

**02**

One day of wind

**14**

Mogo Hot Fire training facility

**17**

50 years of firefighting and fun - Tuncurry

**32**

Training drills using multiple trucks

**36**

RFS goes to Mattara

# BUSHFIREbulletin

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# CONTENTS

**Publisher**  
NSW Rural Fire Service

**Editorial Team**  
Michael Watts, Meeka Bailey,  
Murray Hillan, Matt Schroder,  
Belinda Landry, Rebel Talbert,  
Cameron Wade

**Production/Advertising Coordinator**  
Steve Byers

**Graphic Design/Art Production**  
Carillon Graphic Communications

**Cover photo**  
By Steve Brown, Forests NSW.  
Aircraft and ground crews work together  
on the Big Hill Fire, Wingecarribee.

## 01 FOREWORD

## 02 INCIDENTS

- 02 One day of wind
- 06 Tooma Dam fire
- 08 Wakehurst Parkway fire
- 09 Weir wipeout
- 10 Billys fire in billygoat country
- 12 Woolwash fire
- 13 Middle Dural house fire
- 14 Coolatai grass feeds Figtree fire
- 15 Flame and explosions from truck alight close Olympic Highway
- 15 Shops saved as Diggers Rest Hotel is gutted
- 16 100 workers evacuated from large factory fire
- 16 Big Hill Wollondilly River fire
- 17 Bathurst house
- 17 Helicopter crash
- 17 Falling trees test firefighting crews

## 18 NEWS

- 18 Volunteers assist with Police forensics course
- 20 Free National Park pass
- 20 Blayney black spot treated
- 20 New Brigade Constitution Guideline now available
- 21 Comments invited
- 21 Do not be without power when the heat is on
- 21 Mogo Hot Fire Training facility
- 22 700 Bushfire Bulletin readers have their say
- 22 Is your head on straight?
- 22 Insurance company assists fire investigation unit
- 23 News notes

02



32



18



24



48

## 24 SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

- 24 Fifty years of firefighting and fun – Tuncurry
- 26 Maintaining volunteer employee-employer relations
- 27 Office in profile - Pat Smith
- 27 Volunteers attend Malaysian fire and rescue training
- 28 New station for Gerringong
- 28 Walgett volunteers presented with Commissioner's Commendations
- 28 Gosford volunteers celebrated
- 30 The story of the Bulga ghost

## 32 TRAINING

- 32 Training drills using multiple trucks
- 34 Structurally sound scenario
- 35 House alight
- 36 RFS self-sufficient in air attack training
- 38 Training tailored for big machines and big brigade areas
- 39 Trainers gain confidence delivering cadet program
- 40 Training simulates task force situation
- 41 Winch recertification
- 42 Gilbert & Roach Isuzu RFS State Championships - Barooga

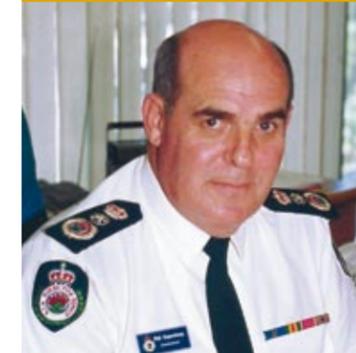
## 48 COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION

- 48 Public information peaks
- 51 Online information hits high
- 52 Hot spots help fire planning
- 53 RFS goes solo at Mattara
- 53 Don't flee late, research backs RFS position on stay or go
- 54 RFS Open Day September 2006

The views expressed in articles in the Bushfire Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the views of the policies of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

01

# FOREWORD



The current season has all the hallmarks of one which is likely to be both serious and protracted.

Already there have been numerous "campaign" events. Burratorang, Putty, Wellington, Mudgee, Wollemi, Coonabarabran, Narrabri, Blue Mountains, Wingecarribee, Forbes, Molong, Bathurst, Oberon, just to name a few. Fire behaviour has been consistent with the drought conditions prevailing throughout much of the State.

Difficult conditions notwithstanding, RFS volunteers and staff have done a wonderful job in containing many fires and limiting loss of property to very low levels. Support given to the firefighting effort by National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Fire Brigades, Forests NSW and other agencies is acknowledged.

Whilst I hope it is not the case, I suspect the year will draw to a close with many firefighters and staff engaged in operations. In some cases RFS volunteers will be away from home unable to enjoy family and friends at a time when most others relax and enjoy the festive season. Such is the nature of our business.

The debt owed our volunteer firefighters is not to be underestimated and their efforts and sacrifice ought never be taken for granted. As I get around the countryside, even after almost 40 years with our organisation, I still marvel at the selflessness, commitment, professionalism and dedication of RFS members.

To all those who have given so much during this year, firefighters, staff at all levels, chaplains, trainers, cooks, communicators, secretaries, presidents, people in the air, people on the ground, I say thank you for another year of rendering communities far safer than they would be without you.

Thanks also to the senior executive team with very difficult jobs and rarely mentioned.

A joyous Christmas and festive season is my wish for you all.

Phil Koperberg AO AFSM BEM  
Commissioner

# OUR VALUES UNDERPIN ALL OUR ACTIONS

# INCIDENTS

## ONE DAY OF WIND

**E**xtrême wind conditions with gusts around 100kph from the northwest caused havoc on Sunday 24 September, fanning fires which became the first Section 44 declarations for the 2006-2007 fire season.

At 33.6 degrees celcius it was the fourth hottest September day on record, according to the Bureau of Meteorology. Homes were destroyed near Picton (Wollondilly), Oakville and Cattai (Hawkesbury Baukham Hills), with fire threatening more properties at Burrill Lake (Shoalhaven) and Red Head (Lake Macquarie).

Hundreds of firefighters were in property protection mode during the extreme weather event, with few opportunities for containment as strong winds downed power lines blacking out thousands of homes, lifted roofs, felled trees and severely limited firefighting efforts. Forty-six new incidents were reported during the day.

Crews often had to deal with flying debris and the complications that electricity outages bring to communications. A colder calmer front followed that evening and the next day, bringing relief for firefighters and communities.

### Wollondilly Section 44

Clashing powerlines are thought to have started a fire in Nolans Rd, Lakesland, west of Picton, which destroyed a number of properties including the home of an RFS volunteer firefighter who went on to protect other property after his home succumbed to flames.

### Strong winds cause havoc

Crews were called to two running fires as the winds struck after midday. The fire in Nolans Rd was moving towards Oakdale, jumping Barkers Lodge Rd. Another fire in Thirlmere Lakes National Park posed concerns that it might spread across East Parade to Couridjah village.



Several properties were lost in the Wollondilly fire

## OVER 320 FIREFIGHTERS FROM RFS, NPWS AND NSW FIRE BRIGADES IN 50 APPLIANCES CONCENTRATED ON FOLLOWING THE RAPIDLY SPOTTING FIRES AND PROTECTING PROPERTIES

### 4 properties lost in 4 hours

Within the first four hours four properties were lost in Nolans Rd, Aitkens Rd, Barkers Lodge Rd and in Nangarin Estate before relief came with an easterly change that reversed fire spread.

Crews could then tackle the blazes at 1000ha with extensive blacking out, mop up and patrol of the Lakesland fire and backburning at Thirlmere Lakes along the southeast edge with the favourable overnight conditions.

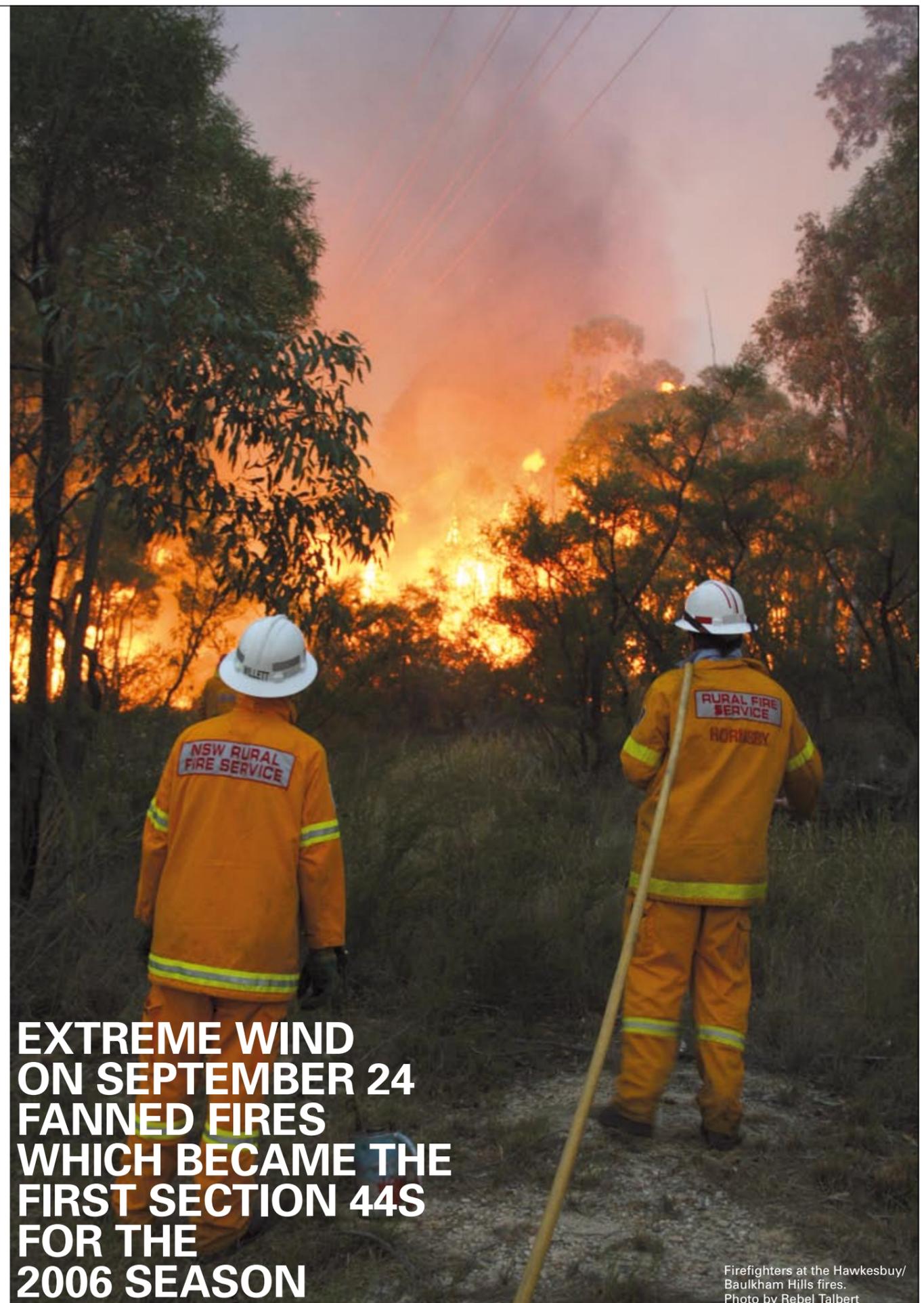
Local crews were backed up by two task forces the next morning. Crew strengths were reduced to 150 firefighters given the mild conditions. Concerns continued that

the Thirlmere Lakes fire could progress into Blue Gum Creek and Couridjah, while the Lakesland fire remained active within containment lines around Lyons Rd with access difficult for ground crews. Fire behaviour was generally predictable with low flame heights and spread enabling direct attack in many places.

Crews continued mop up and patrol with the fire declared contained the following morning. Patrolling continued, particularly for the Thirlmere Lakes National Park by NPWS crews, until 6 November. The fires had burnt 430ha of national park and 800ha of private property.

### Community interest in fire safety education

Interest in receiving fire safety education increased in the Wollondilly area following these fires with requests to RFS Community Educators to address community groups and schools. The team conducted a series of displays in local shopping centres following the fires to capitalise on community interest.



## EXTREME WIND ON SEPTEMBER 24 FANNED FIRES WHICH BECAME THE FIRST SECTION 44S FOR THE 2006 SEASON

Firefighters at the Hawkesbury/Baukham Hills fires. Photo by Rebel Talbert

RFS Firefighters work to contain fires in the Hawkesbury/Baulkham Hills area.  
Photo by Rebel Talbert



**Hawkesbury / Baulkham Hills Section 44**  
Over 300 firefighters were tasked to property protection and containment of two fires that swept through Oakville and Maroota South, destroying two homes in strong winds.

Oakville Rural Fire Brigade and NPWS personnel based at Scheyville National Park responded at around 1300hr to a fire at Dormitory Hill Rd, Oakville.

### Thick smoke hampers efforts

The fire ran quickly in grass towards Midson Rd. This brought properties on the east side of Midson Rd under threat. Crews found the smoky conditions difficult to operate in as they protected property. The thick smoke hampered firefighters' attempts to ascertain the fire's exact spread.

### FIREFIGHTERS NOTICED A HOUSE WITH SMOKE ISSUING FROM IT CLOSE TO DORMITORY HILL RD WHICH WAS SUBJECT TO CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE BEFORE BEING EXTINGUISHED

The fire continued to impact on Midson Rd as it spread southerly through Scheyville National Park. As smoke abated periodically crews observed a further property on Midson Rd issuing smoke. Fire had taken hold in the roof causing it to collapse and destroy the home.

Hawkesbury crews were joined by Baulkham Hills volunteers to contain the fire largely within the boundaries of the park. Spot fires that occurred on the eastern side of Midson Rd during the afternoon were successfully contained.

### Spot fire burns for 500m

One spot fire landed about 500m across Boundary Rd, Baulkham Hills Shire into grassland and took off further east. It ran for about 500m, impacting on property fences and igloo structures before being contained with the assistance of NSWFB. Strike Teams from RFS lower Blue Mountains and Cumberland were also assisting local crews.

At about 1400hr another fire was reported in the area of Portland Head on the western side of the Hawkesbury River in Hawkesbury Shire. This fire developed fairly quickly once again in extreme winds, and ran towards the river crossing into Baulkham Hills at Maroota South.

The fire took hold here and ran towards Wisemans Ferry Rd in the vicinity of Charcoal Rd. Properties located on the river were impacted early in the event and a property was lost on Cheesmans Rd, Cattai.

### Fire grows in intensity

Baulkham Hills firefighters responded with a Hornsby Task Force. Crew strengths were quickly increased to a second task force as the fire spread and grew in intensity. The fire eventually impacted on Wisemans Ferry Rd where a large machinery shed was destroyed.

With the Scheyville National Park fire contained, the lower Blue Mountains and Cumberland firefighters were sent on with Baulkham Hills vehicles to contain the fire along the southeastern side of Wisemans Ferry Rd, Cheesmans Rd and a fire trail to the north of Charcoal Rd. Hawkesbury brigades continued working on the western side of the river to minimise the spread towards Sackville.

Backburning was conducted on both sides of the river to achieve containment.



### Fire contained

By 2300hr the fire was relatively contained. Out of area crews were stood down and Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury firefighters continued patrolling during the evening. Aerial support the next morning enabled 55 firefighters to clear up the edge on the southeastern flank in Baulkham Hills to completely contain the fire.

Hawkesbury and National Parks crews continued to patrol at Scheyville until 4 October 2006 with the total burnt area at 181ha. The Charcoal Rd fire was patrolled until 28 September 2006 and had burnt 552ha (140ha in Hawkesbury and 412ha in Baulkham Hills).

### Shoalhaven

Shoalhaven RFS received a 000 call advising of bush alight at Kings Point at 1026hr. Crews from Lake Conjola, Milton and Tabourie RFBs and NSW Fire Brigades responded.

The fire spread rapidly, threatening the Ulladulla Sewage Treatment Plant and Kings Point before crossing Kings Point Road and heading to the Princes Highway.

Properties were being threatened at Burrill Lake and along the Princes Highway with crews in property protection mode from Canberra Crescent, Burrill Lake, to Princes Highway and the Ulladulla Industrial Estate.

### BY 1130HR THE FIRE WAS 10HA WITH 30 FIREFIGHTERS IN 10 TANKERS PROTECTING PROPERTY

Aerial photograph reveals how close the fire came to properties at Burrill Lake.  
Photo by Sean Bremner, Cambewarra RFB



1000ha was burnt in the Lake Macquarie Redhead Fire.  
Photo by Insp. Shane Geerin.

The fire had the potential to impact the Beach Haven Tourist Park on the eastern side of the Princes Highway.

### Properties threatened

The fire was impacting on the Princes Highway by 1200hr spotting across the highway into bushland and threatening the Beach Haven Caravan Park. The fire was also expected to burn northeasterly to South Ulladulla with threats to Racecourse Beach Caravan Park, residential streets, sports facilities and West Ulladulla TAFE campus. The Princes Highway remained closed for several hours into the afternoon.

### 100 firefighters & 18 tankers

Crews and the area burnt continued to grow with 100 RFS in 18 tankers, 12 NSW Fire Brigades firefighters in three appliances and a NPWS crew working on the 280ha fire by 1300hr. RFS crews from Eurobodalla provided further assistance in the afternoon and evening.

A helicopter was in support, but due to the weather conditions was restricted to reconnaissance. Control lines were proposed for the western side of Ulladulla from Blackburn Rd to Deering St, then to the western end of Green St and South Pacific Crescent.

### Firefighters gain control

With the fire contained on the southern edge by mid afternoon, mop up and patrol activities were conducted through King's Point and Burrill Lake. By 1830hr firefighters were gaining control with the fire at 292ha. Backburning began at 1930hr and continued into the next day. The fire was contained and patrolled the next day and declared out on 26 September.

**Lake Macquarie Section 44**  
RFS personnel assisted NSW Fire Brigades

with a fire at Redhead that started at about 1000hr and threatened property along Oakdale, Redhead, Kalaroo and Groves Rds.

