north of Wollongong was short-lived. However two days later a Section 44 was declared for the Kiama-Shellharbour RFD. A fire was moving south from Mt Kembla (west of Wollongong) toward Macquarie Pass, which forms the western boundary of the Brigade's area. The next eight days were spent controlling the Bourke River fire, one of the lesser-known Black Christmas blazes.

A strategy of back burning, bulldozing and water-bombing was put in place along tracks and railway lines to keep the fire west of the escarpment and away from dwellings to the south and east. The backburns were very intense and were an awesome sight as they took off into the unburned scrub. What followed were grinding days of patrolling and mopping up, the unglamorous, but still vital side of firefighting.

By 1 January it seemed that the fire was contained and the Park bushies were looking forward to possible deployment in the fire ravaged Shoalhaven. However, that afternoon a new blaze erupted on the eastern side of the containment lines. Valiant efforts by an Albion Park crew to hold the fire proved futile and it spotted over the escarpment to threaten isolated dwellings located in the dense bushland.

Evacuations and road closures began whilst firefighters undertook property protection and played a waiting game as new strategies were devised. Thankfully, and due to efforts of the Kiama-Shellharbour brigades, no dwellings were lost. Property protection, backburning and observation now became the focus. Albion Park volunteers became very familiar with such locations as "Carbury's property", "The Levy Place" or "The Pole House" as they again undertook the seemingly endless rounds of shifts along side their colleagues from other brigades in the district.

As 5 January approached it became clear that the impact of the fire was waning as it burned into moister rainforest. In fact the fire was burning itself out and eventually it remained only to keep an eye on some isolated



pockets. The final shift for The Park said farewell to the Bourke River fire at 0730 on 6 January as Deputies David Bowley and Richard Johnston along with fire fighter Tim Wilesmith performed the final act by felling a tree in danger of collapse.

Such then was the Albion Park Rural Fire Brigade's "Black Christmas".

As a footnote to their experiences all the Albion Park members commented how strange it was that the usual stock-in trade of the Brigade, MVAs, vehicle fires and small grass fires etc, was largely absent during "Black Christmas". However, barely a day later two serious MVAs saw the brigade back on the job. It was back to business as usual.

**Michael Thompson**  
Firefighter



OF DESTRUCTION. QUICK ACTION BY THE CREW OF AP2 SAVED THIS HOUSE WHILST OTHER CREWS DEALT WITH WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE STREET





## FIRE REPORTS

# 16 PENNANT HILLS PARK



### **Pennant Hills Fire**

24 December to 26 December

#### **Area of fire**

545.8 Hectares

#### **Perimeter of fire**

25.51 Kilometres

### **1 January**

First report of this fire occurred at or around 1350 hrs at a location off Britannia Avenue, Pennant Hills within the Pennant Hills Park.

Brigades from Hornsby and NSW Fire Brigades were responded to the area and on arrival at or around 1358 hrs reported a thick column of smoke within the bushland area inside the Park. From the initial reports and ongoing "000" calls over the next hour or so, additional resources from NSW Fire Brigades, RFS and National Parks & Wildlife Service were responded into the area, as well as NSW Police and a request for air support.

Weather conditions at Hornsby at around 14:00 hrs indicated a temperature of 34 degrees, humidity at around 10% with winds generally from the west gusting in excess of 30 kph.

The fire made its run in a south easterly direction towards Devlins Creek with movement to the south and west being reasonably slow with no direct

threat to property in its early development.

After crossing Devlins Creek at or around 1445 hrs, interface properties in North Epping came under direct impact from the fire.

Streets to the north east of Boundary Road, North Epping were under threat and brigades that had been responded worked purely in a property protection role moving west to east with the firefront.

The main front spotted across the Lane Cove River which then impacted on the South Turramurra area around Canoon Rd and streets to the south by 1630 hrs. Properties in Bowen Avenue were under threat and again brigades continued to carry out property protection, endeavouring to keep ahead of the firefront as it impacted.

The area around Browns Water Hole was considered as a possible cut-off. However, the intensity and behaviour of the fire would not allow this and the fire continued to follow the



*Photograph by Sean Davey*



bushland along to the Lane Cove River further east.

The weather conditions during this time had varied little from those which existed at the start and readings again from Hornsby at around 1800 hrs, indicated temperature at around 34 degrees, humidity of 10% with winds moderately less around 10 kph average gusting to 25-30 kph. On the fire area however, these conditions varied considerably with the terrain, fuel loads and fire intensity at any given point. This aside, the general prevailing wind direction being predominantly from the north west continued to move the fire in an easterly direction.

Properties in South Turramurra that bordered on the bushland to the south, (particularly in Ashburton Avenue, Kissing Point Road and Koombalah Avenue areas,) continued to be impacted by the fire as were those further east in Busaco Road, Marsfield. On the southern edge, brigades continued to focus on property

**DURING THE AFTERNOON, THE ERICKSON AIR CRANE WAS DEPLOYED TO THIS FIRE, ITS FIRST USE ON BUSHLAND INTERFACE OPERATION IN NSW.**

protection and areas of West Pymble were being resourced meet the threat.

The geographic location of this fire was such that sufficient resources had to be allocated both to the north and south flanks as the fire progressed. Any movement between these flanks would require some time to achieve as units would have to travel well around the perimeter for this to happen.

By 1900 hrs, while the main run of the fire continued east, other areas still contained fire activity which had the potential to impact on homes. The main area was that area between South Turramurra and Wahroonga where extensive fire was active to the north of Canoon Road heading north east to the Comenara Parkway and bushland reserves, as well as the southern streets of Wahroonga, such as Leuna Avenue. Further fire was also still active north of Cheltenham and burning westerly within the Pennant Hills Park.

The next couple of hours saw a welcome moderation to the winds and a slight drop in temperature. However, the humidity continued to remain low. This allowed brigades to instigate backburning operations to contain the fires around Wahroonga, South Turramurra, North Epping and Pennant Hills. These continued overnight and into the next day.

To contain the easterly run it was decided that RFS and NPWS would cut a trail from an existing track at the end of Gloucester Avenue, West Pymble through approximately 50 metres of bushland into the Lane Cove River. This would meet an existing track on the southern side of the river which ran up into Christie Park. The appropriate machinery was sourced and put to work in this area.

**THE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF THIS FIRE WAS SUCH THAT SUFFICIENT RESOURCES HAD TO BE ALLOCATED BOTH TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH FLANKS AS THE FIRE PROGRESSED.**



The strategy for the fire's containment was to get this line established, backburn from it and at the same time backburn around the perimeter of the balance of the area where the fire was burning. This would use the most appropriate containment lines which would minimise any run of fire that may cause spotting in adverse conditions thereby, losing the fire, jeopardising further assets, and the safety of the firefighters.

Like so many of the fires this summer, the fire behaviour during the main run was particularly severe. Asset losses were minimal with an old shed and container at the Archery Range within the Park destroyed and only minor other damage.

During the afternoon, the Erickson Air Crane was deployed to this fire, its first use on bushland interface operations in NSW. The aircraft was on the ground at Kenthurst when the fire started and when the confirmation of the fire was received, it was over the fireground in around 30 minutes.

The Air Crane's contribution by cooling and knocking down the head of the fire approaching properties, gave the firefighters on the ground the ability to get on top of the firefront which was then less than half the intensity it may have been. Whilst the firefighters were impressed by this machine, the pilot who has worked fires around the world, made the comment that he has never seen fire fighters attack a fire with the tenacity and skill that he saw during the afternoon. The Air Crane together with a Medium Jet Ranger with a bucket were the only aircraft available for use at this time, as all others were fully deployed.