A total of 100 firefighters in eight RFS tankers and seven NSWFB appliances worked on the incident which was declared a Section 44. The fire burnt 1000ha.

### Strong winds and high temps challenging

A number of fires started in NSWFB area behind a nursery at Oakdale Rd and spread to sandy, heath vegetation that was difficult and in some cases impossible to access. The difficult topography included rehabilitated sand mining and garbage tip areas which challenged firefighters along with high temperatures and strong winds.

### Retirement village residents affected

The fire progressed to residential and light industrial areas of Redhead as well as a retirement village in the area. No evacuations were called but some residents of the retirement village relocated due to smoke and high temperatures. Crews concentrated on property protection as the first priority and then on backburning to achieve containment.

### Aircraft a huge advantage

Aerial reconnaissance provided a major advantage to operations as aircraft helped to identify where the fires were in order to place resources. While waterbombing also assisted it was the reconnaissance tasks of aircraft that really gave ground crews and incident managers the upper hand. A NSWFB helicopter and several RFS helicopters were used.

### Football club offers facilities

A command post was established a Lyles Oval, Redhead where the local football club made their canteen and facilities available. The Incident Management Team operated from Lake Macquarie Fire Control Centre.

### Backburning begins

The fire reached the back of properties but these were successfully defended by firefighters as well as being protected by firebreaks. A large amount of backburning was undertaken during the evening as conditions eased, with firefighters concerned the predicted southerly change would cause problems.

Progress of the change was monitored by State Operations and RFS Fire Control Centres along the NSW coast. Backburning was completed and containment achieved before the southerly hit.

### HEAT STRESS AND SPIDER BITES WERE EXPERIENCED BY SOME FIREFIGHTERS DURING THE OPERATION

Most resources finished before midnight and NSWFB continued to patrol with a couple of units during the evening and next day.

Crews also worked on two other fire outbreaks during the day. Firefighters from RFS and NSWFB protected coal stockpiles at Stockton Colliery, Taralba and also quickly contained a fire at Tingera Hts.

Agency representatives discuss strategies for the Tooma Dam Fire in the field.  
Photo by Supt. Ian Stewart



## TOOMA DAM FIRE

Remote terrain tested firefighters' skills and strategies when a camp fire escaped from the banks of Tooma Dam about 15km northwest of Khancoban in Tumbarumba Shire on 9 October 2006, spreading in Kosciusko National Park.

Firefighters were also working on a blaze near Shannons Flat 20km north of Cooma, and another 10km north of Jindabyne Dam.

### Day 1 – Monday 9 October 2006

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) firefighters responded to the escaped fire and a helicopter was deployed for air observation to assist in determining its specific location and spread.

### Day 2 – Tuesday 10 October 2006

About 20 NPWS personnel continued to work on the isolated fire along with dozers establishing control lines and direct attack was made by ground crews along with helicopters bucketing.

Increased fire behaviour on the northern flank made it difficult for the dozer to establish the control line. Crews fell back to Dargals fire trail with the fire at about 85ha by 1430hr.

Firefighters backburned as the 1.5m flames from the firefront approached the trail, proposing a wetline to the north on a creek near Patons Hut to the reservoir.

## THE FIRE WAS OVER 150HA BY 1630HR AND SPREADING TO REACH 660HA OVER THE FOLLOWING DAY

While no assets were directly threatened, the strategies aimed to protect Snowy Hydro facilities 3.5km north of the fire along with environmentally significant areas while preparing for the limited possibility of fire spreading to remote rural properties.

### Day 3 – Wednesday 11 October 2006

The fire broke containment lines during the afternoon, spotting over Dargal fire trail and moving to the Tooma to Cabramurra Rd under southwesterly winds, passing Patons Hut on the Toolong Plain.

With weather conditions and fire activity increasing NPWS resources increased and RFS crews were called in to assist.

## PROTECTION OF SNOWY HYDRO ASSETS AND BACKBURNING FROM CABRAMURRA RD AHEAD OF THE FRONT WERE THE KEY STRATEGIES

Crews hoped to hold the fire east of the Round Mountain trail and to the north on the Tooma to Cabramurra Rd.

### Bushwalkers out of harm's way

NPWS officers were working on removing bushwalkers from the Round Mountain fire trail. A Section 44 declaration was made during the afternoon. NPWS crews worked on the fire overnight, along with a grader and dozer preparing trails for containment strategies. Increased RFS crews were sourced for the following day.

### Day 4 – Thursday 12 October 2006

Cold conditions overnight caused fire activity to reduce. In difficult, remote territory, planning containment lines and gathering resources was the focus.



## Working together

Twenty five RFS and 24 NPWS firefighters were tasked to the fire. RFS crews were tasked to Cabramurra Rd. NPWS worked on the western side supporting heavy machinery. Four aircraft were tasked to reconnaissance and waterbombing. All tourists were successfully evacuated.

The fire spread in an easterly direction and reached about 800ha with no damage to assets, burning in country previously burnt in the 2002-2003 fires. Crews concentrated on containment strategies on the western front in the Snakey Plains area.

## A SPOTOVER AT 1400HR ON THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE DAM WAS BOMBED BY AIRCRAFT AND LIMITED TO 6HA

NPWS crews mopped up this area overnight.

A new fire started at the northern end of Snowy Plain burning about 10ha and was brought under control by local crews and a dozer.

### Day 5 – Friday 13 October 2006

Fire activity was benign overnight but high winds during the morning proved to be problematic. Crews were concentrating on establishing control lines from These Village fire trail to Tooma Rd with RFS continuing to patrol Cabramurra Rd. NPWS Remote Area Firefighting Team mopped up the spotover on the western side of the dam.

## Fire breaks containment lines

The firefront was located around Musical Hill and heading east with flame heights of 3m in some areas during the early afternoon. The fire took a significant southeasterly run with a finger of fire of about 1km crossing the Round Mountain Fire Trail containment line and challenging the 60 firefighters on the ground. Firefighters were airlifted to the western front.

## THE FIRE WAS NOW LOCATED NEAR THE TUMUT RIVER IN OPEN GRASS AND WAS ESTIMATED TO BE 2600HA

Seven helicopters were now working on the fire. The Cabramurra to Khancoban Rd closed from 2000hr due to fire and tanker activity. Visitors were advised to stay clear of the Snowy Plain and Jagungal Mountain areas due to concerns the fire could spread there.

The fire was divided into western and eastern divisions with three new sectors established in the eastern division. Further heavy plant were located to strengthen fallback lines overnight on the Grey Mare fire trail and Snowy Plains fire trail in the eastern division.

### Day 6 - Saturday 14 October 2006

The fire did not cross the Tumut River overnight but continued to burn and widen along Toolong Range.

## THE DAY'S OBJECTIVE WAS TO ENSURE THE FIRE DID NOT ESCAPE IDENTIFIED CONTAINMENT LINES BETWEEN THESE VILLAGE FIRE TRAIL AND TOOMA RD

Road closures continued and plant continued fire trail work to consolidate containment lines.

### Spotfire reignites

The spotfire on the western side of the dam reignited under heavy winds and was being suppressed by NPWS crews and waterbombing aircraft. Rain on the fire ground during the afternoon reduced fire activity significantly and crews were stood down overnight. The burnt area was estimated at 3000ha.

### Day 7 – Sunday 15 October 2006

With fire activity benign due to overnight rain of between 4mm and 14mm RFS crews were stood down and 20 NPWS firefighters continued to work on the fireground in 10 strikers.

Consideration was given to trails closer to the fire edge and use of Tumut River for containment lines as well as direct attack where possible, but given the 30km fire edge this would prove difficult. Mop and patrol of the 4700ha fire proceeded and the fire was declared contained at 1430hr.

### Day 8 – Monday 16 October 2006

Reconnaissance showed no active edge on the fireground with only some smoking timber inside the lines. NPWS crews continued to work on the fire with concerns dead alpine ash and other tree species could reignite within containment lines as the day heated up.

## SOME FIRE ACTIVITY WAS REPORTED ON THE SOUTH WESTERN FLANK DURING THE AFTERNOON

Three fire investigators were assigned to confirm the cause and origin of the fire and a rehabilitation task force was set up to plan trail stabilisation work.

### Days 9 to 15 – 17 to 23 October 2006

NPWS crews were reduced to 11 firefighters. The fire was reduced to patrol status on 18 October due to limited fire activity and declared out on 23 October at 4707ha.

Top: The fire burnt over 4700ha.  
Photo by Supt. Ian Stewart

Strong winds pushed a fire that started in Cromer over the Wakehurst Parkway. Photo by John Winter, Warringah Pittwater Headquarters RFB.



## WAKEHURST PARKWAY FIRE – WARRINGAH

By Meeka Bailey, RFS Media Officer and George Sheppard, RFS Warringah Pittwater CSO.

Fire started on a private property in Cromer at about 1315hr on Sunday 8 October 2006 and spread under strong southeasterly winds towards to the NSW Academy of Sport about 1km to the north.

As it was a Sunday a large number of bush walkers and mountain bike riders were using the trails in the affected bushland, with people in the direct path of the fire.

### People and property in danger

Due to the threat to life and the potential to threaten multiple assets at the NSW Sports Academy, including a motel, dormitories, homes and training facilities along with a major road, the Wakehurst Parkway, the RFS and NSW Fire Brigades crews were responded in large numbers. There were concerns that if the fire crossed the Wakehurst Parkway to the north it could threaten properties in the Elanora Heights and Ingleside areas.

#### Day 1 – Sunday 8 October 2006

The local Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) at Beacon Hill was patrolling a hazard reduction from days earlier when they observed the fire start on the ridge further north in Cromer.

They responded immediately with their Cat 1 and Cat 7 arriving minutes later and began protecting homes directly under threat. They were soon supported by another Cat 1 and a pumper from the NSWFB Dee Why.

### THEY WERE SUCCESSFUL IN PROTECTING THE HOMES IMMEDIATELY UNDER THREAT BUT WERE UNABLE TO STOP THE PROGRESS OF THE FIRE NORTHWARDS

The fire covered the first kilometre in about 30 minutes. A Section 44 was declared by 1430hr and at this stage there was a total of 95 RFS and 24 NSWFB firefighters in 18 tankers and six pumpers on scene with the fire now well over 50ha. They were also supported by three helicopters.

### Bushwalk goes wrong

Firefighters managed to safely evacuate a group of 18 elderly bushwalkers who were threatened by the spreading fire and the Police used a bus to transport them from the area.

### TWO RFS STRIKE TEAMS WERE DISPATCHED, ONE FROM HORNSBY AND ONE FROM BAULKHAM HILLS, TO ASSIST WITH THE CONTAINMENT OF THE FIRE

By 1600hr conditions had slightly improved but the fire had the potential to threaten properties in Oxford Falls, Cromer, Beacon Hill, Ingleside, and Elanora Heights. The strategy was to contain the fire east and south of the Wakehurst Parkway while establishing a containment line from Cromer north to the Academy, reducing its impact on property.

### Avoiding a major road closure

Reopening the Wakehurst Parkway on Monday morning was a key concern for firefighters as it is one of only three roads that feed the Northern Beaches. Crew numbers were increased to ensure enough resources were available for the evening's work.

By 2100hr containment of the eastern edge of the fire and backburning around the buildings in the Academy was completed. As conditions eased into the night, backburning started around properties in Cromer, along the Wakehurst Parkway and along a handtool trail in the south to lock in the fire.

### Spotfire causes further problems

At about 2130hr a spotfire started almost 1km to the north of the Wakehurst Parkway and an additional eight local units were deployed into difficult country to directly control it. An additional strike team from

Hornsby was also deployed to enhance the backburning operation around the main fire while the spotfire was being extinguished.

Concerns for threats now included the Garrigal National Park. By midnight there were over 170 RFS and 24 NSWFB firefighters in 33 tankers and six pumpers on scene.

#### Day 2 – Monday 9 October 2006

Crew numbers were reduced during the early morning, with 30 RFS firefighters in five tankers patrolling. By 0600hr backburning was completed, but its effectiveness had been hampered by some light rain during the night. The spotfire had been extinguished by direct attack. Crews worked with the RTA to make the Wakehurst Parkway safe from dangerous trees and the road was reopened at around 0800hr.

Because the backburn depth, at about 10m, was very thin in area along the Wakehurst Parkway, fire activity increased and the road was soon closed to the public. Reconnaissance indicated the fire was 145ha and that a large area was unburnt with active fire running into it.

The day's objectives were to maintain the fire within containment lines and to undertake aerial incendiary drops to burn out the remaining area from north to south using contour ignition. Patrolling and mop up would continue.

### Helicopters brought in to help

The Wakehurst Parkway remained closed due to continued containment work and dangerous trees. Three helicopters were tasked for the day, one for incendiary drops and two for waterbombing. National Parks and Wildlife Service firefighters joined operations with four personnel and two strikers.



Aerial incendiary runs started at 1130hr and were 80 per cent complete by 1630hr with the burnt area extending to 210ha. The risk of escape to the north was reduced as aerial backburning progressed.

Patrol of the evening spotfire continued with crews using hand tools to ensure it was extinguished.

## THE WAKEHURST PARKWAY REMAINED CLOSED BUT LOOKED LIKELY TO OPEN FOR PEAK HOUR TRAFFIC THE NEXT MORNING

Aircraft were stood down at 1800hr. The fire was 249ha at 2030hr with most of the area within containment lines burnt. Some active fire was identified in small unburnt pockets and the potential for trees to fall across the Parkway remained.

Two RFS tankers and one RFS striker continued mop up and patrol during the evening.

#### Day 3 – Tuesday 10 October 2006

The Wakehurst Parkway reopened at by 0730hr following RTA inspection.

Aerial reconnaissance at 0900hr showed most of the area within containment lines had been burnt with unburnt pockets expected to continue burning throughout the day.

## TREES SHOWED SIGNS OF CANDLING AND FALLING PARTICULARLY BEHIND THE SPORTS ACADEMY AND IN THE MIDDLE CREEK AND MEATWORKS AREA

The fire was declared contained at 1200hr and 20 RFS firefighters in four tankers and one striker continued mop up and patrol during the afternoon.

#### Day 4 – Wednesday 11 October 2006

The fire, at 257ha, was reduced to patrol status with one RFS striker patrolling three times a day until it was declared out at 1030hr Monday 16 October 2006.



The Wakehurst Parkway fire on 10 October 2006.

## WEIR WIPE OUT

RFS Sutherland Fire Prevention Crew and Loftus Rural Fire Brigade attended a call to a truck in the water at Audley Weir in the Royal National Park.

### IT IS LIKELY THE TRUCK'S BRAKES FAILED GOING DOWN A STEEP HILL, CAUSING THE TRUCK TO ROLL ON A CORNER

The driver was transported to hospital and the RFS in conjunction with NSW Fire Brigades Sutherland and Hazmat from Chullora attempted to control the diesel and oil in the Port Hacking River.

Photo by Anthony Gray, RFS Sutherland District Works Supervisor



## BILLYS FIRE IN BILLYGOAT COUNTRY

**B**illys Fire ran in rugged forest and grazing country in the Mt Rankin area, challenging firefighters for over two weeks due to difficult terrain and threats to hobby farms.

### Day 1 - 19 October 2006

RFS crews responded to a fire in grass and bushland in the Mt Rankin area about 15km northwest of Bathurst at about 1100hr.

Ground crews could not access the fire due to the steep north-south running ridges and valleys so three aircraft were tasked

with direct attack as strategies were being developed for containment. A large plume of smoke was visible from Orange and Bathurst and 14 RFS firefighters in four tankers were tasked to the fire which had burnt about 25ha.

### AS THE AFTERNOON PROGRESSED THE FIRE SPREAD TO 100HA AND THERE WERE CONCERNS FOR PROPERTIES EAST OF MT RANKIN AS WEATHER CONDITIONS DETERIORATED

Crew strengths increased with 40 firefighters on scene.

By 1430hr the fire reached 150ha and crews were falling back to property protection for numerous 25ha rural residences.

### 100 firefighters & 22 tankers

Further brigades were responded, and support for property protection was provided by NSW Fire Brigades, to total 100 firefighters in 22 tankers. Six fixed wing aircraft and four helicopters were tasked to the fire. Fire behaviour included very high flame heights and spotting of 300 - 400m in timbered country. Fire operations concentrated on property protection around houses and sheds. Direct attack was only possible in open grassland areas.

### BY 1630HR THE FIRE HAD BURNT 400HA AND WAS IMPACTING ON PROPERTIES EAST OF MT RANKIN BUT WAS STILL NOT READILY ACCESSIBLE BY GROUND CREWS

Properties in the Green Gully Road and Bryars Road area were threatened.

A Section 44 declaration was made and by 2130hrs the fire had burnt 718ha.

### Weather conditions ease

With easing evening conditions crew strengths were reduced to 17 tankers from 2400hr. While weather conditions were expected to ease the following day there continued to be concerns for property in the Mount Rankin Road, Macgregors Lane, Freemantle Road and Duramana Road areas during the day. After a wind change pressure was expected in the Duramana Road and Bridle Track areas.

### Day 2 - 20 October 2006

Residents in the Mount Rankin area were advised to remain with their properties unless directed otherwise by emergency services personnel and to continue to monitor their properties in case of ember attack.

A community meeting was arranged to be held at Eglinton Hall at 1200hr to keep residents in the area informed of the situation. Seven heavy plant were in the field working on containment lines.

### More properties threatened

As expected the fire once again threatened properties, this time to the north of Mt Rankin. A total of 140 firefighters were in the field from RFS, NSWFB and Forests NSW in 31 tankers. Aircraft included five fixed wing and four helicopters for continued waterbombing in difficult country.

The fire had impacted on about 10km of fencing and spread to 980ha.



### BY MIDDAY A SOUTHERLY CHANGE BROUGHT LIGHT RAIN, REDUCING FIRE ACTIVITY AND GIVING FIREFIGHTERS THE UPPER HAND FOR PROPERTY PROTECTION BUT HAMPERING BACKBURNING OPERATIONS PLANNED FOR THE EVENING

Dozers and graders continued to create mineral earth breaks in front of the fire and local crews patrolled during the evening. The fire was 1016ha. Ground crews were deployed to hot spots and in support of machinery.

Evening crews were able to complete a new containment line in Waltham Sector to the north east to contain the fire to a smaller area than first anticipated due to subdued overnight fire activity. Other ground crews conducted mop up and patrol.

### Day 3 - 21 October 2006

Crews hoped to capitalise on solid overnight work and reduced fire activity to conduct backburning to consolidate perimeter trails and directly attack hotspots following reconnaissance.

Ground crews ensured properties within the proposed burn areas were prepared and stock moved where required. Over 100 firefighters were tasked.

### Helicopters fight hotspots

As backburning progressed during the afternoon crews remained vigilant for possible spotovers in difficult wind conditions with westerly gusts of 35kph. Helicopters bucketed hotspots where required. The fire was 1070ha.

### DURING THE LATE AFTERNOON MULTIPLE SPOTOVERS OCCURRED IN THE NORTHEAST AND AT 1800HR THE FIRE BREACHED CONTROL LINES AND RAN TO THE NORTH

The spotovers could not be contained. The fire was burning northwards with crews located on Billywillinga Creek to prevent fire breaking out onto grazing country. A unit was also stationed at Billywillinga homestead.

The rugged terrain and fire behaviour meant falling back to control lines further to the north. Backburning in Yankee Sector was completed and crews were mopping up and blacking out.

### Day 4 - 22 October 2006

If conditions permitted backburning was planned to the northeast at Waltham and to the east in Bravo Sectors.

### New crews allow rest time

Local crews and resources had been fighting this fire for a number of days under difficult conditions. Out of area crews provided assistance enabling local firefighters to recuperate. Over 170 firefighters were tasked during the morning to containment work.

Fixed wing aircraft were assisting with waterbombing and laying phoschek lines on spotovers.

### CREWS AND AIRCRAFT SUCCESSFULLY CONTAINED THE SPOTOVERS, WITH MINERAL EARTH BREAKS CONSTRUCTED AROUND THEM

Backburning started in Waltham and Bravo sector in the afternoon with plans to continue overnight. The backburns were combining well with aerial incendiary work carried out during the afternoon.

A Community Liaison Officer worked with a number of properties to disseminate information on the fire.

To the southeast, Zulu Sector had a full mineral earth break along the entire fire edge and backburning was being carried out where possible to deepen the containment line. The fireground was 1250ha and 86 firefighters deepened backburns during the evening.

### Day 5 - 23 October 2006

With concerns that predicted winds in coming days could further pressure containment lines, work on these continued. A northwesterly change expected for the 24 and 25 October

could cause problems along a 6km front on the northern sector with properties potentially involved, as well threatening properties that were previously protected in the early stages of the fire to the south.

### EIGHTY FIREFIGHTERS CONCENTRATED ON COMPLETING AND DEEPENING BACKBURNING OPERATIONS IN THE NORTH, WITH MOP UP AND PATROL IN ALL SECTORS.

Heavy plant worked on fallback options for the southern end of fire.

A second community liaison meeting was held at Eglinton Community Hall advising residents of fire status and of smoke issues.

### Backburning completed

Crews completed backburning on Waltham, Alpha and Bravo Sectors by the afternoon with aerial incendiary drops helping to fill in unburnt country, although burning in grassland in Waltham sector was patchy. The western sides were completed successfully. During the evening 63 firefighters were tasked to deepening lines where required.

### Day 6 - 24 October 2006

Crews achieved containment by 0500hr. Patrols around Alpha, Yankee, Waltham and Bravo Sectors had been successful with between 30 and 50 meter blackout in over 50 per cent of the area and firefighters continued to monitor these. The fire had burnt 1709ha.

### Day 7 to 16 - 25 October to 3 November 2006

Crews managed to successfully hold the fire by continually mopping up and patrolling. Crews continued to monitor these areas with mop up and patrol over nine days with crews gradually reduced until the fire was declared out on 3 November 2006.

**Opposite top:** Crews working on Billys Fire, Mt Rankin. Photo by Brett McMillen, Eglinton RFB

**Opposite middle:** The hard work of local and out of area crews through vigilant property protection and patrolling ensuring no homes were lost during the Billys Fire. Photo by Brett McMillen, Eglinton RFB

**This page:** Heavy plant were a vital part of containment efforts. Photo by Brett McMillen, Eglinton RFB  
A map of the fireground.

**Top:** Firefighters contain a fire that crossed from Airids to the Woolwash area of the Holsworthy Army Range.



## WOOLWASH FIRE

Story and Photos by Chris Maw Heathcote RFB

Only a week after 120mm of rain, it should be a quiet time for the Heathcote Rural Fire Brigade (RFB), but fires have a habit of running their own course in the Holsworthy Army Range located just south of Sydney.

It was no surprise then when a fire crossed the Georges River into the Woolwash area of the range on 17 September 2006. The fire started at about 2030hr at Foxlow Pl Airids in the Campbelltown district.

The fire was patrolled overnight as recent rain inhibited activity during the evening.

## WITH NO REPORTS OF PROPERTY THREAT THE FIRE WAS EXPECTED TO GROW THROUGH THE NEXT DAY AS IT SPREAD TOWARDS EXISTING TRAILS

Fires in this military area are a pretty regular occurrence during summer. While deliberate ignitions are a serious issue in the Airids area, fire cause in the military range can also be a result of dry storms or the occasional piece of ordnance going astray.

Whatever the cause, fires have long made a habit of wandering around aimlessly over a period of days before making a run under the influence of strong westerly winds and subsequently impacting on the suburbs of Sandy Point or Menai with devastating results. Obviously it makes good sense to try to get an early handle on them.

In times gone by these fires were the responsibility of the Army Fire Service but a rationalising of resources means the task of suppression now lies between the Macarthur and Sutherland RFS areas. With the loss of properties in recent history in mind it is seldom a problem getting crews to tackle such seemingly remote and innocuous fires in terrain that can be challenging to say the least.

Crews spent Monday 18 September securing a hand trail line to the Georges River and identifying the adequacy of fallback lines. Late in the afternoon fire impacted and threatened the primary containment options along Ridge Sector.

## OVERNIGHT CREWS SECURED A HAND TRAIL IN GEORGES RIVER SECTOR AND SUBSEQUENT BURNING ALONG THAT AND RIDGE SECTOR LESSENER THE THREAT ON THE LINE

Crews were stood down at midnight with the fire at 25ha to start operations again at 0700hr.

And so it was that Sutherland crews from Heathcote and Illawong Rural Fire Brigades arrived to assist Macarthur brigades at the fire early morning Tuesday 19 September to be briefed by the Campbelltown groupie.

## A regular operation goes to plan

No surprises here. Cut a hand trail, backburn, mop up and then patrol, all before the

weather turned at around 1400hr. Working together around 30 firefighters had backburned 100ha, achieving containment on all sides much earlier than predicted.

Crews confirmed and reinforced hand trail works, deepened backburns and then started mop up of the western edge in Ridge and Georges River Sectors. In Creek Sector heavy machinery were reopening the track to the Georges River. Hand trail operations started and backburning on the western side was conducted to link the sectors while providing fire protection to machinery.

By 1230hr backburning was completed in Ridge Sector with mopping up progressing while 30 per cent of backburning was finished to a depth of 70m on Creek Sector.

At 1500hr the fire was 58ha and backburning on all three sectors was completed to a depth of between 100 and 200m.

A walking party was tasked to traversing the Georges River from the northern end on Creek Sector to the point of origin and back to the northern end of Creek Sector.

## A job well done

Some 14 hours after leaving, the weary Sutherland crews traipsed back into their stations satisfied in the knowledge their efforts meant that a potential threat to adjoining suburbs had yet again been averted.

The fire was 95ha as it continued to burn to containment lines on Wednesday 19 September. Patrol of the fire was handed over to Defence personnel at 1230hr and continued until declared out on 27 September.

RFS crews from Glenorie, Middle Dural and Galston and NSWFB pump 94 worked on defensive strategies.

## 3 cars up in flames

Three cars were well alight in the garage and carport next to an adjoining self-contained unit and produced extreme amounts of heat that compromised the steel structure of the building.

## Agencies work together

As the area was covered by a Mutual Aid Agreement, the RFS assumed control of the incident and NSWFB were responsible for operations. Fire crews from both agencies continued to work on defensive strategies to control the fire so that BA crews could continue their search.

## AT ABOUT 1030HR AFTER LENGTHY FIREFIGHTING OPERATIONS, A DECEASED PERSON WAS FOUND IN THE LOWER LEVEL OF THE HOUSE

Due to the intensity of the fire, the structure had become unstable and crews were only able to continue defensive operations on the top level of the structure.

## Careful & methodical shoring

In order for Police Forensics to safely enter the structure the NSWFB Urban Search and Rescue unit (USAR) was required to shore up the structure prior to investigations. At about 1155hr the NSWFB USAR 1 arrived and the focus of the operation moved from search and rescue and fire attack to careful and methodical shoring.

## Garage cleared

The Kellyville RFB lighting unit worked to provide visibility in the garage area of the structure while NSWFB USAR shored up the structure. RFS crews assisted in towing one of the vehicles out of the garage so that Police Forensics had access to the area.

## THIS INCIDENT WAS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES WORKING TOGETHER TO ENSURE THE BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOME

RFS Inspector Phil Bow and NSWFB Inspector Nicholas Ferrante worked closely together in a joint planning and logistics function.



## MIDDLE DURAL HOUSE FIRE – NSW EMERGENCY SERVICES WORKING TOGETHER

Story by Rebel Talbert, RFS Media Officer  
Photo by Robert Symons

At about 0730hr on Monday 24 July off duty RFS firefighter Greg Thorn noticed a house fire in Wildthorn Ave, Middle Dural and reported it to 000 (triple zero).

## Residents rescued

Once on scene, Firefighter Thorn from Wisemans Ferry Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) reported the structure was well alight and one person unaccounted for.

While waiting for fire appliances to arrive, Firefighter Thorn assisted a second person from the structure, disconnected power from the house and located a water source.

NSWFB pump 71 was first on scene and started working on the lower level of the structure.

## THE FIRE SPREAD RAPIDLY TO THE REMAINDER OF THE HOUSE AND BA CREWS ATTEMPTED TO SEARCH THE LOWER LEVEL BUT HAD TO WITHDRAW DUE TO EXTREME FIRE CONDITIONS



## COOLATAI GRASS FEEDS FIGTREE FIRE

Photos by Rob Chappel, Northern Daily Leader

A fast running grass fire east of the New England Highway started near a lookout in the Moonbi Hills, north east of Tamworth, with 10 RFS personnel deployed at 1450hrs on 21 November 2006.

### Properties threatened

In steep terrain with large amounts of Coolatai grass and eucalypt fuel to feed it, the "Figtree" fire was moving fast and had the potential to spread up the Moonbi Ranges and close the New England Highway, threatening rural properties in the area.

**BY 1700HR 30 FIREFIGHTERS WERE IN PROPERTY PROTECTION MODE FOR FARM BUILDINGS, EXTINGUISHING THE 20HA FIRE WHERE POSSIBLE WITH THE SUPPORT OF THREE FIXED WING AIRCRAFT TO LIMIT FIRE SPREAD**

Vehicle access was limited due to steep terrain intersected with gullies. Spotting aircraft provided intelligence to ground crews enabling them to position personnel.



### Backburning begins

Firefighters aimed to contain the fire to the lower Moonbi Ranges or face a long, campaign fire in difficult country. Backburning operations began in the late afternoon to provide a firm burnt edge to the fire area with black out and patrol continuing in the evening.

By 2200hr the fire was 30ha and being controlled with 18 firefighters on scene.

Overnight crews were able to achieve containment with day patrols following up with thorough mop up, particularly of granite crevices. Patrols continued until 28 November 2006.

**From top:** First attack brigade Kootingal 1 working on the Figtree Fire, Moonbi.

**A firefighter attacks the head of the fire.**

Intensive flames and explosions were caused by the paint, thinners and other dangerous goods carried by the B-double.

AFFF foam helped subdue the fire.



## FLAME AND EXPLOSIONS FROM TRUCK ALIGHT CLOSE OLYMPIC HIGHWAY

Story by James Smith, Riverina Zone Community Safety Officer  
Photos by Ian Good, Yathella RFB

A B-double carrying dangerous goods caught alight on the Olympic Highway 25km north of Wagga Wagga, closing the highway and taking firefighters over eight hours to extinguish the blaze.

A 000 call was received by RFS Riverina Zone Duty Officer at 1116hr on Sunday 17 September 2006. Local RFS brigades from Yathella and Brucedale were despatched immediately, with the first crews on scene by 1130hr.

**FORTUNATELY THE TRUCK DRIVER, WHO WAS UNHURT IN THE INCIDENT, HAD BEEN ABLE TO UNHITCH THE PRIME MOVER AND DRIVE IT TO SAFETY**

### Hazardous Materials units involved

By this time advice had been received on the truck's manifest, carrying oil, paint, thinners and acid. Hazardous Materials units from NSWFB Turvey Park were responded.

RFS volunteers, unable to approach the truck due to intense fire and ongoing explosions, had constructed a bund using handtools to control the volume of burning liquid flowing down the table drain.

Thick acrid smoke, visible over 30 km away, continued to hamper firefighting efforts. It was not until late in the afternoon that firefighters were able to approach the blaze, using AFFF foam to finally subdue and extinguish the fire.

Additional RFS units from Junee, Harefield, Glenfield and Forest Hill brought the number of resources deployed to seven tankers, one pumper, and a 38000lt bulk water carrier, supported by two NSWFB units. Personnel included 34 RFS and nine NSWFB crew.

The highway had been closed immediately, and NSW Police maintained a roadblock until 2000hr. Junee Shire Council staff and RFS volunteers worked well into the night with clean up operations to reopen the road.

## SHOPS SAVED AS DIGGERS REST HOTEL IS GUTTED

By Supt. Mark Ryan, Manager RFS North West Team

**F**or the second time in its history the Diggers Rest Hotel in Lightning Ridge was destroyed by fire.

At 2325hr on Saturday 24 April 2006 the RFS North West Team Duty Officer received a 000 call to assist the Lightning Ridge NSW Fire Brigade with a structure fire.

**LIGHTNING RIDGE HQ RURAL FIRE BRIGADE (RFB) WAS ACTIVATED AND ON ARRIVAL 13 MINUTES LATER REPORTED THE DIGGERS REST HOTEL WAS FULLY ALIGHT, AND REQUESTED ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE**

Walgett Headquarters and Grawin RFBs were activated. NSWFB was stepping up its operation with Walgett and Coonamble Brigades responded to the incident, along with Operational Commander West 4, and Dubbo stations providing coverage for Coonamble and Walgett.

### Homes & shops protected

By 0005hr, Walgett 1 and 7 and Grawin 1 were responding towards Lightning Ridge. The local brigade was engaged in protecting the adjoining homes and shops that had been evacuated. The fire was too intense to save the Diggers Rest.

At 0005hr FCO 5 was responded to Lightning Ridge, while FCO 2 maintained contact with FCO 1 and State Operations to provide updates on the situation.

By 0200hr there were four RFS Cat 1s, one RFS Cat 7, four NSWFB urban pumpers and operational command from both services on site.

**THE DIGGERS REST HOTEL WAS DESTROYED, HOWEVER DUE TO THE RAPID INTERVENTION AND GOOD WORK OF THE NSWFB AND RFS ADJOINING SHOPS WERE SAVED**

The hotel was first gutted by fire in 1927.

## 100 WORKERS EVACUATED FROM LARGE FACTORY FIRE

As one of the largest furniture manufacturers in Australia, Cowra's Sarajane Furniture employed 100 people when it was destroyed by fire on 22 September 2006.

Multiple explosions echoed from the 1ha structure in William St as fire gutted the complex. A number of LPG cylinders were on the eastern side of the fire and a strong westerly wind was blowing smoke and flame towards structures to the east.

RFS volunteers were called to assist NSW Fire Brigades who had two appliances from Cowra 270 stations responding at 1300hr.

RFS Canobolas Zone responded four tankers from Cowra Headquarters, Woodstock and Holmwood Rural Fire Brigades (RFB) and a Group Officer. NSWFB requested Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus (CABA) support and two more RFBs were responded from Millthorpe and Lucknow to help with offensive operations.

About 55 firefighters were working on the fire. Workers and residents from surrounding areas were evacuated whilst the Mid Western and Olympic Highways were closed for some hours until smoke was cleared.



## BIG HILL WOLLONDILLY RIVER FIRE

A fire 2km west of the Wollondilly River started in Mulwaree shire on 21 November and crossed into Wingecarribee.

## FOUR SPOTFIRES OCCURRED THE FOLLOWING DAY IN WHEAT STUBBLE ON THE EASTERN SIDE, THE LARGEST BEING 5HA

Crews were able to round these up and eventually contain the fire to 648ha. Photo by Steve Brown, Forests NSW.



## BATHURST HOUSE

Photos by Insp. Greg Wardle  
RFS Chifley Zone Operations Officer

A house fire in Cottonwood Dr, Eglinton saw a dual response from Eglinton Rural Fire Brigade and NSW Fire Brigades at 1223hr, 7 September 2006.

The units worked side by side with Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus crews entering the building.

The house was fully involved with the fire starting from the rear of the house, moving to the roof and travelling to the front.

## NO ONE WAS TRAPPED

Crews were able to contain the fire to one structure which was destroyed. At least four hours of overhaul was involved.