During the afternoon, a shortage of water pressure was experienced at South Turramurra. Sydney Water personnel were responded to the scene after the problem was notified. They worked with the firefighters to ensure that the maximum amount of water that

the system could accept was available. However, the usage was greater than the system could deliver. The requirement of the firefighting effort was extreme and covered a wide area, further exacerbating the problem. The whole area including streets well removed from direct impact of the fire are heavily vegetated and were subjected to ash and ember fallout further impacting on water use by residents using garden hoses to wet down areas around or on homes. At the height of the fire, many home owners were also leaving hoses and sprinklers unattended. It is considered that the supply is adequate for normal fire events. This situation placed a considerably higher demand on it. Even so it had minor impact on the firefighting efforts. Bulk water semi trailers (35,000 litres) were responded to the area to alleviate this situation.

No forced evacuations took place during the afternoon or evening. Police Officers moved around all affected areas advising residents of the situation leaving the 'evacuate or not' decision to them. Roads around the affected area were closed to all but residents and this operation worked smoothly. Being a public holiday with a blitz on the roads, a more than usual number of Police were immediately available to move into the area. The M2 Motorway was also closed for some time due to smoke and fire impact around Marsfield. Sightseers were the biggest problem Police were faced with, particularly on the first day.

**WHILST THE FIREFIGHTERS WERE IMPRESSED BY THIS MACHINE, THE PILOT WHO HAS WORKED FIRES AROUND THE WORLD, MADE THE COMMENT THAT HE HAS NEVER SEEN FIREFIGHTERS ATTACK A FIRE WITH THE TENACITY AND SKILL THAT HE SAW DURING THE AFTERNOON.**

Like so many of the fires this summer, the fire behaviour during the main run was particularly severe. Asset losses were minimal with an old shed and container at the Archery Range within the Park destroyed and only minor other damage.

During the afternoon, the Erickson Air Crane was deployed to this fire, its first use on bushland interface operations in NSW. The aircraft was on the ground at Kenthurst when the fire started and when the confirmation of the fire was received, it was over the fireground in around 30 minutes.

The Air Crane's contribution by cooling and knocking down the head of the fire approaching properties, gave the firefighters on the ground the ability to get on top of the firefront which was then less than half the intensity it may have been. Whilst the firefighters were impressed by this machine, the pilot who has worked fires around the world, made the comment that he has never seen fire fighters attack a

fire with the tenacity and skill that he saw during the afternoon. The Air Crane together with a Medium Jet Ranger with a bucket were the only aircraft available for use at this time, as all others were fully deployed.

During the afternoon, a shortage of water pressure was experienced at South Turramurra. Sydney Water personnel were responded to the scene after the problem was notified. They worked with the firefighters to ensure that the maximum amount of water that the system could accept was available. However, the usage was greater than the system could deliver. The requirement of the firefighting effort was extreme and covered a wide area, further exacerbating the problem. The whole area including streets well removed from direct impact of the fire are heavily vegetated and were subjected to ash and ember fallout further impacting on water use by residents using garden hoses to wet down areas around or on homes. At the



height of the fire, many home owners were also leaving hoses and sprinklers unattended. It is considered that the supply is adequate for normal fire events. This situation placed a considerably higher demand on it. Even so it had minor impact on the firefighting efforts. Bulk Water semi trailers (35,000 litres) were responded to the area to alleviate this situation.

No forced evacuations took place during the afternoon or evening. Police Officers moved around all affected areas advising residents of the situation leaving the 'evacuate or not' decision to them. Roads around the affected area were closed to all but residents and this operation worked smoothly. Being a public holiday with a blitz on the roads, a more than usual number of Police were immediately available to move into the area. The M2 Motorway was also closed for some time due to smoke and fire impact around Marsfield. Sightseers were the biggest problem Police were faced with, particularly on the first day.

**BY LATE AFTERNOON, ALL BURNS HAD BEEN COMPLETED AND MOPPING UP WAS WELL IN HAND. THIS CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT AND INTO THE NEXT DAY.**

**List of Resources**

AGENCY	NUMBER TANKERS 1	FIREFIGHTING PERSONNEL	SUPPORT PERSONNEL	OTHER EQUIP DESCRIPTION
NSW RFS	Day 1 -44 Day 2 - 35	520 400	30 30	Canteen /Liaison etc
NSW FB	Day 1 -42 Day 2 - 25	356 200	20 15	Liaison ICV etc
NPWS	Day 1 -7 Day 2 - 7	35 35	8 8	Liaison etc
CFA	Day 2 - 20	240	8	Liaison etc
NSW Police	Day 1 - 30 Day 2 - 6		45 12	
NSW Ambulance	Day 1 -4 Day 2 - 4		10 10	
SES	Day 1 - 8 Day 2 - 5		30 25	Welfare etc







# SYDNEY CELEBRATES BUSHFIRES PARADE

*Photographs by Adam Hollingwoth and Sean Davey*





Despite the rather ironic forecast of rain, on the morning of Friday, 8 February 2002, nearly 7,000 members of the inter-agency team that fought the Christmas Bushfires of 2001 rallied at Circular Quay in preparation for a street parade through the middle of Sydney. The parade gave the general public the opportunity to express gratitude and admiration for the selfless and tireless efforts of those who fought side-by-side to save lives and property over those few terrible weeks.

An estimated 5,000 Rural Fire Service members followed a flotilla of firefighting vehicles down George Street to Town Hall. Marching under their District banners some were still leaving Circular Quay when the first contingent reached Town Hall - even though they were marching up to ten abreast. They were cheered on by thousands of well-wishers who lined George Street, waving flags and banners to congratulate their efforts. RFS members had travelled from right across the State to take part in the parade. Some Districts were represented by a single member - generally getting the biggest cheer from the crowd. Other Districts were represented by hundreds of members.

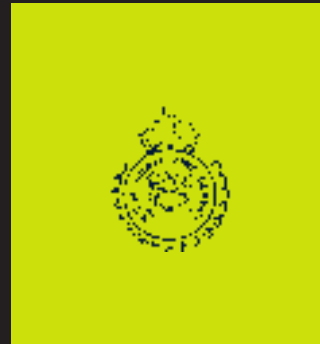
The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported "these were no aloof sporting gods. They were embraced as neighbours, friends and dads and mums by those who gathered in George Street to claim them as their own". *The Daily Telegraph* described "the tens of thousands (who) lined the streets to cheer on the 5,000 heroes who saved NSW from the Black Christmas Fires".





The Sydney Morning Herald also produced a commemorative poster that was handed out to well-wishers. The poster, resembling a front page of the paper, carried the banner "Heroes in Hard Hats" and was accompanied by a photo of three RFS members aggressively fighting a fire in what were obvious tenuous conditions. Hundreds of these banners lined the roads for the marchers, adding enormously to the spirit of the day. Channel 7 covered the entire march live to air, with reporters stationed on roof tops and along the street interviewing Service members as they were cheered and applauded.





At Town Hall the dignitaries lined up to praise those involved in the firefighting effort. The Governor General, Deputy Prime Minister, Premier and Lord Mayor all spoke, congratulating the assembled emergency services and support personnel and those who could not make the march. In his speech, Premier Bob Carr said "these were the worst fires in our history. These heroes took them on and they won. No lives lost, 10,000 homes saved, grace under pressure, sheer class all the way."