## HELICOPTER CRASH

Wooloweyah Rural Fire Brigade and NSW Fire Brigade - Yamba attended a helicopter crash at 1600hrs 2 November 2006.

The helicopter crashed on Palmers Island between Maclean and Yamba

While the pilot and passenger survived both sustained serious injuries and were hospitalised.



## FALLING TREES TEST FIREFIGHTING CREWS

Photo by Steve Brown Forests NSW

Old Bar RFB attended a 3ha fire on 8 October 2006.

Falling trees were a particular problem for crews who contained the fire and mopped up over about six hours.



# GENERAL NEWS

## VOLUNTEERS ASSIST WITH POLICE FORENSICS COURSE

Story and photos by Angus Barnes,  
RFS Far South Coast Operations Officer

**N**SW Police were looking for somewhere to hold their structural investigation training and struck the same obstacles as everybody else - it's hard to find houses to burn down on purpose these days.

Once they found out about the Mogo Hot Fire Training Centre, they had a look at the facility and decided it was ideal for the forensics course they intended to run.

## POLICE PURCHASED SECOND HAND FURNITURE, PAINTED THE INSIDE OF THE ROOMS WHITE AND SET UP REALISTIC SCENARIOS

The rooms were ignited, one at a time, with RFS volunteers honing their offensive firefighting skills in very life like situations under controlled conditions.

### Praise for exercise

As you would expect in a genuine structure fire, a lot of black smoke, zero visibility, high heat and a room full of obstacles provided for what some described as the best practical training exercise they had ever been involved in.

Some of the technology used on the day included a heat proof camera located inside



the rooms for viewing the fire's progression. All in all it was a beneficial day for everyone involved. Both police and volunteers are eagerly anticipating the next course.

**From top:** The foam mattresses in this burnt out bedroom contributed to the thick black smoke which tested the trainees' firefighting skills.

**Entering the structure in offensive mode.**



**RFS CHAPLAIN RICHARD CORMICK BLESSED THE WINGECARRIBEE FLEET AT EXETER OVAL AND COMMUNITY HALL ON 22 OCTOBER 2006**



## FREE NATIONAL PARK PASS

Each year the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) offer RFS volunteers and other emergency services Annual All-Parks Passes – this is their way of saying thank you to volunteers for the help they have provided

This pass allows volunteers free access into all National Parks within NSW, with the exception of Booderee National Park, Jervis Bay, or National Parks within the ACT.

All RFS "active" volunteers are eligible for one complimentary, one-year, All-Parks Annual Pass for a nominated vehicle registered at the volunteer's home address. The pass is valid from June to June each year and must be re-applied for on expiry.

The distribution of these passes is co-ordinated by the RFS Volunteer Relations Unit. A number of passes are sent out to all District offices where they are made available to volunteers.

### How to obtain a pass

To obtain one of these passes you will need to complete an application form from the Fire Control Centre, attach a copy of the nominated vehicle registration and return forms to your Fire Control Centre.

### BEFORE A PASS CAN BE HANDED OUT YOUR VOLUNTEER STATUS WILL NEED TO BE VERIFIED BY THE ISSUING OFFICER

The pass and registration information will then be placed on Firezone and a copy of your vehicle registration and pass number issued to that vehicle will be supplied to NPWS for their records.

Once you are issued a pass you will need to ensure that it is affixed to the vehicle nominated. If a pass is damaged the volunteer will need to contact NPWS – a replacement pass will cost around \$6.00.

If the nominated vehicle is sold or damaged please ensure that the sticker is removed and forwarded to NPWS. A replacement cost will apply.

For further information regarding NPWS Annual All-Parks Passes please contact your district office.

## BLAYNEY BLACK SPOT TREATED

By Brett Bowden,  
RFS Canobolas Zone Operations Officer

RFS Canobolas Zone continues to work on improving communications in areas identified as black spots with an additional repeater site at Clarkes Trig east of Blayney.

### FOR MANY YEARS THE AREAS EAST OF BLAYNEY AROUND NEWBRIDGE AND MOORILDA HAVE SUFFERED FROM POOR COMMUNICATIONS FOR RFS OPERATIONS

Topography is just one of the reasons communications have been difficult.

Over the last five years communications capability has deteriorated due to the growth of radiata pine around the main Blayney PMR site at Mt Macquarie.

### New device installed



To ensure that reliable and robust communications are in place for volunteer firefighters this summer, the Canobolas Zone Portable Repeater was installed at the Clarkes Trig site to provide temporary network communications for operational communications pending installation of new hardware.

The portable repeater is trailer based and is powered by gel cell batteries and solar panels. It has been established at the site by linking it to a nearby PMR site resulting in an extension of that network's coverage area.

While it is in operation local brigades have the opportunity to test the coverage area to maximise their understanding of operational limitations prior to new site installation in coming months.

**Centre:** The portable repeater trailer next to Clarkes Trig provides communications coverage to areas east of Blayney.

## NEW BRIGADE CONSTITUTION GUIDELINE NOW AVAILABLE

The new Brigade Constitution guideline documents are now available on MyRFS and have been sent as a hardcopy package to Brigades following extensive consultation.

In August 2004 a review of the Service Standard dealing with Brigade Constitutions started. The project team comprised RFS staff (Head office, Region, and District), volunteers, RFSA, NSW Farmers and representatives of legal firm Clayton Utz.

Prior to the team first meeting in 2004, there was a call for issues to provide the team with data to target their revision of the documents. About 160 issues were received, and more than 100 of these were from RFS volunteers.

The resulting draft was sent out for comment in August 2005, including documents covering meeting and account keeping protocols.

Following a comment period in excess of three months, the Commissioner gave a commitment early this year that the draft would be reviewed again. This was to ensure that account was taken of volunteer concerns and that Brigades had maximum flexibility within the constraints of legislative requirements.

The Constitution package was sent out to each brigade in September.

Included is:

- A covering letter from the Commissioner
- SS 2.1.2 Brigade Constitution version 2.0 and SOP 2.1.2-1 Managing Brigade Accounts (see note below)
- Self help Guide to developing your new Brigade Constitution
- Booklet – How to Run my Brigade Meeting
- Booklet – How to Keep my Brigade Accounts

The associated documents and forms for The Brigade Constitution, Brigade Meetings and Account Keeping have been provided in Microsoft Word format.

The Brigade Constitution guideline documents will be permanently available on MyRFS under the Administration documents section. The Service Standards will remain under the Service Standards section of MyRFS.

\* NOTE - Managing Brigade Accounts has been released as an SOP as the requirements within this document are based on legislation (including Federal taxation laws), and as such are mandatory.



## COMMENTS INVITED

The Service Standard and Standard Operating Procedures related to station designs is open for public comment until 18 January 2007.

Because Brigade Stations are vital in enabling volunteer firefighters to do their essential emergency services work and training, as well as often being a social focal point for communities, the RFS has developed a range of station designs.

### One issue, too many solutions!

Over the lifetime of the RFS, station designs have been independently developed across the State.

The involvement of 142 local government areas has seen as many different solutions being developed to address the same issue.

### THE STATION DESIGN PROJECT HARNESSSED THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF SERVICE MEMBERS BY USING EXAMPLES OF EXISTING STATIONS, DISCUSSIONS WITH FIREFIGHTERS AND BEST PRACTICE PROCEDURES

This resulted in a realistic, workable and flexible set of designs, some with a number of options, which were put up for comment in 2005.



## Your comments here...

Following discussion and acceptance of the designs, a draft Service Standard was developed to guide the design and construction process. Service Standard 5.1.11 Standard Brigade Stations and feedback form is on MyRFS, with comments to be sent to [feedback.standards@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:feedback.standards@rfs.nsw.gov.au).

### THE RANGE OF DESIGNS INCLUDES ONE, TWO, THREE AND FOUR BAY STATIONS FOR REMOTE RURAL, RURAL AND VILLAGE BRIGADES

An option of a transportable station specifically for remote areas is also available.

### Practical advice included

The draft Service Standard includes guidance for funding of station construction, use of transportable fire sheds, allocation based on brigade classification and the minimum requirements in terms of water, sanitation, electricity, telephone, design and signage.

### THIS ASSISTS BRIGADES TO ENSURE THEIR STATION MEETS BUILDING CODES AND THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF AN EMERGENCY SERVICE FACILITY

Exceptions to the standards are also outlined to deal with restrictions of land space and shape, local planning and development conditions and heritage orders.

### DO NOT BE WITHOUT POWER WHEN THE HEAT IS ON

RFS electrical generator sets are now available on the equipment catalogue.

The vehicle 3.3Kva Genset, with the fire station and control centre generator units.



## Gensets

RFS Engineering, Contracts and Infrastructure Planning have made a range of generator sets (Gensets) available that can be combined with building new fire stations and control centres or as a retro fit to these facilities and other sites.

The standard range of silenced 8.5Kva, 17Kva, 40Kva and 110Kva (other sizes available with Engineering Services approval) complement the standard range of gensets for vehicles.

### Automatic Transfer System

The Gensets are available with Automatic Transfer System (ATS) that brings the Genset online should the mains supply fall below the required voltage or should there be a power failure.

### WHEN MAINS VOLTAGE IS CORRECTED THE GENSET WILL SWITCH BACK OVER TO MAINS SUPPLY AND SHUT DOWN

The Gensets are available from the RFS Equipment Catalogue and E-purchasing system. The budget pricing shown includes generator, ATS, electrical and site costs. There may be some variation dependant on delivery, site position, and electrical works.

### For more information

Further information is available by contacting Equipment Officer – Engineering Services, Contracts Officer – Financial Services and Director – Infrastructure Planning.

## MOGO HOT FIRE TRAINING FACILITY

The Mogo Hot Fire Training facility has extended its range of uses to a base for an large motorcycle enthusiasts event.

Generally used to give RFS firefighters simulated training and to test equipment, the Mogo facility set the scene for over 200 motorcycle riders during the July 2006 Australian Four Day Enduro event.

Teams from as far as Austria competed. RFS Eurobodalla was involved in catering the event.



## WIN an AKRON TASK FORCE NOZZLE & 38mm NON PERCOLATING HOSE from CHUBB Fire & Safety

### 700 BUSHFIRE BULLETIN READERS HAVE THEIR SAY

The Bushfire Bulletin Reader Survey had a huge response with over 700 surveys completed, providing some very positive comments on what Bushfire Bulletin readers like and dislike.

**THE OVERALL RESULT IS THAT THE BUSHFIRE BULLETIN IS A POPULAR MAGAZINE THAT IS WELL RESPECTED AND VALUED BY YOU - OUR READERS - AND NOW WE HAVE MORE INFORMATION FROM YOU IN ORDER TO CONTINUE TO IMPROVE**

The new design of the magazine has been very well received, particularly the use of less colour backgrounds and defined content categories such as Training and Incidents.

Of the respondents 99 per cent said the Bushfire Bulletin is a respected publication and 96 per cent considered it a useful component of development within the RFS. The magazine is valued for its ability to inform 97 per cent of survey respondents of RFS issues.

### Improvements are planned

An important finding was that 59 per cent of respondents felt that the voice of volunteers featured enough, but 41 percent felt these voices needed more profile. While most people are happy with this aspect of the Bulletin we will be working to include even more voices of volunteers in future stories.

Another important finding is that 62 per cent of respondents would like the magazine to include more on research papers and projects on firefighting and emergency management, while 89 per cent would like more practical and instructive information on these topics. This will help frame the types of articles we publish in the future.

Also helping to frame the stories we print is the huge range of topic suggestions submitted.

### And the winner is...

The survey offered a prize of an Akron Task Force Nozzle and 38mm non-percolating hose donated by Chubb Fire & Safety. This was won by Alec Rendell from Molong in the Central West, an area that recently experienced bushfire threat.

Mr Rendell has avidly supported RFS volunteers over many years and was also involved in the construction of RFS fire stations some years ago. He has donated the equipment to Molong Rural Fire Brigade.

Many thanks to all of you who submitted survey forms. Keep your feedback and story submissions coming.

**Email:**  
media@rfs.nsw.gov.au

**Mail:**  
Editor Bushfire Bulletin  
NSW Rural Fire Service Headquarters  
Locked Bag 17  
Granville NSW 2142



### IS YOUR HEAD ON STRAIGHT?

All you ever wanted to know about how RFS Wildland (Bushfire) Helmets protect your brain is available on MyRFS.

If you thought you didn't need a helmet, read up on the abbreviated injury scale and how much force it would take to give you a debilitating or non-survivable injury.

Find out about how important the inner harness is in slowing down brain movement when something hits the outer shell.

RFS Engineering Services has also tested a range of helmets currently in the field with reassuring results. Check the Equipment section document at [www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au)



### INSURANCE COMPANY ASSISTS FIRE INVESTIGATION UNIT

The RFS Fire Investigation Unit was successful in recently being awarded a grant of \$3637.00 from the FM Global Insurance Company.

FM Global has an internationally focused Arson Prevention Fund through which it awards funding to fire agencies across North America, Europe and Australia.

The funds are designed to assist the investigation and prevention of arson across communities through the purchase of fire investigation equipment.

**Above:** Andrew Hill of FM Global presented RFS Fire Investigation Manager Supt. Richard Woods with a cheque in November 2006. These funds will be used to purchase new fire investigation equipment across RFS Region North, South, East and West.

### NEWS NOTES

#### Canon donation

Canon have kindly donated a large number of faxes, printers and photocopiers to brigades with more than 60 brigades benefiting so far, and more planned for the future.

#### Response driving

In the last edition of the Bulletin the Operations middle spread focused on safe response driving. The first picture used to illustrate this section was not actually a response driving incident but an accident caused by the civilian driver. Apologies for using the photograph out of context.

#### Mulgrave factory fire

The graphic illustrating this fire in the previous edition should have shown Oakville 1A and Glossodia in swapped positions.

#### Where is the Operations centre spread?

The popular and instructive Bushfire Bulletin "centrefold" has not been printed in this edition due to increased fire activity in November. The staff members who work hard to develop this section were diverted to operational duties.

#### Jobs with the RFS

If you are interested in working for the RFS, check the NSW Government job website [www.jobs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.jobs.nsw.gov.au).

All RFS positions are advertised there and the online process will assist you to follow each step required when applying for public service positions.

Positions are also advertised in the Public Service Notices each week.

Any queries can be emailed to RFS Staff Services [staff.services@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:staff.services@rfs.nsw.gov.au).



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# SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS



## FIFTY YEARS OF FIREFIGHTING AND FUN – TUNCURRY

Tuncurry Rural Fire Brigade celebrated its 50 years of service to the community of Great Lakes and the RFS on Saturday 30 September 2006.

Captain Bob Berriman recalled the development of the brigade to those who gathered to celebrate at Tuncurry Bowling Club.

### Recollections

At the talk over a beer in the local pub where it all started was a local hairdresser by name of Jack King (deceased) who belonged to the Chamber of Commerce, was a member the Local Government Urban Committee and generally a prime mover in the development of Tuncurry. Jack was the force in organising the first and early meetings and the drive to secure the Brigade's continuance.

### Big-hearted man leads the way

Joe Fazio was our first Captain and my predecessor. He was also a community minded man owning the local cafe and general goods store opposite the pub. Joe was a man with a big heart and an even bigger desire to help anyone in need and devoted many hours of volunteer work with St Vincent De Paul.

As a Captain Joe was extremely well-liked and looked up to. He reigned with a strong hand which always commandeered respect and obedience. Joe learned his role both as a firefighter and Captain the hard way, doing the job, making, correcting and remembering your mistakes and learning what fire is, how it behaves and how to beat it. Joe learned the lessons well and unlike today there were no classrooms or courses to teach you how.

### Local shed well-used

Another of the blokes was my friend and mate Ross Sinclair. Ross worked for his father Dave Sinclair who owned the local service station, mechanical and engineering service (now the Caltex Service Station) as well as owning the area of land opposite our station upon which they lived on a slight hill, 50 yards away on the flat, where a big old galvanised iron shed use to stand. In our early years this shed was home to our equipment.

As an interesting point, when we acquired our first ever truck, we fitted a 37,000 litre petrol tank as the water tank, which was dug out of the ground from Dave's Service Station. This same tank has been pulled off and refitted to every tanker we have had since (excluding our present Cat 1) - a total of four. The last was our Acko 6 X 6 built in 1991. Ross remained a member until he married and moved to the Orkney Islands where he lived for the next 15 years. Ross is now back in town and is the proprietor of the garage behind the B.P. Service Station.

### Favorite memories

Some funny moments come to mind thinking back over the years.

In the early days (pre-prohibition) there was no such thing as protective clothing etc. so everyone turned out in their work clothes and boots, hats very rare. Often we would be having a beer after work and the old siren on top of the station would start wailing. Sometimes you heard it and other times someone would run into the pub and yell out "don't you blokes know you've got a fire, your bloody siren's screaming", or something similar.

### NEXT THING A DOZEN OR SO BLOKES WOULD ROLL OUT OF THE PUB, RUN OVER TO THE SHED, BOARD THE TRUCK AND TAKE OFF, ARMS AND BODIES WAVING EVERYWHERE

No booze buses those days. Try it now!!! Not once however did we have or cause any accidents nor did anyone get hurt. Vehicles might have been slower but fires travelled just as fast as they do now.