At the conclusion of the formal ceremony, the assembled emergency service workers descended on Tumbalong Park at Darling Harbour for a giant sausage sizzle and a concert provided by Sydney radio station Triple M, featuring acts like Alex Lloyd and Jimmy Barnes. The sun shone on Sydney all day, and it was only as Jimmy Barnes was winding up his act, that the heavens opened up with an almighty drenching. A drenching that all those assembled could only have wished for on Christmas Day.

**John Winter**

## YOU WANT WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? THE JOYS OF LOGISTICS

Students of incident management doctrine will recall the three vital organisational supports required for any major incident or group of incidents - Operations, Planning and Logistics, if any of them don't operate effectively, management of the incident or incidents is affected.

This article looks at the State Operations logistics section during the December 2001/January 2002 fires, now commonly called the Christmas fires.

The Oxford Dictionary describes logistics in two ways:

- a. *the organisation of moving, lodging and supplying troops and equipment* and
- b. *the detailed organisation and implementation of a plan or operation, it's from the French 'logistique' from 'loger' meaning 'to lodge'.*

These definitions capture the essence of the job, and to the uninitiated, it sounds easy enough, but it can be quite difficult, even with extensive pre-planning. Tasks can often exceed existing plans, especially in the early stages when multiple incidents are occurring over a wide area.

### THE ORGANISATION OF MOVING, LODGING AND SUPPLYING TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT



The logistics plans we have in place cover many areas;

1. Ensuring the means of procurement are sound i.e. knowing what, where and how to source the wide variety of equipment and services required.
2. Ensuring that the trading terms are adequate and understood by suppliers, some of who will not previously have dealt with the organisation.
3. Ensuring that those who require equipment and services know how and where to contact the logistics personnel.
4. Ensuring that those who require equipment understand what can be provided. For instance, no capital equipment can be purchased.
5. Having a system in place to provide "instant" orders that are acceptable to suppliers.
6. Having adequate staff and infrastructure to maintain contact with incident management teams and physically order the goods and services.

7. Ensuring that those that have ordered the goods or services know that orders have been placed. Being able to let them know if there is a delay is also vital.

8. Being able to arrange fast delivery to the right people.

Fortunately, the terms of the current supply contracts organised by the RFS and NSWFB require that suppliers keep emergency stocks of catalogue items. After our experiences in 1994 we keep an updated list of after hours contact numbers for key suppliers' representatives, but it was difficult during the Christmas holidays when the people we needed were scattered across the country. Thank goodness for mobile phones!

Even with those plans in place it was a challenge. For instance, have you ever tried to buy 50 standpipes on Christmas Eve? How about an extra hundred and fifty fitted lengths of 38 mm percolating hose and how about two and a half thousand pairs of smoke goggles and could you





Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

get us six of pallets of bottled water by tomorrow morning? And seven districts need a total of 40 pallets of BFF foam and it must be there tomorrow morning. There's a task force travelling through Bathurst in an hour and they need feeding and refuelling. And there's a task force travelling through Parkes tonight and they need feeding, refuelling and overnight accommodation and have you got any size 14 boots? We need 150 PPE jackets and trousers, could you get us a colour photocopier for mapping? (Fuji Xerox came to the rescue). We need another generator and some extra electrical wiring. Can you organise a portable office building to fit about a dozen people? We need six fax machines and fifteen extra phone lines and so it goes.

In between all of that, an orchardist from Tumut has driven to Rosehill with two huge crates of apples and there's a lady on the phone who wants to give us some nectarines, a pallet, about 800 kilos of them, "but you'll

have to pick them up from the markets". (We did, they were lovely, but getting them out to the troops was not easy). Robyne Lyndon, an RFS member from the South West works with Goodman Fielder/Uncle Tobys and has arranged for a large supply of muesli bars and other goodies for the troops. Kraft are sending lots of biscuits and cheese, about six pallets of them. All these things are nice to get but distributing them takes time. We called on the SES to set up a transport cell (there weren't many couriers working over the holidays) and they really helped distributing all manner of things.

NRMA want to help, what can they do? (We asked for 30 pallets of water to be delivered to various fire control centres and they did) Arnotts are sending nine pallets of cakes. And could you please talk to a lady at the front door, her kids want to give their toys to kids in need (thank heavens for the Chaplain, he looked after that). There's a lady at

the front door with a box of fresh scones, jam and cream (we were happy to look after that!)

The system we had in place worked, but the magnitude of the events meant that emergency stocks were exhausted very quickly by the fire combat agencies and more had to be sourced in a hurry. Our key suppliers worked tirelessly and made their warehouses available on public holidays, at night, anytime, to provide the equipment. A special mention needs to be made of 3M, suppliers of Bush Fire Fighting Foam (BFFF). Any time day or night on any day, they were there to take the calls and provided the pallets of foam to anywhere, from Richmond Valley in the north to Narromine out west and way down the south coast, the organisation was outstanding, particularly the transport division.

Tributes also need to be paid to the ten Head Office staff that ran the logistics desks 24 hours a day for three weeks, it was an

outstanding effort that was very much appreciated by firefighters throughout the State – we know, they rang and told us!

**Tony Jones**

FOR INSTANCE, HAVE YOU EVER TRIED TO BUY 50 STANDPIPES ON CHRISTMAS EVE? HOW ABOUT AN EXTRA HUNDRED AND FIFTY FITTED LENGTHS OF 38 MM PERCOLATING HOSE AND HOW ABOUT TWO AND A HALF THOUSAND PAIRS OF SMOKE GOGGLES AND COULD YOU GET US SIX OF PALLETS OF BOTTLED WATER BY TOMORROW MORNING?



## HIDDEN HEROES

"WE TRAIN VOLUNTEERS FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS," JENNIFER EXPLAINED, "AND NOW WE SEE THE RESULTS OF THOSE TRAINING SESSIONS AND WORKSHOPS"



Hidden away, behind some impressive brick heritage buildings in Parramatta is an army of workers who have overcome denominational and welfare barriers as they continue to help the victims of New South Wales record bushfires. This is the staff of the State Disaster Recovery Centre. "These are the hidden heroes".

On 16 January, the NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner, Phil Koperberg declared: "The 22 day-long bushfire crisis is effectively over. Danger has passed." Throughout those 22 days there had been many emergencies which were dealt with and assistance was co-ordinated from the State Disaster Recovery Centre at Parramatta.

Inside the plain brick building, called "Kamballa", the Department of Community Services (DOCS) had a team, led by Peter Olney, the Manager of Emergency Services. Representatives from DOCS, the Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul, ADRA, Anglicare and The Salvation Army had their desks and respective areas of responsibility, applying themselves to the myriad of necessities as they came in.

While thousands of firefighters battled the flames, these hidden heroes attended to the needs of people fleeing to safety, often with only the clothes on their backs.

DOCS workers co-ordinated the relief efforts, which also included nine other Disaster Recovery Centres in the areas closest to the fires.

The Red Cross provided personal care and support. By registering people at the various Recovery Centres, they were able to set up a data base, recording every person's status. Overseas phone calls inquiring about relatives

were soon checked and family members could be assured that "someone living at Bondi was quite safe".

Marnie Hillman, the Red Cross Disaster Response Co-ordinator, Emergency Services, explained that "The pamphlet 'Coping with a major personal crisis' was distributed to every person needing counselling, to help them through their time of grief."

St Vincent de Paul was responsible for the distribution of clothing. Stories of people's generosity seemed to be never-ending. Stores offered coupons for new clothing, while others provided shoes and the needs families from the smallest to the oldest.

ADRA (the Adventist Disaster and Relief Agency) was responsible for emergency accommodation. In each Disaster Recovery Centre, a pre-prepared kit provided the volunteer with the necessary identification, forms and a banner with the word "Accommodation" clearly visible.