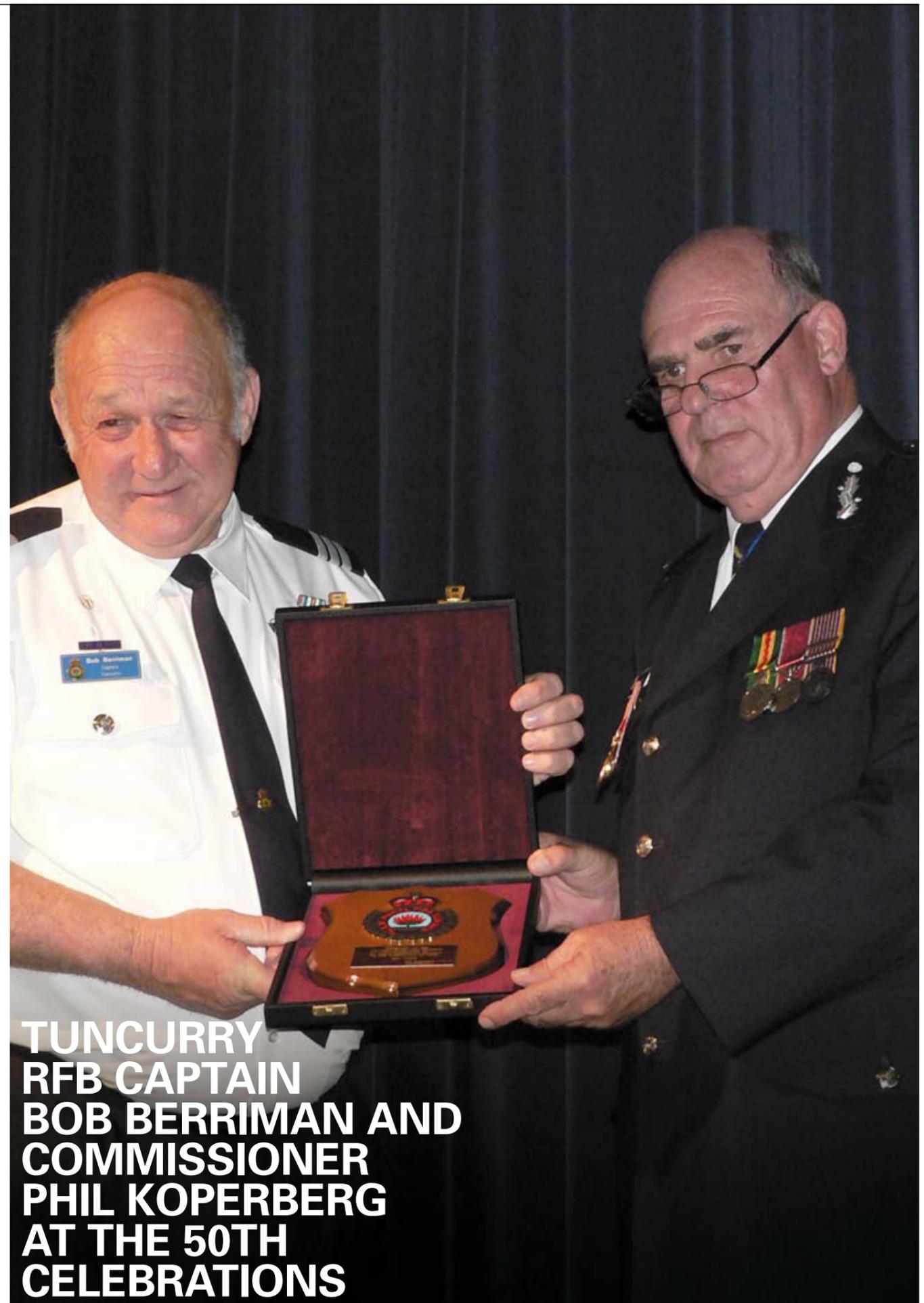
### Misunderstandings amusing in retrospect!

At a reasonably big fire where a structure was threatened I heard a Crew Leader going bananas; on investigating the cause of the drama I learned the following. Funny later, not so at the time.

A new recruit attending his first major fire had been told to run a 65mm hose line, breach it to two 38mm lines and run them round each side of the house, assuming he would attach a nozzle to each. Whether his instructions were misunderstood, or some form of panic occurred in the heat of the moment nobody knows, but the lad did as told.

But instead of connecting nozzles to each of the hoses he ran the hoses around the house and connected them both together resulting in water going round in a circle and not coming out anywhere. You can imagine the scene.

Top: Tuncurry RFB celebrates 50 years.



## TUNCURRY RFB CAPTAIN BOB BERRIMAN AND COMMISSIONER PHIL KOPERBERG AT THE 50TH CELEBRATIONS

## MAINTAINING VOLUNTEER EMPLOYEE-EMPLOYER RELATIONS

By Vikki Scanlon, Acting Manager Volunteer Relations

The support of employers is an important part of volunteering, for without their valuable co-operation many RFS volunteers would not be able to attend incidents.

An employee's absence while attending incidents may reduce the employer's ability to meet production schedules or may put additional work load on other employees.

As the fire season is now well and truly upon us it is important for volunteers who respond to any incident during their normal working hours to have an understanding with their employer regarding the time committed to the RFS.

### Approach your employer

If you have not already done so, approach your employer and negotiate "time off arrangements" for your RFS volunteer duties. Your employer may already have provisions in place or award conditions may provide you with "time off" provided you have your manager's or supervisor's consent.

To avoid any misunderstandings with your employer these negotiations should be done prior to you attending incidents.

## REMEMBER, YOUR EMPLOYER IS NOT OBLIGED TO GIVE YOU TIME OFF, SO TRY TO EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERING AND THE VALUABLE SERVICE THE RFS PROVIDES TO THE COMMUNITY

Your employer may decide to grant you a certain number of days special leave, or you may come to some alternative arrangement if no special leave is available.

If you and your employer do come to an arrangement and an emergency operation is activated then check with your employer that it is still alright at to respond at that time.

Do not just leave your workplace and advise your employer later.

### Be realistic and reliable

It is often difficult to predict how long an operation may extend, so be reasonable in the amount of time you request off or are away from the workplace. Always return

on the day you have agreed to with your employer as this will make it easier for you to attend incidents in the future.

Your employer may request a letter confirming that you were attending an incident in your capacity as a volunteer with the RFS. This can be obtained from your local Fire Control Centre.

### Always other opportunities

If your employer cannot grant you time off to attend an incident during your working hours, accept that this is the case. You will still be able to participate in brigade activities or attend incidents at other times outside your working hours.

Do not jeopardise your job for the sake of volunteering with the RFS.

## YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE RFS IS IMPORTANT, BUT SO IS FINDING THE BALANCE BETWEEN WORK, FAMILY LIFE AND EMERGENCY SERVICE COMMITMENTS

If your employer requires any further information you may suggest that they contact your local District Manager.

Phill Gant and Adrian Reynolds (centre and right) form part of a 13 man fog attack. Photo by Croatian firefighter Sinisa Jembrith



## OFFICER IN PROFILE PAT SMITH, GROUP OFFICER RIVERINA ZONE YEARS IN SERVICE: 36

### How did you get involved in the RFS?

I came back home to the farm after going to boarding school in Campbelltown and went from there.

### Can you give us a brief history of your progression through the Service?

I became a member and progressed to Deputy Captain of Bidgeemia Brigade, and from there I went to Captain of the brigade, a position I still hold.

### What has been your most memorable moment?

Over the last 20 years, taking task forces away and operating as divisional commander for the Cabramurra fire a few years ago. I had a very good team to work with.

### What has been your worst fire?

Well, Cabramurra due to the speed and ferocity of the fire, causing us to deal with the problem of the fire jumping kilometres ahead. Also the Conargo plains fires, as it was about 30 years ago and we had very little equipment.

### What do you think is the most significant change you have seen in the Service?

The development of the equipment and trucks over the past 10 to 15 years, assisting our firefighting. The new organisational structure has been a good development.

### What do you miss from before you were a Groupie?

The less hands-on role that you have to take on. You have to teach yourself to stand back and look at the bigger picture of what is going on. It is always hard to do that.

### What is your favourite appliance and why?

Am I allowed to say big red fire truck? All the suitable vehicles that are in the field now, the four wheel drives. The bigger newer trucks are really useful.

### Any final thoughts or comments?

I find being a Groupie most of the time to be a pleasurable experience, mostly due to the groups of people we get to work with.



## VOLUNTEERS ATTEND MALAYSIAN FIRE AND RESCUE TRAINING

Smokehouse searches, confined space rescue, oil spill fires and rappelling were just some of the training four RFS volunteers took part in when they travelled to Malaysia for an International Structural Firefighting Course.

Darlington Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) (Singleton) Senior Deputy Captain Kel Codrington, Ourimbah RFB (Gosford) Captain Lou Zamberlan, Exeter RFB (Wingecarribee) Captain Adrian Reynolds and Shoalhaven Group Captain Phill Gant were hosted by the Malaysian Fire and Rescue Department (BOMBA) in August and September.

### International Insights

"This was a great opportunity to extend our skills, learn new techniques, and bring what we learnt back to NSW," Group Captain Gant said.

## THERE WERE 29 PARTICIPANTS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD AIMING TO SHARE TRAINING INSIGHTS AND FIREFIGHTING EXPERIENCES IN STRUCTURAL FIREFIGHTING

RFS volunteers take part in international courses because they are great ambassadors who highlight the important role volunteers play in firefighting and emergency services. They also return from these opportunities with ideas that can be used to continually improve RFS firefighting capabilities.

### Like a rat in a cage

A mixture of theory and practical sessions made up the two week course, with the first practical session on the use of extinguisher guns and impulse guns, followed the next day by the use of breathing apparatus in "rat cages".

## "THIS WAS AN EXERCISE IN TEAMWORK AND SEARCH TECHNIQUES," GROUP CAPTAIN GANT SAID.

Lou Zamberlan abseiling from the fifth floor of a tower at the training centre.



"The cages consist of many modules of 1200mm cubes of wire cages, connected by various doors, ladders and tubes which we had to negotiate in darkness in teams of three or more.

"The floor was wired for load detection and infrared sensors allowed for the exercise to be fully monitored from a console."

A simulated sewer system with water traps and long drops was used to train for confined space rescues. Captain Reynolds volunteered as a victim and was rescued by a team including Group Captain Gant by being trussed up in a portable stretcher, then dragged through the system to a safe area.

### Comparing legislation

One of the theory sessions looked at how Malaysian legislation and Incident Control System (ICS) borrowed from international models and changed to suit local conditions. For example, their ICS is based largely on the Australian model, but is modified in several ways, such as the Incident Controller having direct management of air operations rather than the operations cell.

## TALL BUILDING FIRES ARE A PARTICULAR ISSUE IN MALAYSIA WHERE FIRE REGULATIONS DICTATE MANDATORY SAFETY MANAGEMENT TEAMS ARE ESTABLISHED FOR SOME CONSTRUCTIONS

A visit to the Petronas Towers safety management team included inspection of their full Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus and Personal Protective Equipment.

### Happy little Vegemites?

During the evening each country gave a short presentation which became an ideal opportunity for informal discussions and gift exchanges. RFS caps and clip-on koalas were handed out. Senior Deputy Captain Codrington introduced as many of the course participants as possible to the delights of Vegemite.

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## NEW STATION FOR GERRINGONG

By Alan James, Gerringong RFB

The Gerringong Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) is proud to announce that the new fire station was officially opened by the Mayor, Sandra McCarthy, on 11 March 2006.

In attendance were RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg; RFS Illawarra Manager Supt. Richard Cotterill; and members of the Illawarra Team.

### Long service rewarded

The opening ceremony was also used to acknowledge the long standing commitment of five members of the Gerringong RFB who were presented with long service awards: Shane Wicks, Andrew Sweeney, Rod Orford, Chris Robinson, and Greg Ball.

The station was funded and constructed by Kiama Council with the assistance of volunteer brigade members.

Members of the brigade contributed to the design of the station through membership of a Design Steering Committee with the Council and Fire Control.

### Great new features

The brigade was successful in having a number of features included in the station design,

including clearance around the building, lighting layout, positioning of power outlets.

Building costs including roadworks and landscaping amounted to \$380,000. Additionally, the brigade spent \$35,000 on the fit-out which included all communications, training facilities, training room air-conditioning, workshop, kitchen equipment and lockers.



## WALGETT VOLUNTEERS PRESENTED WITH COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATIONS

Captain Lindsay Magann and Firefighter Paul Clarke applied CPR treatment on a fellow RFS member for some 35 minutes on Sunday 13 February 2005, helping until an ambulance arrived.

## THEIR ACTIONS RESULTED IN THEIR COLLEAGUE RECOVERING, BRINGING GREAT CREDIT TO THEM AND THE SERVICE

On Sunday 23 July 2006 a ceremony was held at the Walgett Headquarters Rural Fire Brigade Station to present the Commissioner's Commendation for Service Medals to the two members who were unable to attend the State Ceremony in May.

Superintendent Mark Ryan, Manager North West Team began the proceedings by highlighting the brigade's significant operational and support roles undertaken in recent months.

## THE CEREMONY WAS A WELL DESERVED ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FOR BRIGADE MEMBERS WHO GIVE THEIR TIME SELFLESSLY ON A REGULAR BASIS

Captain Magann and Firefighter Clarke were presented with the medals by RFS Region West Manager Chief Superintendent Dominic Lane, who also addressed the meeting and highlighted the significance of the medals to those who received them, congratulating the recipients.

At the same time, the community presented a donated vehicle fridge to the brigade as a token of their thanks for the hard work the volunteers do for the town and shire.



The hard work of Walgett volunteer firefighters was highlighted during a medal ceremony in July.

## GOSFORD VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATED

On Wednesday 13 September 2006 RFS Gosford District hosted its annual awards ceremony to highlight the contribution of local volunteers.

## THE CEREMONY WAS HELD AT THE GOSFORD REGIONAL GALLERY AND ARTS CENTRE AND CELEBRATED THE EFFORTS THAT 29 VOLUNTEERS MADE TO THE COMMUNITY OVER MANY YEARS

National and Long Service Medals were awarded. On the same day two new Category 7 tankers were presented to Killcare-Wagstaffe Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) and Gosford Headquarters RFB.



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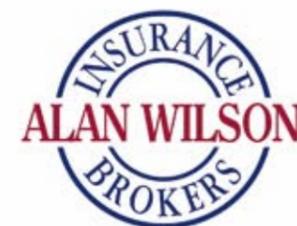
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## THE STORY OF THE BULGA GHOST

By David and Robyn King, Diamond Beach RFB

Up here in the Manning Valley, firefighters come in all shapes and sizes. A recent event in Diamond Beach Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) showed that some are also poets. The story goes like this:

As part of a seven year vehicle upgrade program within the Manning Valley, Bulga Plateau RFB received a new Cat 7, and its Cat 9 went on to Diamond Beach as an addition to its Cat 1.

## HOWEVER, SOME MONTHS LATER, LOOSE WIRING ON THE CAT 9 PROBABLY CAUSED BY WORK DONE DURING REPAIRS TO THE PUMP ENGINE EXHAUST CAUSED THE PUMP TO START SPONTANEOUSLY AT INCONVENIENT AND DISCONCERTING MOMENTS

This mysterious occurrence was, until diagnosed and repaired, christened "The Bulga Ghost" and a poem – well, really just a bit of bush doggerel – was penned recording its activities. So, here it is, with the obvious apology:

(The priest from the Isle of Mitchell is George, the Captain from Mitchells Island Brigade).

### THE BULGA GHOST

There was movement at the station, for the word had passed around  
That the Bulga Ghost had come again to life.  
It had woken from its slumber with a fearful, frightening sound  
And a shriek that split the air just like a knife.

All the tried and trusted firies said,  
"What the ..... was that?",  
Shrugged their shoulders and continued  
with their work  
Of putting wet stuff on the red stuff in their  
hard white plastic hats  
But the ghost was now about to go berserk.

It first displayed its mettle on a quiet little burn  
Just to check if everybody was awake.  
A tiny little glitch it seemed, but we were  
soon to learn  
That to ignore it was a very grave mistake.

Returning to the station, the ghost reared its  
ugly head  
With a blip so short we barely gave it a  
thought.  
Ron and Dave looked at each other with  
brows expressing pain  
Of the trouble that from Bulga we had brought.

Mike viewed it as a symptom of an  
overactive mind  
As he drove the Cat 9 striker into town  
But three times the ghost showed Mike  
that it could be quite unkind  
As his yellows turned progressively to brown.

In the rain the pump kept turning, causing  
Mike to stop and start,  
Dodging trucks along the highway not so  
calm.  
He felt the only cure would be a special  
voodoo art,  
An exorcism might be the only balm.

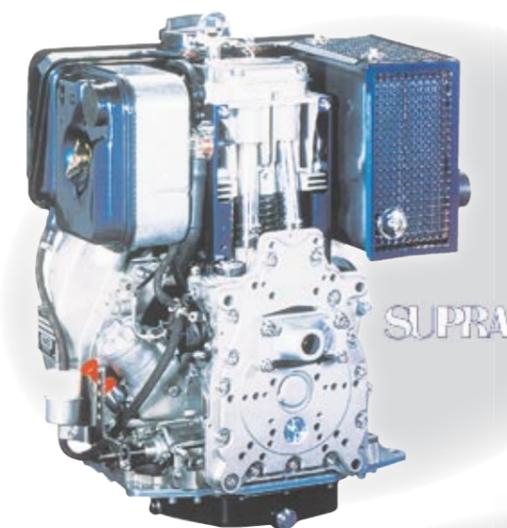
A priest from the Isle of Mitchell was  
assigned this special task  
To exorcise the demon in the pump.  
So he shook a smoking gum branch before  
drinking from a flask  
Then he gave the troubled vehicle a mighty  
thump.

The pump roared once, but feebly, then it  
gave a little sob;  
It tried and sadly failed to start once more.  
The priest expressed his pleasure at his  
now completed job.  
And with that, exited gracefully to the moor.

But he wondered as he pondered on the  
now quiescent pump,  
Was the banshee in the motor really dead?  
Or was it quietly planning on where and  
when to jump  
Into another unsuspecting firies shed?