ADRA's Chris Olafson, the NSW Manager for Disaster Recovery Service Accommodation, arranged somewhere for people to sleep overnight. "The venues ranged from tents and caravans to private homes and motels."

When nursing homes were evacuated, the bed-ridden were transported to hospitals, but the walking patients - and in some cases their carers - needed accommodation. At one stage, the Parramatta Leagues Club answered the call to stand-by and was prepared to provide rooms for such patients - in the middle of the night!

"Rotary groups were a great help," said Chris. "They had networks in place which could be utilised at a moment's notice."

Altogether ADRA accommodated 2,127 people, including 949 firefighters. The ADRA staff of 116 worked 926 hours - unseen by many, but their achievements meant that people in need had somewhere to sleep and children could play safely.

ANGLICARE had no single responsibility - their task was to "help everywhere their assistance was needed," according to Terry O'Mara, ANGLICARE's General Manager Diocesan Services. Volunteers accompanied Red Cross workers going door-to-door, finding out if people were safe and aware of what emergency services were available.

Jennifer Davies, ANGLICARE's Manager Emergency Services, received phone calls from those on the field, notifying her of special cases of people in need. Knowing the resources available, she was soon able to co-ordinate people "on the ground" to help.

"We train volunteers for such a time as this," Jennifer explained, "and now we see the results of those training sessions and workshops. They have truly been worthwhile. If only more people were prepared for such emergencies as this."

Major Colin Brownhill, Co-ordinator of The Salvation Army's Disaster Recovery Services and Emergency Services Director, was responsible for catering - co-ordinating the feeding of those fleeing from the fires as well as the firefighters and emergency personnel. A total of 73,035 meals were provided, during 19,371 hours of service by 2,134 people. Emergency trailers travelled from area to area, providing cool drinks and a variety of meals as requested.

Teams throughout the State were on stand-by to respond to any catering need. When there was a build-up of traffic at Karuah, north of Newcastle, The Salvation Army teams provided 400 bottles of water to the drivers and passengers of cars, at the request of the local traffic Police. Meals were even supplied by the Parramatta Corps to the workers at the Disaster Recovery Centre - who had not been forgotten.

The "hidden heroes" were still in action weeks after the fires have been controlled. Peter Olney explained: "We are still finding people in need, so we're still on the job."

STORIES OF PEOPLE'S GENEROSITY SEEMED TO BE NEVER-ENDING. STORES OFFERED COUPONS FOR NEW CLOTHING, WHILE OTHERS PROVIDED SHOES AND THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES FROM THE SMALLEST TO THE OLDEST.

## INTERSTATE LIAISON UNIT CHRISTMAS 2001 BUSHFIRES



On Christmas Day 2001 the Service activated its Interstate Liaison Unit (ILU) to co-ordinate the arrival, deployment, welfare, logistics and demobilisation of firefighting agencies from every State and Territory in Australia and New Zealand whose personnel were used during the 2001/2002 Christmas bushfires. The unit ceased operation on 16 January. Richard Donarski was the Unit Manager with Helen Strasser; Andrew Canderle; Cassandra Collins; Carla McDonald; Anne Fitzsimmons; David Wicks; Sean McArdle; Vikki Scanlon and Kate Watchirs in support. The unit functioned twenty-four hours daily.

### KEY ASSISTANCE WAS PROVIDED BY:

**SCOTT BOYES**  
(MERCURE HOTEL  
ROSEHILL)

**JOHN JENNINGS**  
(JENNINGS  
COACHES)

**ROSS COLLINS**  
(STATE TRANSIT)

**JOHN GOWANS**  
(STATE TRANSIT)

**PETER TODD,  
JANNINE BROOKES  
AND RAY GATT**  
(STATE EMERGENCY  
SERVICE)

**CHRISTINE PURDIE**  
(ST JOHN  
AMBULANCE)

A total of 38,065 interstate firefighter movements were handled by the Unit during the 22 day period, of which 26,986 involved movement to and from the various firegrounds. The day peak of 4,503 firefighter movements occurred on 2 January 2002.

Thirty hotels, motels, and educational properties were sourced and utilised to house the interstate firefighters with meals organised by the Unit.

A transport specialist worked with the Unit from an office at Rosehill and was an outstanding success in organising transport resources for the interstate agencies. There were 1,275 transport movements.

St John Ambulance treated a total of 498 Interstate firefighters on their return to their various accommodation, and maintained a first aid presence at all accommodation for the duration of the fires.

The establishment of a specialised ILU to support the interstate agencies during the emergency proved invaluable, to such an extent that it may become a permanent feature in future multi-agency, multi-state operations.

The staff of the ILU were dedicated and provided a level of support beyond all expectations. As issues or problems were identified or requests were submitted, they quickly fulfilled the request, provided a fix or resolved any problems. The staff of State Operations Centre, Communications, IT and Logistics provided continual support and assistance without which the Unit could not have operated effectively.

**Richard Donarski**

## A RIGHT ROYAL VISIT

THE PRINCE TOOK THE TIME TO TALK TO SOME OF THE VICTIMS WHO HAD LOST THEIR HOMES, AND SHARED WITH THEM DETAILS OF THE TRAUMA THEY FACED.

Many dignitaries visited the Service during the Christmas 2001 bushfires. The Governor-General, the Governor of NSW, the Premier, the Deputy Premier, and our own Minister not only visited State Operations but also met firefighters and victims 'in the field'.

On Wednesday, 9 January, His Royal Highness Prince Andrew, the Duke of York arrived at Rosehill. The Prince who was in Australia on a private holiday spent some time both at State Operations and some fire affected areas with firefighters, and victims who had lost their homes.

The visit began with a briefing, by the Commissioner. The Prince was extremely interested in and concerned about the situation that was confronting the State's emergency services. He was impressed with the fact that the single largest firefighting resource was made up of the highly professional volunteers that make up our Service. With his background as a helicopter pilot in the Royal Navy he was

particularly interested in the aviation component of the campaign. He was very keen to inspect one of the Air Cranes at work but due to the operational commitments of those aircraft well away from Sydney, this was not possible.

From State Operations the visit transferred to Warrimoo in the lower Blue Mountains where there had been significant property loss. Word had got out about the Prince's visit to that area and a crowd of approximately 300 to 400 people had gathered by the time the Royal party arrived. This provided a few headaches for the security personnel from both Federal and State Police particularly as the Prince, at one stage, just disappeared amongst the crowd and media scrum on a Royal 'walkabout'.

His Royal Highness met with firefighters from the Blue Mountains brigades and congratulated them and their colleagues on the outstanding effort that was continuing to







All photographs by Adam Hollingworth



suppress the fires around the State. As well as seeing first-hand the destruction that the fires had caused the Prince took the time to talk to some of the victims who had lost their homes, and shared with them details of the trauma they faced and the worries associated with the rebuilding of their lives.



While this was going on the crowd continued to grow, but off to one side sat a young boy, who was wheelchair bound, waiting patiently in the hope of meeting the Prince, who was advised of the boy's predicament. The Prince was determined to meet the boy and so with the help of his security team and members of the Warrimoo Rural Fire Brigade he worked his way through the crowd to talk for some time with the boy in question. The expression on the boy's face said it all as he asked the Prince for an autograph, which was willingly given.

Time is of course the enemy of most VIPs and the Prince was no exception. So with a final 'thank you' to the volunteers he went on his way to continue his holiday. However it was obvious from the conversations that continued after his departure that everybody had appreciated his visit.

**IT WAS OBVIOUS FROM THE CONVERSATIONS THAT CONTINUED AFTER HIS DEPARTURE THAT EVERYBODY HAD APPRECIATED HIS VISIT.**

## FIRE INVESTIGATIONS MAJOR INVESTIGATIONS FOR THE SERVICE

STRIKE FORCE  
'TRONTO' WAS  
ALSO ESTABLISHED  
VIA THE NSW  
POLICE TO GATHER  
INFORMATION ON  
BEHALF OF THE  
CORONER



Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

The inevitable question was asked from day 1 of these fires, "How did they start?" While there was lightning activity in the days running up to these fire events, there was a need to carry out thorough investigations to clearly determine, where possible, which fires were accidental and which were deliberate.

Early in the campaign, as Rural Fire Service Investigators were involved in operational duties in the control of the fires, the Service sought the assistance of external agencies to begin the investigation process. Mr Fabian Crowe from the Country Fire Authority in Victoria, was seconded to assist in the process of gathering information.

Strike Force 'Tronto' was also established via the NSW Police to gather information on behalf of the Coroner. The RFS was requested to supply expertise to carry out scene examinations in conjunction with Forensic Services Police and at the same time the RFS appointed an

Administration/Logistics Officer to assist the Manager Fire Investigation with the liaison with Tronto Investigators and RFS Investigators. Simultaneously these Investigators were seconded from their Districts to form up to six teams to focus on fires in a number of areas across the State. The North Coast, Metropolitan, South, South West, West and North West groups were created with five investigators attached to each group.

The process then evolved over the following two months after the fires to examine scenes, canvass firefighters and liaise with Police Investigators in the field. In several cases, this involved RFS Investigators and Police trekking on foot in rugged terrain to locate the areas of origin of many of these fires. The collation of this information was then managed by the Administration/Logistics Officer of the Unit while the Manager worked closely with Strike Force Tronto.

The Task Force has seen around 150 fires investigated across the State. All information gathered is being forwarded to the Coroner who will then determine into which fires a formal hearing will be conducted. The investigation process is very detailed and time consuming involving carrying out an extensive site examination; interviewing both RFS and NSWFB personnel, interviewing members of the public, taking photographs of the scene and preparing final reports. As most of RFS Investigators are also Fire Control Officers or Deputy Fire Control Officers, undertaking this task as well as managing their Districts was a challenging one.

The FIU has received praise from the Police involved in Strike Force Tronto for the level of detail provided, the high level of professionalism consistently displayed and the inter-agency cooperation. The RFS has also been highly commended on the gathering of information by Strike Force Tronto. This also

highlights the importance of obtaining and recording evidence by first response attack crews.

It is always worth remembering that the results of these Coronial investigations not only highlights the importance of fire investigation within the Service but will also benefit statewide training programs for fire investigations and future training programs for our volunteers.

**Richard Woods**







## QFRS ASSISTS WITH NSW BUSHFIRE EMERGENCY



When the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service received the call for help from the NSW Fire Service, during their Christmas 2001 bushfire crisis, Queensland firefighters were quick to volunteer.

The first of four Queensland taskforce teams departed for Cessnock, inland from Newcastle, on 29 December 2001, with 10 urban and 10 rural fire vehicles.

This first team consisted of over 40 urban firefighters and officers from Brisbane North and South Regions; 60 rural firefighters from Caboolture, Gold Coast, Beaudesert and Esk areas; 2 mechanics; a communications officer and communications technician; and four QAS paramedics.

After initially protecting the township of Cessnock, the team was then moved south of Sydney to the Nowra area, where the Shoalhaven fire had burnt out close to 30,000 hectares of bushland.

The team was tasked with protecting the township of Sussex Inlet, which came under severe threat on the night of January 2, when 12 homes were destroyed but dozens more saved through the efforts of Queensland firefighters.

This first taskforce returned home on 4 January, and was followed by three more teams over the course of the following two weeks, with taskforce four returning to Queensland on 16 January.

These teams continued to fight fires in the area south of Sydney, protecting the townships of Sussex Inlet, Bendalong, Jervis Bay, Berrara, Swanhaven and Fishermans Paradise.

In total, the QFRS contributed to the firefighting effort for 17 days with over 200 urban and 150 rural firefighters; 19 paramedics; and QFRS mechanics, communications officers and technicians making the trip south to assist local NSW crews.

QFRS officers also travelled to NSW to assist with incident management activities and media liaison.

The fires, which burned from 24 December to 16 January burnt out some 7000 square kilometres and destroyed more than 100 homes, over 30 commercial, industrial and community premises, and more than 7000 livestock. However quick action by firefighters from across NSW, throughout Australia and from New Zealand saved thousands of homes from the ravages of fire. Incredibly, despite the ferocity of the blazes – described as one in 100 year conditions – not one human life was lost.

The QFRS has received numerous letters of appreciation from NSW residents and from the NSW Rural Fire Service and the Shoalhaven Mayor acknowledging the efforts of our taskforce teams.

The Queensland taskforce members were honoured by Premier Peter Beattie and

Minister Mike Reynolds during a parade and reception at Parliament House in late January. The Minister and QFRS Commissioner Lee Johnson also presented certificates at local ceremonies in Townsville, Cairns, Bundaberg, Gladstone and Rockhampton.

**THE TEAM WAS  
TASKED WITH  
PROTECTING THE  
TOWNSHIP OF  
SUSSEX INLET,  
WHICH CAME  
UNDER SEVERE  
THREAT ON  
THE NIGHT OF  
JANUARY 2**



## NORTHERN THREE TASK FORCE

A BIG SCARE DURING A BRIEFING SAW THE FIRE ROAR OUT OF A GULLY DIRECTLY UNDER US SENDING BURNING EMBERS TOWARDS THE UNBURNT SECTION OF THE AREA

A NSW Rural Fire Service task force, Northern Three, consisting of tankers from Urunga, Fernmount, Valery and Scotchman brigades along with support vehicles from Tweed and Coffs Harbour Districts departed Urunga on Friday 28 December 2001, headed for the enormous bushfires burning at Kurrajong Heights, west of Sydney.

Urunga Brigade Captain Marty Thick tells the story of his brigade's tasks during the first week he was there:

"The task force convoy consisting of fourteen RFS vehicles, under the command of Bellingen RFS Fire Control Officer Alan Britcliffe, departed at 0600 hours from Urunga. First stop was the Service Centre at Port Macquarie for a quick stretch, then on to Raymond Terrace for lunch at McDonalds and a chance to meet the firefighters from up north. We already knew some of them from the task force to Sydney to assist with the hailstorm damage in 1999.



Photograph by Sean Davey

Back into the vehicles and down the freeway. People travelling north continually waved and gave us the thumbs up which made us all feel pretty good. The best feeling was when two motor cycle Police Officers stood to attention and saluted us as we passed by their radar location. Good for the spirits and morale. This sort of treatment continued right through to our next stop at the Wilberforce Fire Control Centre where we again had a stretch before heading to Kurrajong Heights.

We were allocated accommodation at the Youth In Search Hostel. The crews in the smaller tankers from Fernmount, Scotchman, Valery, Bucca, East Bank and Burringbar went to work that same night but the larger tankers from Urunga, Bonville, Moonee and Tweed Coast were not required so we settled down for a good night's rest before heading out early on Saturday morning. What a fantastic place - pool, spa and sauna. Way to go!

Our first tasking led us to a

nearby farm where the fire had crept precariously close and it was our job to ensure it did not breach the containment lines and threaten the farm houses and sheds. The smoke was choking with visibility down to around 100 metres. We set up a portable pump at a dam for bulk water and for the next three or four hours kept company with the local dairy herd.