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# TRAINING



Two trucks practice grass fire response and suppression.  
Photo by Rebel Talbert

## TRAINING DRILLS USING MULTIPLE TRUCKS

In previous Bushfire Bulletins, we have looked at how to determine your Brigade's training needs and how to run a one truck arrival drill.

Once firefighters are doing well working off one truck, look at working with multiple units. This is good practice both for firefighters and also for Crew Leaders, whether they have been officers for a while or are new trainees doing their Crew Leader Wildfire or Crew Leader Safety courses. Working with multiple trucks can also be a good way to get to know members from nearby Brigades.

Training with multiple trucks needs to be considered on two levels. Firstly, there are the tasks being performed by the firefighters - deploying and using hoses, cutting trails, establishing water supply, and all of the other things we do at fires. Secondly, officers need to practise how to organise the whole operation to ensure that firefighters' work is coordinated and effective.

### FOR THE MOST EFFICIENT TRAINING, YOU MIGHT USE A PRE-INCIDENT PLAN (PIP) FOR AN ASSET IN YOUR DISTRICT/TEAM/ZONE

Your scenario can be based around a fire involving that asset, and the crews can use the PIP to plan and carry out their response. Not only will your members be exercising their generic firefighting skills, but your training will directly prepare you for specific incidents in your community.

Get permission from your local Learning and Development Officer and/or Group Officer for units to participate in training, and ensure you have permission to run training in the chosen area.

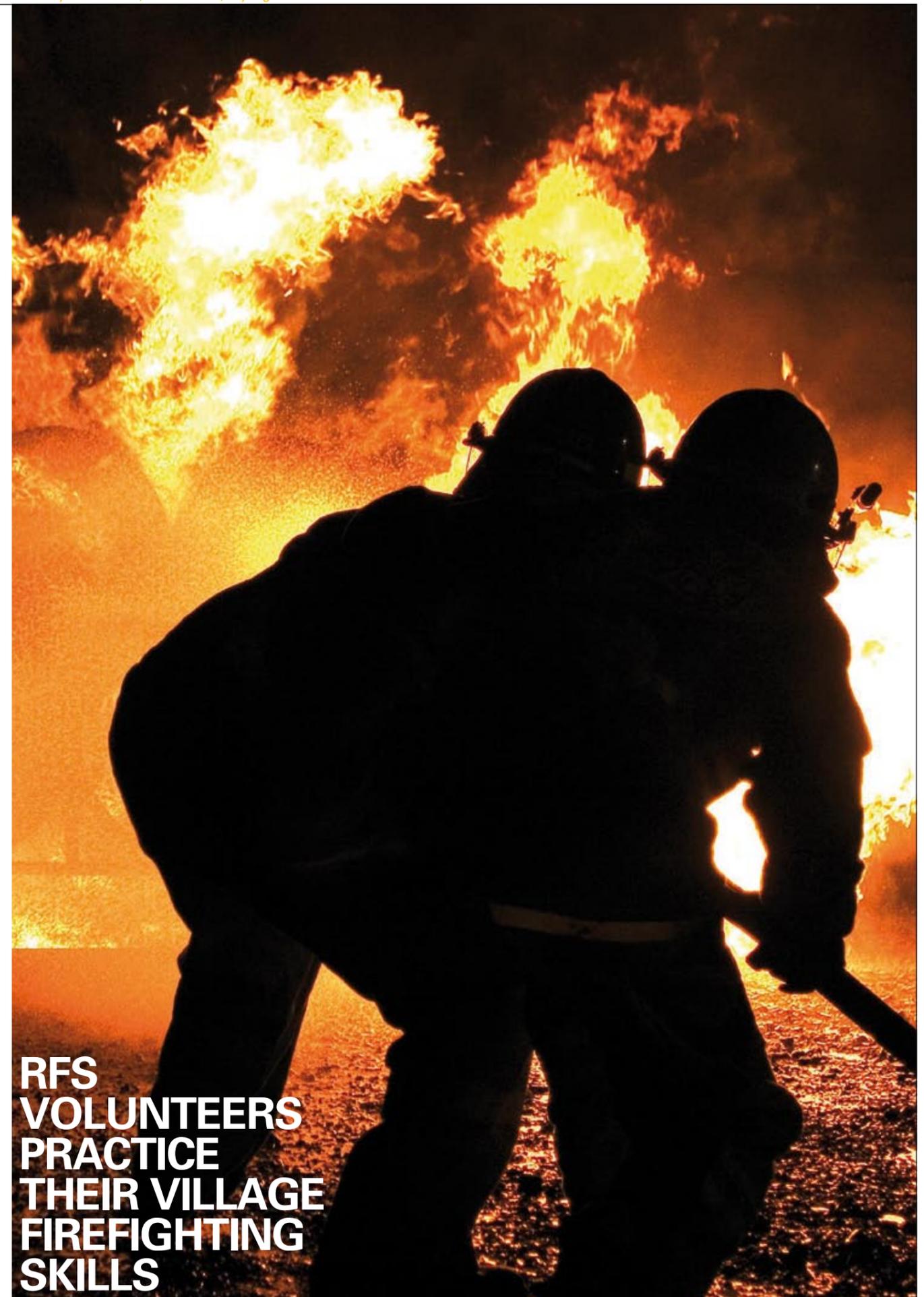
### Starting the Drill

Start with a single truck responding to a simulated incident, as shown in the last edition of the Bushfire Bulletin, with an exercise controller setting up the scenario and acting as FIRECOM. This time the simulated incident will not be small, but will have two more trucks responding in support. A running bushfire on a hot windy day is a good scenario, or you could use a village scenario such as an isolated farm house alight.

Communications can be managed by using simplex radio channels (for example, "9 RFS SIMP 1") and fireground handheld radios can be used for communications between crew members if needed. Simplex channels have good range and no permission is needed to use them.

The first-arriving officer can have their crew deploy and get to work with a direct

Photo by Anna Pillich, Kulnura RFB, Wyong



## RFS VOLUNTEERS PRACTICE THEIR VILLAGE FIREFIGHTING SKILLS

attack on the fire, as in any single-truck drill. However, their fireground management and use of the Incident Control System (ICS) becomes more important in this scenario.

### THE FIRST-ARRIVING OFFICER ALWAYS ASSUMES THE CONTROL CALLSIGN, PROVIDES A SITREP TO FIRECOM AND DEPLOYS OTHER ARRIVING UNITS

For example:  
"FIRECOM, this is Lakeside 1, on scene at Railway St. Large area of bush alight, possible threat to property, crew getting to work on direct attack from the road. I need two more Cat. 1s and a Cat. 9. I will assume Railway St CONTROL. Have the incoming units report to me on Simplex 1, clear."

The next-arriving units tell FIRECOM that they are on scene, then contact CONTROL on the designated radio channel for instructions. The units can then work together in a coordinated way to suppress the fire, rather than working "everyone for themselves," which usually leads to confusion and ineffective firefighting.

The first two units might work the flanks of a bushfire, or in a village scenario one unit can attack the fire while the second unit protects exposures. The exact actions are to be determined by the first-arriving officer, and the exercise controller should simply provide a scenario which gives the officer many options.

The third unit on scene might be tasked with water supply. This gives crews practise in using appliances to supply each other through relay pumping, whether the source of water is a hydrant, dam, water tank or bulk water carrier.

### Split crews

To keep the exercise interesting, have the first unit respond with a crew of two, and further units arrive with crew of five or six. Crew leaders have the option of splitting crews in this case, so two people from the second unit could join the crew on the first - making two crews of four, rather than crews of two and six.

Once the operation is concluded, CONTROL releases units who then report to FIRECOM that they are available again. CONTROL is terminated and everyone can head back to the station for an After-Action Review.

While a scenario using three or four units can take some time to organisation it is good training for medium-sized incidents. Crew members will get practise in coordinated hose work, communications, deployment of equipment and teamwork. Officers will get practise in sizing up incidents, giving briefings and orders, ICS, and communications.

In the next edition of the Bushfire Bulletin, we will look at training for hectic incidents, including rapidly escalating fires.



CABA crews enter the house in search of a female and two children.

### STRUCTURALLY SOUND SCENARIO

Story and photos by Fred Badman,  
Training Officer Lemon Tree Passage RFB

Three Port Stephens Rural Fire Brigades (RFB) tested their village firefighting skills in a simulated house fire in Lemon Tree Passage on Saturday 7 October.

### House donated for simulation

A house due for demolition was provided by its owners to Lemon Tree Passage, Tanilba Bay and Salt Ash RFBs for the event.

Lemon Tree Passage RFB wrote the exercise scenario, with the first call from FIRECOM reported as "House fire at 54 Meredith St". Lemon Tree Passage and Tanilba Bay RFBs were responded.

### ON ARRIVAL AT THE SCENE, CREW LEADERS WERE ADVISED THE TWO FRONT ROOMS OF THE HOUSE WERE INVOLVED AND THAT AN ADULT FEMALE AND TWO CHILDREN WERE STILL IN THE HOUSE

Salt Ash RFB was responded at this point.

Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus (CABA) crews entered the house with a 38mm hose and carried out a search, while crews outside set up positions to support the search.

### Heart attacks & broken legs

As part of the scenario a CABA operator suffered a heart attack. The reserve team entered to assist with the evacuation of the downed operator, then took over the search.

In the meantime, the garage at the rear was involved in the fire and the attack focus



switched. An exposure was also involved in the fire and brigades attended to this.

To further complicate the exercise, one of the assisting brigade members broke a leg and had to be treated and removed from the scene, testing first aid skills.

At this stage, the fire had spread to the rear of the house and total loss was imminent. Crews saved all the exposures with the house destroyed. The woman and one child were saved, however, one child remained missing.

Salvage work was completed. The Brigades made up and proceeded to Lemon Tree Passage station for a well-earned break, lunch and debrief.

During the exercise all Crew Leaders and the Incident Controller were mentored and a Safety Officer was in attendance. The debrief included reports from these people.

The exercise was considered a success and several points were identified as requiring more specific training to assist crews. A night exercise on the same property will help address these points and further improve the skills of these brigades.

**Bottom:** Three brigades practised their structural firefighting skills during the exercise.

### HOUSE ALIGHT

Story and photos by Glenn O'Rourke  
Laguna RFB

On Sunday 2 July 2006 Laguna 1 and Wollombi 1 responded to a house alight at Training Ground Rd, Cessnock.

### Speed & skill saves house

Due to a rapid response and skilled application of the crews' village firefighting techniques, the source of the fire was quickly located, smoke ventilated and a defensive attack launched, successfully extinguishing the fire. The house was saved!

### Skills put to the test

This call out was one of series of simulated and 'hot fire' incidents held to test the village firefighting skills of the RFS Hunter Zone's Western Sector brigades at the Cessnock Training Ground.

The incidents included:

- House and structure fires
- Two car motor vehicle accident, with downed power lines, and
- Hazmat toxic chemical fire

### A large attendance

The training event was co-ordinated by Inspector Dave Templeton, Hunter Zone Learning and Development Officer, and attended by representatives from all brigades in the Western Sector including Laguna, Wollombi, Bucketty and Millfield. Also participating were Group West 1 Alan Johnston, Group Support Jordis Pointu and Hunter Catering.

### DURING THE EVENT, BRIGADE CREWS WERE RESPONDED BY FIRECOM TO EACH INCIDENT UNDER SIMULATED REAL LIFE EMERGENCY CONDITIONS

This required crews to prepare en route and establish and execute an appropriate strategy on arrival at each of the various incidents, while being observed by the experienced eye of brigade Captains, Senior Deputies and Group Officers.

At the conclusion of each incident crews debriefed and a group discussion was held to review the response and identify learning opportunities.



### Valuable lessons learned

All who attended agreed that the day provided a valuable 'real life' opportunity to fine tune their village firefighting and first aid skills as well as to improve communication techniques and develop stronger inter-brigade coordination under emergency conditions.

In addition, the day provided a unique opportunity for a number of trainee Village Crew Leaders to be assessed and successfully demonstrate their skills.

### THE EVENT PROVED TO BE A GREAT WAY TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN THE CAPABILITY AND RESPONSE OF HUNTER'S WESTERN SECTOR BRIGADES SHOULD THE CALL COME - 'HOUSE ALIGHT!'

**Top:** Initial response by Laguna RFB.

**Bottom:** Village firefighting skills were tested during an exercise at Cessnock Training Ground.



The course covered all aspects of the Aircraft Officer role, requiring a full airbase set up including foam, retardant and fuel.

## RFS SELF-SUFFICIENT IN AIR ATTACK TRAINING

By Meeka Bailey, RFS Media Officer  
Photos by Rebel Talbert, RFS Media Officer

The first RFS delivered Air Attack Supervisor (AAS) course was run at Taree Airport in August, marking an important milestone in the Service's self-sufficiency in aviation training.

The course was previously delivered to the RFS by the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). Now, the RFS and DSE are the only AAS training providers in Australia.

"The course in Taree was the first time the RFS delivered air attack training with its own instructors and materials," said RFS Aviation Manager, Chief Supt. Mary-Anne Carmichael.

"This is important not only because it means the training relates directly to RFS needs but also because it highlights how well developed NSW's aerial firefighting systems and resources are."

**THE FIVE DAY COURSE ALSO INCLUDED AN AIRCRAFT OFFICER (AOF) TRAINING COMPONENT, A ROLE WHICH IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO AAS.**

AASs direct aircraft on waterbombing operations, provide command structures in the air and communication with ground troops. AOFs manage logistics on the ground, including tasking aircraft, aircraft fuel and retardant supplies.

These two roles support firefighters on the ground by coordinating aerial suppression through reconnaissance, waterbombing, incendiary dropping and airbase management services.

### Many Services involved

RFS volunteers and staff from across NSW joined with counterparts from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the State Emergency Service, as well as volunteers from the SA Country Fire Service for the course from 14 to 18 August.

Sixteen people took part with 20 instructors also participating in order to ensure all facilitators were up to speed with the new program.

### Finetuning skills

In addition to learning theory, three days of practical flying finetuned the trainees' skills in navigating to waterbombing sites, calling in waterbombers, dropping foam and retardant and the principles of running an airbase.

### Real life scenarios

Course manager, RFS Manning Team Learning and Development Officer Supt. Jim Blackmore, said the program had developed over two years and the training session itself required intensive logistical organisation to provide realistic scenarios.

"It was very close to real life which was a great achievement," Supt. Blackmore said.

"A hazard reduction burn was used on the first day to practise their skills in calling in waterbombing aircraft for fire suppression. Remote areas were used on day two to simulate property protection drops.

"There was a lot of work done to ensure the week ran smoothly including having brigades at each drop site to call in the drop, organising fixed and rotary wing aircraft, airbase requirements and liaison with the RAAF Williamtown over air space issues."

**TWO FIXED WING BOMBERS, ONE FIXED WING AIR ATTACK PLATFORM, ONE AIR ATTACK HELICOPTER AND ONE WATERBOMBING HELICOPTER TOOK PART**

The ground component included a full air base set up for AOFs to manage, involving fuel, retardant, foam and mixing and loading equipment.

### Topography of choice

Greater Taree was chosen because its topography offered a good mix of heavy forest, scrub and grassland areas as well as urban interface and remote communities to test the skills of participants.

Drop sites included Moorall Lake, Diamond Beach, Burrell Creek and Hannam Vale. The brigades in these areas assisted by being present at the drop sites, issuing flares and calling in the drop by communicating with the AASs.

"The brigades really benefited as well because it gave them experience in working with aircraft," Supt. Blackmore said.

### Enjoyable but intense

AAS course participant Grahame Chevalley, RFS Lower Hunter Zone Group Captain and volunteer of 15 years, said the course was enjoyable, but intense, comprehensive and realistic.

"There was actual fire through the hazard reduction so we used live drops on live fires, performing all the roles required of an Air Attack Supervisor," Group Captain Chevalley said.

"That made it very realistic but obviously we were in a situation where we had the support of the trainers.

"The next step in the process is for new trainees to work with experienced AASs to mentor us. We'll be on the Airplane air attack platform roster and on the country air attack roster so we will have opportunities to enhance our training and experience this summer.

**"WE'LL GET REAL, ON THE JOB EXPERIENCE THROUGH THAT BUT I THINK THE TRAINING WE DID IN AUGUST HAS GIVEN US A SOUND BASIS."**

Group Captain Chevalley sees the AAS role as coordinating ground resources and their requirements with the Incident Management Team and aircraft in order to use aircraft as effectively as possible.

"It's almost like the divisional commander role in the air. It's a coordination role between aviation and the crews on the ground, liaising between them at all times through radio contact with ground crews and the aircraft to task the aircraft appropriately.

"Situational awareness is important. You have to be aware of what's going on on the ground, and what's going on in the air. The number one priority is the safety of ground crews and of aircraft and then using the resource effectively and efficiently."

The RFS will be delivering two AAS courses in 2007, with one devoted to interstate fire authorities due to the demand for training.





## TRAINING TAILORED FOR BIG MACHINES AND BIG BRIGADE AREAS

Flexibility and mobility are the focus when it comes to delivering training to firefighters from remote rural brigades in RFS Mid Lachlan Valley (Lachlan, Parkes, Forbes, Weddin).

### One day training course

The local Learning and Development team's latest innovation is a one day course that concentrates on aspects of the Village and Advanced Firefighting courses, specifically header and large machinery fires, accidents and structure fires.

This was requested by brigade members who find it difficult to attend four day courses in town.

"Flexibility is the key", said Lachlan Shire Deputy Group Captain Peter Mooney, who is the volunteer training contact for the area. He is developing the package with Mid Lachlan Valley Team L&D Officer Supt. Tony Place.

## "THE VOLUNTEERS IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD WANT TRAINING TAKEN TO THEM"

"We have large brigade areas so it is no good expecting them to come to town for a course because they have farm and other business commitments, so we deliver training in local halls and sheds."