The wind picked up in strength after lunch and the fire quickly found new life. A big scare during a briefing saw the fire roar out of a gully directly under us sending burning embers towards the unburnt section of the area. We were on our toes quickly to patrol the area. The fire intensified about 300 metres to the north and within minutes several helicopters thundered in and bombed the area for almost three hours.

The area was declared safe at dusk so we headed back to the hostel. Just got into relax mode when we were responded to bush alight about 4 km west at Bilpin adjacent a large apple



PEOPLE TRAVELLING  
NORTH CONTINUALLY  
WAVED AND GAVE  
US THE THUMBS UP  
WHICH MADE US  
ALL FEEL PRETTY  
GOOD



*Photograph by Adam Hollingworth*

orchard. Quite funny to see firefighters scurrying from the pool to get dressed. It looked as though someone had thrown in a bucket load of piranhas. Great response time, though, as we had four fully manned tankers at the scene in under ten minutes. Helped the local brigade contain the fire and it would have caused all sorts of problems if it had got away from us. Sad to say, the property owners told us they believed it was deliberately lit.

Back to the hostel around 2100. What's for tea? Alan rang the local pub and they kept the bistro open for us. Great meal then back "home" to the pool. The rest of the night was remarkably quiet but the smoke was dreadful, making sleep very difficult.

Day three saw Urunga, along with the three other heavy tankers, tasked to Warks Hill to set up and man a buoywall, or portable dam, for the helicopters to fill their buckets. This dam held 11,000 litres of water and it was essential to keep it topped up at all times. We set up a portable pump in the next door neighbour's swimming pool and had bulk water tankers standing-by as well. Things got busy after lunch with the choppers bombing an intensifying fire which had crossed Bells Line of Road and was heading up the mountain towards us, now only half a kilometre away. We had the additional task of protecting the nearby houses from spotfires and relaying weather readings to Firecom every hour. Choppers continually sucked water from





Photograph by Adam Hollingworth

the dam, one chopper every couple of minutes or so, with a turn-around time of 3 to 4 minutes. 'Elvis' flew by and looked like he was going to pick up from our dam but we wouldn't have been able to keep the water up to him, drawing 9,000 litres in one 40 second gulp. What an amazing aircraft, can we have one in Bellingen? These jobs kept us busy till dark. The neighbours were fantastic, bringing us food and drinks all day and opening up their homes to us as though we were their own family.

Back to the pub for tea; no beers please, we are on call. Like putting a dog in a butcher shop and telling it to sit! Next morning three Urunga crew members, Steve Thick, Ivan Perkins and Jason Richards, along with some other firefighters from Coffs and Tweed, boarded a coach and headed back to Urunga. They were replaced by Tom Pinkstone from Urunga, Allan Kenny from Brierfield and Jeff Luke from Megan.

New Year's Eve saw us return to the buoywall, having a

reasonably quiet morning. No choppers in the immediate area so we were re-tasked to patrol some properties along the Bells Line of Road. It turned out to be a long day with several outbreaks but nothing we couldn't handle. No midnight celebrations, just plain too tired.

New Years Day dawned and all hell broke loose. The fire, fanned by hot, gale force westerly winds awoke the beast. We were tasked to protect a house totally surrounded by dense bush. We set up hoses and a portable pump in their pool, and waited. An urgent call came over the radio to evacuate the people and get the hell out of there as the fire had spotted over the breaks and was heading straight at us. We did so very quickly but as we were leaving, the owners raced up into the bush to find their pets. Oh no, not this. We had to go after them and plead with them to get out. You could here the fire in the distance. How far away? We didn't have a clue. We all made it to the main road safely, thank God. We patrolled





up and down Bells Line of Road and during one pass saw two people walking out of a pine forest. It was the same people who had returned to their property on foot to find their pets. We were totally stunned. This same pine forest was engulfed in an inferno a short time later.

Not long after we received an urgent call to bush alight and properties threatened about two kilometres down the road. A large engineering plant was surrounded by a wall of fire so we went into attack mode along with six other heavy tankers. It took over two hours to make the area safe but burning trees falling to the ground caused major concerns for the firefighters. An excavator was used to knock them down.

Just had time to have a drink when we were called to our place of accommodation where a firestorm was roaring out of the gully towards our huts. This can't happen, we live here. What will we wear for the next four days? Where will we sleep? All these

horrible (now amusing) thoughts raced through our minds. Five more tankers arrived and once again we set up. The fire hit with tremendous force with flame heights in excess of twenty metres. The smoke choked and blinded us. We directed our water jets onto the fire but didn't seem to be getting anywhere when, all of a sudden, an Iriquois helicopter thundered in over our heads with sirens screaming like banshees, and bombed the firefront. Another followed right behind it and gave us the chance to stop the fire there and then. What a wonderful sight those choppers were.

We saved the main house with the exception of a burnt power pole. We had just started to mop up around the house when we heard shouts coming from near the huts. The fire had doubled back and was heading up the ridge about two hundred metres away. Here we go again. Once again into attack mode. We poured water onto the fire like you wouldn't believe but we were running out of water, so a

portable pump was quickly set up in the swimming pool and a tanker relay formed for a constant supply. Another great save which made us feel pretty good as this was our "home". The teamwork was fantastic, showing that training really does benefit with everyone working together as if they had been doing so for years. Everyone was buggered after this one.

Back into mopping up but we were again called away to protect houses on the other side of the ridge. It was getting close to dark with the fire half a kilometre away. Firecom radioed to backburn along a dozed trail - which we did. The flame height from the backburn was breathtaking, sixty metres with burning embers falling all around us. The backburn progressed down into the gully and it soon reached the main fire. The noise was almost deafening, like a Jumbo jet passing very close by. We left the area at 2200 and went back to the hostel totally exhausted.

On Wednesday 2 January, we were joined by Fernmount,

**THE FIRE HAD  
DOUBLED BACK  
AND WAS HEADING  
UP THE RIDGE  
ABOUT TWO  
HUNDRED  
METRES AWAY**



WHEN PEOPLE  
WORK WELL  
TOGETHER, IN  
SUCH TRYING  
CONDITIONS, IT  
CERTAINLY MAKES  
BEING A MEMBER  
OF THE NSW  
RURAL FIRE  
SERVICE  
WORTHWHILE

Scotchman and Valery crews and tasked to patrol various roads where we extinguished many small outbreaks. A backburn was burning beautifully towards one area when, suddenly, a chopper dropped a great load of water onto it. The pilot probably heard what one crew leader was shouting! Not long after, we had a visit from Emergency Services Minister Bob Debus – a good morale booster. In the afternoon we sat at a holiday resort offering protection from a fire which was heading in that direction. Not long after, Urunga and several other local brigades were called to respond to the Bowling Club on fire. This was a very quick response and I think 75 tankers in the area would have also responded if they could.

As it turned out, the Club wasn't on fire – but the bush behind it was. The fire quickly crossed Bells Line of Road and raced towards a house. Once again we went to work and knocked the fire down with the help of our friends in the sky. Back to the holiday resort but things were quiet there so we headed back to our hostel.

Thursday 3 January, our last day in Kurrajong Heights saw us joined by Belinda Roche from Coffs Harbour Headquarters brigade. We sat at a house all day waiting for the fire to come. It broke containment lines further around the ridge and passed through to the main road. It was still heading towards us but was burning very slowly back into a sou-westerly wind. We believed the fire would threaten the house but probably after we completed our shift at 1930 hours.

At various times during the afternoon, my crew members and I walked down a trail to see how far the fire had burnt. It was travelling about 20 metres per hour which is very slow for a fire and, at this speed, was of little concern. At 1900 hours we noticed flames coming toward us so we radioed our commander. Suddenly, the wind changed to east/south-east and the entire ridge top burst into flames. Situation Code RED, urgent assistance required. The fire raced towards the house but with the Moonee tanker assisting, we knocked down this flank. The fire had gone around us on both sides, to the south back into the forest but to the north directly at three houses and an apple orchard.

*Continued over*



# HORNSBY FORWARD COMMUNICATIONS VEHICLE PROVIDES CRITICAL AIRBASE COMMUNICATIONS



Photographs by Adam Hollingworth



## HORNSBY FORWARD COMMUNICATIONS VEHICLE PROVIDES CRITICAL AIRBASE COMMUNICATIONS

Prior to the December/January fires the Hornsby Forward Communications Vehicle had not been used extensively for Airbase Communications, however starting in mid-December, providing Airbase Communications became the main role for our vehicle. The Forward Communications Vehicle is a standard Troopcarrier which has been fitted out with all radios that would be needed to improve Fireground communications – two GRN/PMR radios, Airband, Fireground, National Parks and UHF CB. The Forward Communications Vehicle has proven to be so effective that we would like to have it considered as a specialist communications vehicle to be used for the whole Central East Region.

In mid-December we were called out to assist overnight with Communications at the Picton Control Centre for the Wollondilly fires, however when the Operations Team realised how effective the Forward Communications Vehicle would be to provide Airbase Communications, they requested

that the Hornsby vehicle be tasked on the next day at The Oaks Airbase. The Forward Communications Vehicle proved to be so useful for Airbase Communications, that it was in constant use at Wollondilly for the next ten days !!!

After the major fire outbreaks around Sydney on Christmas Day, an Airbase was set up at Maroota on the northern outskirts of Sydney to provide a major refuelling base for helicopters. The Army set up a major transportable refuelling facility here and it was very effective in providing fast refuelling for the larger aircraft such as Sea Kings and the Aircrane. The photo shows the Aircrane taking on 3,000 litres of fuel. The Hornsby Forward Communications Vehicle was used to provide all Airbase Communications at Maroota until the Pennant Hills Park fire started on New Years Day.

Pennant Hills Park is surrounded by dense housing which is in direct contact with the bush, so it was essential to be able to direct

the water bombing exactly where and when it was needed – as well as stopping helicopters water-bombing onto backburns! Hornsby Forward Communications Vehicle was set up at the Macquarie University ovals which provided good radio coverage into the deep gulleys within Pennant Hills Park and Lane Cove National Park. The Forward Communications Vehicle's comprehensive radio capability played a critical role in providing communications between the Water-bombing helicopters, Air-attack supervisors, Fire Command, Fireground Leaders, District Air Ops and State Air Ops. Despite the exceptional rate of fire spread on the two days, the fact that no houses were lost and there were no serious injuries attests to how well all these different people worked together.

**Mike Richter**  
**Hornsby Communications**  
**Brigade**



Once again, assisted by Bonville, Moonee and Tweed Coast brigades and two helicopters, we were able to contain the fire before it impacted on the houses. Several other brigades arrived to lend a hand so we finished mopping up and returned to the pub for tea and then back to the hostel. Another very close call.

This was the end of our tour of duty, we could finally go back to the hostel and enjoy a few beers without having to worry about being called out. Another task force had arrived from Northern Region to relieve us, with Urunga Senior Deputy Captain Gary Keen taking over from me. A very relaxing night and a good rest was had by all before departing Kurrajong Heights by coach on Friday morning.

Several things will remain with me forever. The hospitality of the locals, especially Ron, Judith and

the crew from the hostel who not only treated us like royalty but presented the firefighters with a teddy bear on New Year's Eve. It's not every day that adults are given a teddy bear as a gift but this was a very special thank you from some very special people and one that will be treasured for all time. The crew from the Top Tucker Bistro waited up to 2200 hours on several occasions to ensure we were fed. The food was great and always served with a smile. The looks of despair when people were being evacuated. Terrified animals screaming and darting out of the bush not always to safety. The two Police Officers saluting us. The size and intensity of the fire. Most of all the camaraderie existing between all firefighters on the firefront which would probably only be second to those who have served their country in times of war. I salute the firefighters and officers from my



## WE SAT AT A HOUSE ALL DAY WAITING FOR THE FIRE TO COME



own brigade, other Bellingen brigades, Coffs and Tweed Districts and all RFS personnel for being such a great bunch of people. When people work well together, in such trying conditions, it certainly makes being a member of the NSW Rural Fire Service worthwhile.

Relief crews from Tweed, Coffs Harbour and Bellingen were continually re-tasked to Sydney with the last crews and tankers from Region North returning to their Districts on Sunday 13 January.

On a lighter note, I have also enclosed a photograph of the Putty Road "Ashes". When tasked to the Howes Swamp sector on 12 January, the Northern Region Task Force had to wait for briefing from the Sector Commander who was returning to the staging area from a recon. flight. What better way to pass the time than a game of cricket.

An old fence paling was found on the side of the road, quickly shaped with an axe; the ball was previously found at a house but the local dog had chewed a hole in it and a container of BFFF was used for the wicket. Full tosses were ordered as there wasn't much bounce in the wicket, nor the ball for that matter. It was great fun, enjoyed by players and spectators alike. Stumps were drawn when the chopper landed on the "field". The bat and ball have been mounted and hang proudly on the wall of the Urunga Rural Fire Station. It will certainly create a great deal of conversation. Hopefully, one day, it might be signed by the Aussie cricket team. (By the way, the Putty Road was closed at the time).

**Photos and article by  
Marty Thick**

## THE BAT AND BALL HAVE BEEN MOUNTED AND HANG PROUDLY ON THE WALL OF THE URUNGA RURAL FIRE STATION

## EXCUSES, EXCUSES...

BELOW IS AN EDITED TONGUE-IN-CHEEK E-MAIL I SENT TO FRIENDS IN SYDNEY AS AN EXCUSE FOR NOT LOOKING THEM UP...



*Photographs by Adam Hollingworth*

Pager sounded at 1615 Monday requesting drivers for retrieval of CFS vehicles in Sydney. Used up all my accrued spousal brownie-points by saying yes without consultation. Told to expect to be back early Wed am. & sit tight waiting confirmation. Paged again at 1650 & told to be at airport by 1830 and returning Wednesday sometime. Rush home from work, pack, rush back to airport. Ring friends in Sydney, ring work. Check in luggage (including mobile). Realise after bag disappeared that I'd forgotten to ring back captain & tell him I was going.

Waved to returning crews from second deployment including members of own Brigade.

At Pre-boarding briefing told we won't be leaving Katoomba till Wednesday, returning Thursday, due to damage & defects to many appliances. Bye-bye several months' future spousal brownie points plus bonus demerits due to no mobile to phone home to advise schedule change...

Arrived Sydney 2120 in a chartered 767 – just 58 assorted MFS, CFS & SES bods in a 250-seat plane. Half the crew were from the Blue Mountains and they treated us like royalty. Shine was only slightly dimmed when the cargo door wouldn't open. We offered to help, many present having extensive RCR experience. Qantas ground-staff declined our offer. Ingrates. We got our luggage a bit after 2200. Told that some of us might leave Katoomba Tuesday, the rest Wednesday. Rang wife to tell her the "good" news. On the plus side, a delay would allow opportunity to meet some RFS acquaintances known only via e-mail lists.