Prolonged drought and drier, dustier conditions have increased the number of header fires in these areas over recent years.

"This course also leads on from the Bush Firefighter Grasslands course which we developed a couple of years ago for remote rural brigades and which was delivered extensively this year," Supt. Place said.

"Brigades in remote locations have to deal with structural and machinery fires so their members were requesting training to cover those, but needed it delivered in a different format."

### Course still in development

The course is still in the development stage. A trial session on 14 September was run by Supt. Place, hosted by Gunning Bland Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) in Parkes Shire and also attended by Yarragong RFB from Forbes. About 25 members participated.

The training was held over one day, rather than several, with a combination of theory and practical sessions. It was delivered using a round robin system where groups "visit" a stand hosted by an instructor covering a particular topic.

### Farming community needs

The topics are all based on farming community needs – shed fires, including machinery and chemical sheds, farm machinery fires and motor vehicle accidents involving headers and tractors, relay pumping, working safely with electricity and dealing with gas bottles.

## BY BREAKING THE GROUP UP AND ROTATING THROUGH DIFFERENT STANDS THE INSTRUCTORS ARE ABLE TO LIMIT GROUP SIZES AND MAXIMISE THE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EACH GROUP

And the feedback?

"It was very well received and now we are going into developing the questions the volunteers asked," said Group Captain Mooney.

The content and format will be reviewed and the package will be further developed before being submitted to RFS Learning & Development Systems to ensure it meets required standards.

**Top & bottom:** Gunning Bland and Yarragong brigades tackle header fire training.

## TRAINERS GAIN CONFIDENCE DELIVERING CADET PROGRAM

The RFS High School Cadet Program is proving to be a strong initiative, receiving praise from students, teachers, parents and RFS members for the achievements of participants.

Nineteen students from Mudgee High School (HS) recently graduated from its RFS Cadet Program.

### Course a big hit with Cadets

Parents and teachers have commented on how the students have grown and on the interest shown in the course – an interest that is not generally displayed for other activities.

Most of the Mudgee HS cadets worked with Mudgee Headquarters RFB during RFS Open Day, putting on a display for the public to show their skills.

The brigade is now establishing a cadet group which the students are keen to join.

## VOLUNTEER TRAINERS HAVE ALSO GROWN FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF WORKING WITH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Volunteer trainers have also grown from the experience of working with high school students, said trainer Michael Moxon, Cudgegong Communications Deputy Supervisor and Cooks Gap RFB member.

"The enthusiasm, interest and probing questions of the cadets have made me more confident and skilled in my role as a trainer," Mr Moxon said.

## "THERE IS ALSO THE FEELING THAT WE'RE DOING A WORTHWHILE JOB BY WORKING WITH THE KIDS BECAUSE THEY ARE BUILDING PRACTICAL LIFE SKILLS, DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP, TEAMWORK AND INITIATIVE."

### Presentation ceremony

The Mudgee HS cadets were presented with certificates at a ceremony which was



the first official occasion some of them had attended. Watched by their proud parents, this was another exciting life experience brought to them by the RFS.

After the presentation parents and guests were treated to a demonstration of their skills in a simulated fire suppression scenario.

A second RFS Cadet Unit was formed in Tumut in July this year when students at McCauley Catholic Central School approached the RFS to run the 10 week course. Twenty students from McCauley are taking part.

**Top:** Mudgee High School students demonstrate their skills during an event to award certificates for completing the RFS Cadet program.

Photo by RFS Region West Community Safety Officer Simon Curry

**Bottom:** Young guns...Mudgee High School students proudly wearing their PPE. Photo by RFS Region West Community Safety Officer Simon Curry

### TRAINING SIMULATES TASK FORCE SITUATION

Story and photos by Bruce Neilson, Development Control Officer Northern Rivers Team

**B**rigades from RFS Northern Rivers Team tested their skills during an exercise on 30 July at Yorklea, near Casino.

The aim was to carry out a team training exercise in a safe environment in simulated task force situations and to have an informal fun day, gaining experience in a non-completive environment.

The scenarios included Hazmat with the NSWFB, vehicle maintenance, mapping, pumping with the SES and structure fire.

About 80 people attended including about 40 crew and supporting personnel in communications, marshalls, catering, other agencies and the Incident Management Team.



#### TRUCKS ATTENDING:

- Broadwater 1
- Blue Knob 9
- Kyogle HQ 1
- Bungwalbyn 7
- Caniaba 1
- Bonalbo 7
- Hanging Rock 1
- Yorklea 7
- Old Bonalbo 1
- Wyrallah 1

**Top:** Crews test their equipment skills as part of the Northern Rivers Team exercise.

**Bottom:** RFS crews experienced more about Hazmat response with NSW Fire Brigades.



**R**emote Area Fire Team (RAFT) members were recertified for winching during a training session at Albion Park Airport on Saturday 7 October.

Other recertification sessions have been held at Glenbrook, Armidale and Tocomwal this year.

A two-day winch course was also held at the Careflight Base at Westmead for new RAFT trainees.

Photos by Anthony Gray Sutherland RFS Works and Services Supervisor

**Top:** A RAFT member during winch training.

**Bottom left:** Crews practise hover exit and entry.

**Bottom right:** Hot refuelling during winch recertification.



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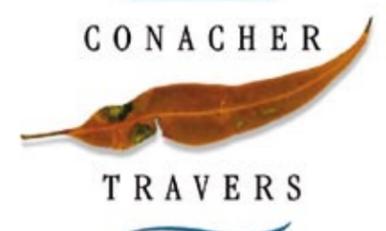




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**GILBERT & ROACH ISUZU  
RFS STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS  
- BAROOGA**

**CHAMPION CREWS  
COMPETE**

Photos by Meeka Bailey, RFS Media Officer

This year's Gilbert & Roach – Isuzu RFS State Championship was held at the border town of Barooga, Berrigan Shire.

Thanks to the assistance of the Rural Fire Service Association 400 RFS personnel gathered in the town for the weekend of 23 to 24 September.

**THE OVERALL WINNER OF  
THE SENIOR COMPETITION  
WAS OAKVILLE RURAL  
FIRE BRIGADE (RFB) FROM  
HAWKESBURY DISTRICT**

Second was Forbes Central and third was Tweed RFB.

The winner of the cadet competition was St Paul's from Penrith, followed by Warringah-Pittwater and Oakville cadets.

A composite crew of Berrigan volunteer firefighters forming the Barooga team won the Rural Fire Driving event. The winner of the visiting team competition was Queensland RFS.

**Great prizes on offer**

More than 240 senior and cadet volunteer firefighters competed over two days for some great prizes for their brigades, including a Panasonic 106cm Plasma TV, Gaam MK70 Pumpset, Star City accommodation plus many other great prizes from the likes of Stihl, Kestral and Woody Motors.

Trying to relieve them of some of the prize pool were teams from Queensland, Victoria and the ACT. With the overall winners taking home healthy Allianz cash prizes the competition was fierce.

**Impressive range of scenarios**

Crews were impressed by the range of scenarios presented, in particular the emergency response event which involved an old bus used to simulate an accident where crews had to assist a number of victims with broken limbs, possible internal injuries and glass lacerations.

The bus was lodged down an embankment at Cottadidda State Forest and crews faced challenges in accessing multiple victims to assess injuries as Ambulance officers responded.

**Full marching parade**

The Championship was highlighted by a full parade, featuring the first performance of the RFS Pipe Band, and a march past saluting RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg. Over the two days there were 18 events contested by close to 40 teams and a demonstration by a RFS Remote Area Firefighting Team featuring a live "winch in" exercise from a helicopter.



**GILBERT & ROACH ISUZU  
RFS STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS  
- BAROOGA**

**EVENT LIST**

**Cadets**

- GAAM - Tanker, Pump and Ladder
- RFSA - Bush Fire Fighter Skills Event
- GAAM - Navigation Event
- RFSA - Obstacle Event
- RFSA - Equipment Failure Event
- GAAM - Hand Tool/Water Transfer Event
- RFSA - Emergency Event
- GAAM - Team Challenge Event
- RFSA - Fire Ground Procedures Event

**Senior**

- RFSA - Chainsaw Event
- GAAM - Tanker, Pump and Ladder
- RFSA - Light Tanker Event
- ANZ - Equipment Failure Event
- RFSA - Bush Fire Fighter Skills Event
- LUMLEY GENERAL INSURANCE  
- Defensive Structural Event
- MAPINFO - Emergency Response Event
- RFSA - Fire Ground Procedures Event
- RFSA - Rural Fire Driving Event

**ATTENDING RFS BRIGADES**

**Senior Teams:**

**Brigade**

- Barooga
- Winmalee
- Cawdor
- Southampton
- Dubbo HQ
- Candlangan
- Forbes Central
- Condobolin HQ
- Glen Innes
- Guyra
- Oakville
- Castlereagh
- Tumut
- Walleroo

**Junior Teams:**

**Brigade**

- Smiths Road
- Candlangan
- Condobolin Junior
- Oakville
- St Pauls
- Orchard Hills
- Gulgong DC Juniors
- Alectown
- Tumut
- Warringah Cadet Unit



**GILBERT & ROACH ISUZU RFS STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS - BAROOGA**



The RFS State Championship scenarios are designed to test standard firefighting skills as well as knowledge and practise of fireground procedures.

These procedures are designed to guide firefighters so that they are safe, effective and efficient when fighting fires or attending other emergencies.

**THE COMPETITORS IN EACH EVENT MAY BE JUDGED ON A NUMBER OF CRITERIA**

The competitors in each event may be judged on a number of criteria, such as how fast they complete a scenario, the team work demonstrated, or how well a crew performs against best practice firefighting procedures.

**WHILE POINTS CAN BE SCORED FOR PERFORMING WELL, PENALTIES CAN ALSO BE APPLIED**

Failing to properly complete an event, failing to refill tankers prior to each scenario, not following set courses, unsafe practice or lack of leadership will incur penalties.

Crews win events by demonstrating they know how to enact proper fireground procedures and by doing this quickly so

that the fastest, safest response to the simulated emergency is provided.

**FIREFIGHTERS ARE GIVEN A DIFFERENT AMOUNT OF DETAIL ON EACH EVENT BEFORE THEY TAKE PART**

Some events are described in full, while others are kept secret. This allows crews to show their organisational skills and ability to get the job done through team work.

**RFS Light Tanker Event**

This event aims to showcase the crew leader's ability to manage his/her crew and test the team's ability to carry out tasks assigned to them using only the equipment available. Crews respond to three fires within the fireground - a grass and pole top fire, an oil fire and a fat fire. They must drive to the fireground using a set course, extinguish the fires, provide a situation report to FireCom and draught water to refill their tanker prior to returning to station.

**Maximum time: 25 minutes**

**RFS Bush Firefighter Skills Event**

Crews are tested on their manual bush firefighting skills with the team's physical fitness stretched in a scenario that simulates remote firefighting - with no water available to fight the fire. Crews will select the appropriate equipment and tasks to remove a log blocking the path of their vehicle, constructing a 1m handtool line in order to access a creek crossing and cross using a

rope bridge while carrying equipment. Crews then light a backburn using correct drip torch technique, extinguish a spotfire, prepare for the arrival of a simulated helicopter in dusty conditions, then approach and board the helicopter safely.

**Maximum time: 20 minutes**

**ANZ Equipment Failure Event**

A prompt response to failed equipment is required in this event to ensure water is delivered to a fire. The team's pumping and hose work are tested as well as their ability to work safely on roads. Crews are not told when or what equipment will fail, and more than one piece of equipment might pose a challenge for them. The crew drives a tanker to the scenario, disembarks and extinguishes one fire. They board the tanker again before draughting water from one bin to fill a second bin, simulating water transfer and delivery. After reboarding the tanker the crew must extinguish another fire, then make up their equipment and drive back.

**Maximum time: 20 minutes**

**Lumley General Insurance Defensive Structural Event**

This scenario simulates a building fire. Crews must respond to and make a structure fire safe which starts with FireCom responding the crew. They will undertake defensive firefighting. Details of this event are left sketchy to test the crew's skills, however, they will have to demonstrate their pump and hose work as well as fireground procedures.

**Maximum time: 10 minutes**



**Map Info Emergency Response Event**

This scenario is set up remotely, this year in the Cottadidda State Forest on the outskirts of Barooga. The event tests the crew's ability to deal with a major incident. This major event is kept a secret from crews who will not know what is around the corner from their staging area until the major incident comes into view. Previous Championships have used large motor accidents involving hazardous materials and passenger vehicles to challenge firefighters' response to fuel spills, injuries and map reading. This year, the emergency was a bus crash with multiple victims requiring injury assessment. Often RFS brigades are the first on scene to transport accidents so a wide range of skills from containing chemicals to providing first aid are required.

**Maximum time: 20 minutes**

**RFS Fireground Procedures Event**

Communications to and from the fireground are absolutely vital to ensure firefighters get the resources they need and that the best response is provided to each incident. This scenario tests fireground procedures where crews provide and receive information through radios as well as receiving and following hard copy logistical information on communication procedures. Information may be recorded in writing, relayed by radio, and submitted in reports.

**Maximum time: 1 hour**

**RFS Chainsaw Event**

Using chainsaws is a highly skilled specialty and this event tests the team's ability, knowledge and competence for simple tree



falling in a safe environment. Participants answer general safety questions about chainsaw use, demonstrate a bore cut using kick back minimisation techniques, cut a biscuit from a log, explain cross cutting and limbing, assess a standing tree and explain preparation for felling, then carry out felling of a tree.

**Maximum time: 50 minutes**

**RFS Rural Fire Driving**

Driving a firefighting tanker requires special skill. This event tests driving and leadership skills to direct a course in difficult terrain. The course was located on the outskirts of Barooga and navigation skills are also judged during this event. Crews confronted short vertical rises, stall recovery, rough terrain and reversing using a guide. They also recover another vehicle using chains, bow shackles and snatch blocks.

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# COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION

## PUBLIC INFORMATION PEAKS

Public information on fires has become more sophisticated this fire season with systems and resources – both technological and human – co-ordinated to ensure communities are provided with timely, accurate fire updates through the media, RFS website, 1800 phone lines, newsletters and community liaison officers in the field.

## FIRE INFORMATION MUST BE MANAGED QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY DURING OPERATIONS

It needs to be managed well to increase public awareness, decrease concerns, rumours and confusion, and enable communities to make decisions in bushfire situations.

The strategic co-ordination of public information is done in line with incident management systems. It relies on information flowing between firefighters on the ground providing status reports to local Incident Management Teams (IMT). The IMT may include a Public Liaison Unit (PLU) dedicated to local communication strategies.

IMTs relay information to regional Major Incident Co-ordination teams and RFS Headquarters State Operations where a dedicated public information unit co-ordinates communication at a statewide level.

With so many types of communication methods, personnel, levels of hierarchy and operational variables involved it is vital that consistent accurate messages



Over 3500 calls from residents were taken on a 1800 number answered by a community liaison team at Katoomba.

are delivered, with an emphasis on IMTs providing local information.

### How does it work – Blue Mountains November 2006

Lightning strikes started two fires north of Mt Victoria and Blackheath on 13 November 2006, with fire runs closing the Darling Causeway. A Public Liaison Unit (PLU) was established within the IMT at Katoomba to facilitate communication with the range of communities that might be affected by fires that could not be easily contained. This was one of several PLUs operating in IMTs in NSW in November.

This unit was managed by a Public Liaison Officer (PLO) who sat on the same level in the IMT structure as the Planning, Logistics and Operations Officers. The PLO determined strategies to communicate with Blue Mountains' communities. Because of the significant assets potentially involved and huge media interest the PLO was

assisted by Community Liaison Officers (CLO) and Media Liaison Officers (MLO).

They all worked closely with information managers at RFS Headquarters to ensure consistent messages were delivered to the media, on the RFS website, on 1800 NSW RFS fire update messages and call centre personnel and in briefings for related agencies and the government.

### On the ground – the IMT – local accurate information is the key

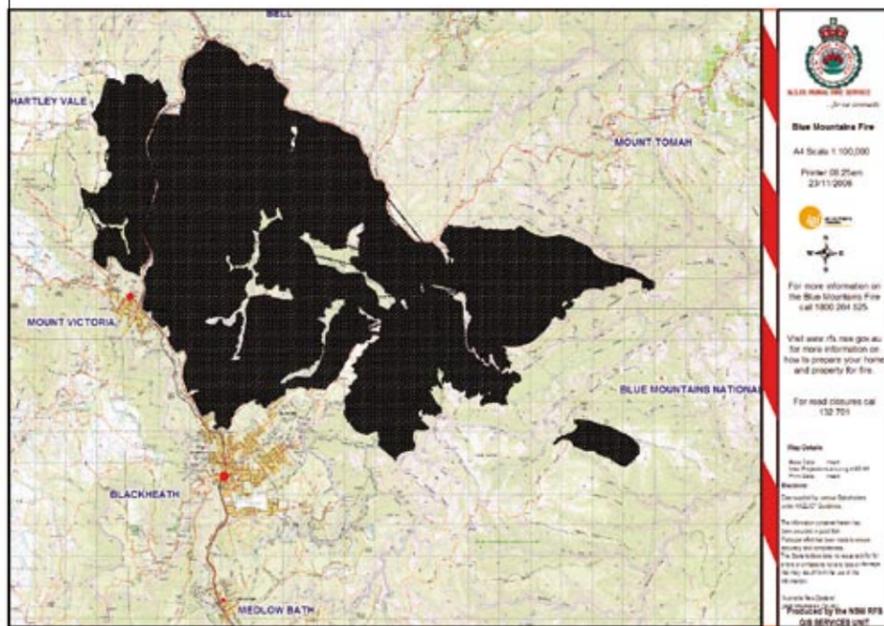
#### Public Liaison Officer

Determines key messages and appropriate delivery in consultation with Incident Controller, Operations and Planning cells of IMT. Regular community newsletters were developed for distribution by SES to potentially affected communities at Mt Tomah, Mt Wilson, Bell, Mt Victoria, Blackheath, Katoomba, Faulconbridge and Linden. This information was also distributed



**OVER 400 BRIGADES TOOK PART IN THE 2006 RFS OPEN DAY - SEE STORY ON PAGE 20**

**Top:** An extensive communication program was conducted to ensure communities were well informed about a fire in the Blue Mountains National Park. Photo by Rebel Talbert



by email to over 850 residents previously signed up for such updates. PLOs organised and presented at community meetings held at every village in the Blue Mountains on 16 to 17 November and facilitated the opening of all Blue Mountains RFS stations to provide information at other times. PLOs managed website updates for the RFS Blue Mountains site and the RFS statewide site. This involved liaising with RFS information personnel at Headquarters State Operations. The information was also used to ensure RFS State Duty Media Officers were providing the same information to journalists.