Then on to the bus for a quick? trip to Leura... except there's no such thing as a quick trip in Sydney. Everywhere is a cut lunch & water-bag away.

The driver was a character. By the 5-minute mark, it was clear that, in addition to being a good bloke, he was determined to awe us yokels from Adelaide

Village. Unfortunately, by the time he'd chucked in a few clangers like Sydney's population being 4 million hectares (a vacant lot, perhaps?), we yokels were less-than-awed.

He really, really wanted us to be impressed by the burnt-out areas – "...burnt out as far as the eye can see..." "Three inches!" called out some wag. I think that's when he twigged that we were viewing blackened areas through tinted windows in the dead of night.

We did however spot snippets of charcoal in the headlights climbing up from Penrith. And that is all that most of us saw of Sydney 2001/02 fires.

Arrived at Resort-style accommodation at midnight (near enough). We might only be ferry drivers, but the RFS seemed determined to look after us. Had dinner. Tried to sleep. Bed was ok, but my room-mate alternately had sleep apnoea & paroxysms of snoring... Over-came strong



temptation to use my pillow to make his apnoea permanent.

Passed on the 0600 round of golf. Took panadol to offset lack of sleep & staggered into the dining room around 0800 for a SUPERB breakfast. Stumbled out to the bus. Panadols not yet working.

Latest update - most vehicles serviced & ready to go so most of us are now leaving Tuesday... right now! Phoned friend to apologise for not being more sociable & missed the vehicle allocation briefing. Herded onto the bus & taken to Katoomba Council depot. Hoping I'm one of the Tuesday group because the Wednesday group aren't on the bus... Still waiting for the panadols to kick in.

Allocated Naracoorte 34 (whew!!!). Met co-driver Kym from Mt.Barker CFS. Tidied up locker contents, threw out rubbish & returned NSW RFS equipment. Issued with travel/convoy instructions, believed to have been written

by someone in Adelaide with firm ideas on how convoys of trucks should behave. Instructions universally acclaimed with raspberries, dissent, and "suggestions". Somewhat modified local variant adopted instead. Panadols still not a happening thing.

Discovered that the 6-speed Hino box is just as ordinary as the older five-speed one. Marginally better on gentle slopes IF you can guess the right soggy direction to push the gear-stick early enough. Panadols now irrelevant due to cabin, engine & road noise.

Also quickly become convinced that this truck is on drugs... wanders around like a mad cow! Unwavering attention required to keep it between the white lines.

Kym keeps looking at me, as if pitying my grossly inferior driving skills. (Ok, I'm not a gun driver, but I didn't think I was THIS bad..)

And then it was his turn to drive...

HE REALLY, REALLY WANTED US TO BE IMPRESSED BY THE BURNT-OUT AREAS



Photographs by Matt Black

STILL TRYING TO CONVINCE MYSELF THAT THIS TRIP REALLY HAPPENED, BUT WOULDN'T HAVE MISSED IT FOR QUIDS...



Photographs by Sean Davey

Kym cursing in frustration at difficulty of maintaining a straight line. Panadol's working at last! Later learnt that the tyres fitted to this particular truck are renowned for vagueness at speed on bitumen...

We worked out early on that the SA crews must have done some good work. Heaps of people in oncoming cars waving & flashing headlights etc. all the way to Taillem Bend. Felt a real shiver of pride at being associated with them. In a major PR coup for the CFS we managed not to hit any of the cars with wandering truck.

Ate lunch at Cowra Maccas. Not my first choice eatery. I prefer old-style cafes, but too hungry to care. Bolted it down. Later heard that the owner waived payment for 60-odd meals as a "thankyou" gesture to SA fire-fighters. Now feeling so wracked with guilt at declaiming Macca's food that I will be forever condemned to stop at THAT MacDonald's.

Had the satisfaction of tootling past 2 grass fires without even offering to help. Waved in a friendly fashion to local crews & cockies in attendance, and pretended not to be driving a rural fire appliance (both fires were clearly under control).

Stopped overnight at Hay. Minor drama when another crew found you can't quite drive 430km in the early series Hino on a single tank. 427.5km is now accurately confirmed as maximum range possible with smaller tank fitted to those trucks.

On the lighter side, we met some lads who had no idea of why 20-something SA fire vehicles were passing through Hay. Wanted to know where the fire was. Not sure if they'd heard of Sydney either.

Had a most pleasant & convivial evening swapping yarns with other drivers from MFS, SES & CFS, and chatting-up the motel staff. Slept the sleep of the dead and nearly missed breakfast & the truck-collection run to the Council depot. One of the last vehicles to depart Hay. In the morning sun, the convoy of CFS vehicles stretching out in front of us across the Hay Plain was an inspiring sight.

Lunch at Pinnaroo courtesy of the Salvo's, shook hands with CEO's of MFS, CFS & SES who assured us that our service had been important. Still feels some what fraudulent compared with effort put in by fire-fighting predecessors.

Swapped to Mawson Tanker (a Scania) for a dream-like cruise home, complete with air-conditioning & decent radio. Arrived Kangarilla 48hrs the minute after initial pager call. Advised Kanga Captain Ken of a couple of little problems I'd noticed, and gleefully accepted a lift home.

Still trying to convince myself that this trip really happened, but wouldn't have missed it for quids...

Note: CFS vehicle designations - a "tanker" is a bulk water tanker, typically 9000-12000L. A "34" is a 3000L 4WD appliance.

**Alan Julian**  
**Cherry Gardens CFS**





# Where there's fire there's Hatz ...

It's not only smoke that accompanies fires. For years now Hatz diesel engines have performed without problems at major fires around Australia; pumping water quietly, efficiently and reliably under extreme conditions. There are now over 2000 Australian fire fighting units which are Hatz equipped to perform under pressure.



## Look at the big advantages of Hatz Power Packs

- No vapour locks • Lower exhaust temperatures
- Less radio interference • No radiator failures
- Minimal noise levels • Reliable starting
- Australia wide parts and service

For further details and demonstrations contact:  
**HATZ AUSTRALIA PTY LTD**

A.B.N. 98 002 693 323

Telephone: (02) 9743 8288 or free call 1800 025 049 • Fax: (02) 9743 8000

**Hatz Diesel engines have been purchased for bush fire fighting applications by:**

- South Australian Country Fire Service (SA CFS) • Victorian Country Fire Authority (CFA) • NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) • Baulkham Hills Shire Council (NSW) • Sutherland Shire Council (NSW) • Blue Mountains Shire Council (NSW) • ACT Fire Brigade • Tasmanian Fire Service • State Electricity Commission of Victoria • NSW Forestry Commission • Queensland Fire Service • WA Bush Fire Board



## CHRISTMAS FIRES 2001 COMMEMORATIVE EDITION



**BUSHFIRE BULLETIN**  
COMMEMORATIVE EDITION  
CHRISTMAS FIRES 2001

**PUBLISHER** NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE  
**EDITORS** JOHN WINTER/MICHAEL WATTS  
**ADVERTISING SALES** NICHOLE INGRAM  
**DESIGN** VERSA ([WWW.VERSACREATIVE.COM.AU](http://WWW.VERSACREATIVE.COM.AU))

SUBSCRIPTION – SEE PAGE 127

UNIT 3 175-179  
JAMES RUSE DRIVE  
ROSEHILL NSW, 2142  
LOCKED MAIL BAG 17  
GRANVILLE NSW 2142  
**TELEPHONE** (02) 9684 4411  
**FACSIMILE** (02) 9638 4671