### Community Liaison Officers

Assists with "face-to-face" and on the ground communication activities. A 1800 hotline manned by local people took about 3500 calls over two weeks, providing information to concerned residents. CLOs were also on the fireground with SES during door

knocks, fielding questions and inquiries from the community. They took part in assisting individual properties by providing specific advice on how to prepare. CLOs did the daily "milk run" – A3 fliers with fire information were put up around some villages for those who did not get letterbox drop.

### Media Liaison Officers

Provides information to local media outlets on fire status and helps the community keep abreast of fire situation and how to prepare. This was managed by the MLO who could either do interviews or line up the IC or volunteers and ensure they were briefed and confident. With every television, radio and newspaper outlet in Greater Sydney flocking to the Blue Mountains, managing dozens of journalists, photographers and film crews was a huge task. Taking the pressure of a busy IMT and firefighters was important, as was providing

**Centre:** A map of the Blue Mountains fire which was used by the local Public Liaison Unit to inform Blue Mountains communities of fire location. It formed part of newsletters and presentations.

accurate information. Fireground escorts worked directly with the media to ensure they could safely access the fireground without disrupting firefighting. MLOs also worked closely with RFS headquarters media officers to ensure consistent messages were going to all media. See related story on page 17.

### RFS Headquarters – State Operations Public Information Unit

#### State Public Information Co-ordinator

Sitting in the "inner circle" of State Operations this officer has access to the latest information on current and emerging fires across NSW and provides this information to the RFS State Duty Media Officer, Public Information Line Supervisor (1800 NSW RFS) and Public Information Officers to use for their specific purposes (see below). The SPIC gathers information from State Overview Officer, incoming sitreps, members of regional Major Incident Coordination Teams and by calling the PLOs or other IMT personnel at fire control centres for updates.

#### State Duty Media Officer

While local PLOs and MLOs are providing good local updates to local media, the RFS State Duty Media Officer is keeping larger media organisation apprised of fires across the state. They are also helping these media make contact with PLOs and MLOs if they go to the fireground or want specific information on a particular fire. Hundreds of calls from journalists are received every day, 24 hours a day to the SDMO.

#### Public Information Officer

Using information gathered by the SPIC, the PIO updates the RFS website regularly to ensure timely information is provided. The RFS website received extraordinary levels of traffic on 22 November 2006 when wind conditions posed the most concern for communities potentially affected by the Blue Mountains fire (see related story). A number of other fires in NSW were also being updated in a similar manner at the same time. Regular updates ensure people are better informed. This can also assist to reduce call levels to Fire Control Centres, triple zero (000) and from the media. This officer can also provide briefings for the State Emergency Management Committee, the Minister, Commissioner and any other briefing requests.

#### Information Line Supervisor

While a 1800 number was established to provide information to Blue Mountains residents staffed by local people, the 1800 NSW RFS number also provides a fire update function. When calls to this number increase, people man the call centre to provide information on fire status. These

personnel use the information provided from IMTs to the State Information Officer to provide these updates or redirect residents to their local Fire Control Centre / 1800 service if appropriate.

#### How did it go?

Anecdotal feedback on the communication strategies employed has generally been positive, but a thorough evaluation has not yet been conducted to determine areas where improvements can be made.

**IMT PERSONNEL HAVE APPRECIATED THE FACT THAT PRESSURE TO HANDLE MEDIA AND PUBLIC INQUIRIES EASES WHEN PERSONNEL ARE DEDICATED TO THESE FUNCTIONS AND FIREFIGHTERS HAVE ALSO REPORTED THAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS APPRECIATE REGULAR UPDATES IN THE VARIOUS FORMS PROVIDED.**

The system is coordinated by RFS Community Safety Directorate, primarily through Media & Public Affairs and Community Education units.

### ONLINE INFORMATION HITS HIGH

Previously unseen hits were recorded on the RFS public website during November 2006, particularly as people looked for information on fire activity from 21 to 23 November.

Traffic reports show the RFS public website registered 1,308,811 hits, more than doubling October 2006 figures of 560,633 and exceeding the previous high of 605,358 in January 2006.

Average monthly traffic is 356,197 hits.

The majority of hits came over three days with 176,907 hits on 21 November, 289,824 hits on 22 November and 121,226 on 23 November – a total of 587,957.

This three day figure is more than the entire hits for the month of October 2006.

#### Major Fire Updates section receives most hits

The most popular section of the site during those three days was the Major Fire Updates section where the RFS Headquarters State Operations Public Information Unit posts narrative information on fire status. This page had a total of 78,540 hits on 22 November with 250 requests per second at one point. This section of the website



kicks into gear when there are major fires occurring – such as Section 44 declarations. When this section is not being updated for major fires, the Current Incidents section provides a snap shot of statewide incidents.

Updates on fires in the Blue Mountains, Forbes, Oberon, Hunter Valley (Wollemi and Goulburn River NPs), Molong, Lake George, Colo Heights, Putty Rd, Morton NP, and Bylong fires were being displayed and updated on the Major Fire Updates section when user traffic hit its height.

#### Keeping the site up-to-date

Maintaining accurate, current information during increased fire activity is resource intensive with up to 12 people over 24 hours working directly or indirectly on providing information, writing and loading content, photographs and maps. These people were based at RFS State Operations and at local Incident Management Teams.

There is anecdotal information that users are generally satisfied with the RFS website's ability to provide good, useful information on fire status. From emails received by users the RFS Media and Public Affairs Team was able to do some evaluation of how the information was working, and take on board suggestions and improvements.

**IN PARTICULAR PEOPLE WANT GOOD, DETAILED, DOWNLOADABLE MAPS OF FIRES AND REGULAR UPDATES THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

**Name:** Jules  
**Message sent:** 20/11/2006 at 11:45PM  
Just a quick email to thank you so much for the information you provide on this website regarding the Blue Mountains Fire. The fact that it is updated 3 times a day gives me great comfort that the information provided is accurate and timely. I am resident in Medlow Bath but work in Burwood most days. I log onto your website first thing in the morning then during the day for the midday update and then in the evening again to find out how progress is going.

**Name:** Sue  
**Message sent:** 22/11/2006 at 04:50PM  
Thanks for timely updates. I have family in vulnerable parts of Blackheath and am keeping them informed of big picture thanks to website updates. Keep up the good work.

**Name:** Kylie  
**Message sent:** 23/11/2006 at 09:55AM  
I would just like to congratulate you on a fantastic web site. I live at Royalla on the southern NSW ACT border and at this time of the year I pay particular attention to what bush fires are where. Your web site is great and in particular the Fire update section. It lets me know where bush fires are in NSW therefore keeping me well informed in protecting my property.

**Name:** Glen  
**Message sent:** 25/11/2006 at 07:50PM  
As an IT professional, often the work we do is under appreciated, and compliments hard to come by... hence from one pro to the next, good job. Nice site. Clean, fast, easy to navigate and containing useful content.



## HOTSPOTS HELP FIRE PLANNING

By Nikki Conroy, Coordinator, Hotspots Fire Project, (NCC) and Gillian Basnett, RFS Project Officer (Hotspots)

The Hotspots Fire Project is helping property managers create practical fire management plans that better protect their environmental, social and economic assets as well as adjoining properties across different land tenures.

## WORKSHOPS ENABLE LANDHOLDERS TO COME TOGETHER TO DEVELOP INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FIRE MANAGEMENT PLANS OR COMMUNITY FIRE MANAGEMENT PLANS

Landholders and communities work together across tenures to develop common goals and outcomes that support biodiversity.

Hotspots presents the latest developments in ecological fire management and legislation in a two day workshop program and gives landholders access to materials and information, to produce practical, map based fire management plans.

"The Hotspots project allowed me to come together with my neighbours to look at fire impacts on a landscape basis and to look ahead – it is a lot better than crisis management," said David Donnelly, a grazier near Glen Innes.

"Including fire management in my property plan has been a great idea.

"I now feel a lot more confident about what I can and should do for protection from unwanted fire, and also a lot more knowledgeable about what I can and should do with the use of fire in my own property

- for hazard reduction, protection of our farm assets and to ensure we keep the diversity of plants and animals that we want."

For many land managers and communities, the responsible use and management of fire is an ongoing challenge.

## ELIMINATING FIRE IS NEITHER A PRACTICAL NOR AN ECOLOGICALLY APPROPRIATE SOLUTION

Meeting the challenges associated with fire requires effective planning and collaboration within communities, between agencies and across land tenures.

### Managing fires together

This is where the Hotspots Fire Project comes in. Hotspots is a pilot project which, through a co-ordinated program of literature review, training and education initiatives, translates science and current fire legislation into a practical management framework for land managers and regional communities. It brings together landowners, members of the community, scientists, RFS volunteer firefighters and staff, Catchment Authorities, public land managers and others.

Workshops include a one day session for landholders on fire ecology and fire legislation and other important information relevant to managing fire on their properties within the context of local native vegetation.

For those who are interested, Hotspots then organises a second day of map-based fire planning with landholders for their own property. This results in an overall plan for

fire management, including fire protection measures and planned fire activities such as hazard reduction. The goal is to protect economic, social and environmental assets.

### Pilot program generates interest

The project started running its pilot program of workshops in the Northern Rivers region in 2005 with enormous interest generated and over 130 participants. Each workshop was held in a different social community, from peri-urban to large landholdings in excess of 10,000ha; in different landscapes, from coastal dunes to the gorges of the northern escarpment; and in differing vegetation communities, from heathland to rainforest.

Each workshop also addressed a different suite of local issues including large-scale wildfires at Currawinya in the Upper Clarence Catchment, fuel loads in State Forest near Glen Innes, issues associated with grazing and timber production in Tallewudjah Lower Clarence, and protection of dwellings immediately adjacent to National Park at Wooleweyah.

### Targeted local workshops planned

Over the next year and a half Hotspots will be running targeted workshops in the Southern Rivers, Central West and Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority regions.

"Hotspots workshops seem to take on various forms in different areas, really targeting the needs of different groups by focusing on the concerns and management priorities of the participants," said RFS Northern Tablelands Community Safety Officer Terry Kitching, a presenter at a number of Hotspots workshops.

"The workshops are also a great opportunity for everyone to be able to appreciate different sides of the story.

"For example, the workshop at Currawinya allowed me to understand why that community wanted to protect the Brush Tailed Rock Wallaby and its habitat; and enabled the community to understand the RFS position and the importance of protecting assets at the same time.

"This understanding facilitates a better management of fire across the landscape."

Funded by the NSW Environmental Trust, the Hotspots Fire Project is delivered by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW. Regional partners include the RFS, NSW Department of Environment and Conservation, Catchment Management Authorities, and NSW Farmers Association.

For more information contact Gillian Basnett RFS Project Officer (Hotspots) on [gillian.basnett@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:gillian.basnett@rfs.nsw.gov.au) or (02) 8741 5438 or visit the Hotspots website at [www.hotspotsfireproject.org.au](http://www.hotspotsfireproject.org.au)

## RFS GOES SOLO AT MATTARA

By Gilly Katz, RFS Lakes Team Acting Community Safety Officer

RFS Lakes Team Community Education crew enjoyed a week of interacting with the greater Newcastle community at this year's Mattara Spring Festival held from 30 September to 8 October in Newcastle's picturesque Civic Park.

### Education for locals

Mattara is an opportunity for the Community Education Committee to provide information to residents about home fire safety, escape plans and preparing for the fire season, as well as interacting and connecting with the community.

### Special treat for local kids

This year, the local kids were given a special treat with some extra entertainment provided by the Lake Team's Community Fireguard Mascot, Solo the Dog, and the one who makes it all possible, Solo's handler, Wakefield Brigade volunteer Ian Douglas.

When some pre-arranged festival entertainment failed to appear, students from the Events Management Course at Hamilton TAFE, who were running the daily program, called on the RFS to come to the rescue. Solo and the Community Safety team provided some impromptu entertainment mingled with fire education over the day.

### Belly dancing Pooch!

Solo learnt to belly-dance (or at least practise warming up for belly dancing) in an impromptu lesson, as well as participate in a celebrity volleyball game (firefighters versus celebrities - students dressed up as Shrek, Snow White etc) which drew huge crowds.

### Physics lessons

The fireys also gave impromptu basic physics lessons while they handed out fire triangle tattoos and gave tours of the Category One Tanker that was on hand.

## THE ACTIVITIES HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAM WORK AND CO-OPERATION FOR ALL WHO PARTICIPATED

Recent legislative requirements for smoke alarms evoked a lot of discussion and questions from residents too, given that Newcastle is an urban area. However, as a fire at John Hunter Hospital threatened some homes last summer, interest in how to better prepare homes for bushfire was still relevant for some families.

As with all activities, the learning process is made more pertinent if it is relevant and enjoyable, and having a crew of enthusiastic



volunteers plus a big Dalmatian with two left feet, made sure that Newcastle residents will be a whole lot more FireWise this summer - and throughout the year!

## DON'T FLEE LATE, RESEARCH BACKS RFS POSITION ON STAY OR GO

*Is staying at home the safest option during bushfires? Historical evidence for an Australian approach. Handmer & Tibbits 2006.*

Research conducted by the Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre, has supported the RFS position on the safety of staying to defend property if well prepared and the higher risk of dying when leaving at the last moment.

### Staying home can save lives

Researchers John Handmer from the Centre for Risk and Community Safety RMIT University and Amalie Tibbits from the CRC gathered available evidence over 60 years.

The historical evidence shows the 2001 Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) position, "houses protect people and people protect houses", is correct.

### 60 years of evidence

Their evidence included stories of buildings as shelters during the Victorian 1939 fires when 650 homes were destroyed and 71 lives lost. The stories of those who survived tell of sheltering in structures and extinguishing embers that threatened their shelter.

The paper includes evidence from Ash Wednesday 1983 where twice as many deaths occurred in vehicles or in the open than inside houses.

## THOSE WHO SURVIVED IN THEIR HOMES KNEW WHAT TO DO, WERE PREPARED AND HAD WATER SUPPLIES

This paper supports fire authorities in their efforts to educate communities to prepare property and their families to stay and defend. Deciding whether to stay and protect the family home can be a difficult decision for many people.

The researchers are extending the study to deal with the problems of effectively implementing this policy.

"It is a sad fact that a disproportionate number of women and children die in these circumstances because they try to flee their house as a fire front approaches, while the men remain to defend the home," said Professor Handmer.

The paper is available through the RFS Library. RFS volunteers can access the library online through MyRFS – [www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au).

# OVER 400 RURAL FIRE BRIGADES AND THOUSANDS OF RFS MEMBERS WELCOMED THE PUBLIC TO THEIR STATIONS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS ON RFS OPEN DAY - SATURDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2006.



The vast range of activities, displays and events organised for RFS Open Day 2006 helped to improve public understanding of RFS volunteers and their work, deliver FireWise messages and assist to recruit new members.

Brigades took part from Brewarrina to Back Creek in Yass Valley, from Bendemeer in Tamworth to Billnudge in Byron Shire and Basin View in Shoalhaven.

While hundreds of stations opened up, many brigades in areas that could not count on passing traffic took the opportunity to host events or displays in shopping centres or parks.

Helensburgh, Otford, Stanwell Park, Darkes Forest and Wollongong Community Education teams banded together to host a large event at Charles Harper Park, Helensburgh while Araluen, Bombay, Braidwood, Charleyong, Farrington, Krawarree and Mongarlowe RFBs in Palarang held an event at Ryrrie Park, Braidwood.

One of our newest brigades, Lightning Ridge, set up at Lions Park while Tweed district brigades gathered at the Speed on Tweed Festival in the Main Street of Murwillumbah.

## Attendees appreciate their volunteers

Brigades reported a range of attendance figures, with the average being between 30 to 50 people taking part in Open Day. Some brigades had very little interest with only two or three people attending, while others had hundreds. These figures are taken from Brigade Evaluation sheets submitted to RFS Media & Public Affairs – if you have not already submitted this it can be found under “Open Day” in the Community Education and Safety documents on MyRFS, [www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au).

Some comments from people who attended include:

“Volunteers are very friendly and informative...it was great to see the facilities, centre and equipment.” (Yorklea)

“Good job guys. Keep up the good work!” (Woodburn)

“Looking forward to retraining and getting more involved.” (Broadwater)

“I liked the way it was professionally presented and information provided.” (Tamworth)

“I liked the organisation and friendship. Volunteers deserve community support due to the excellent, dangerous work they do.” (Grafton)

“Sarah enjoyed being in the cab. Malcolm liked flipping the bin over. Got advice on smoke alarm and extinguisher.” (Gulmarrad)

Brigades that hosted events reported good rapport with their communities through RFS Open Day.

“Very positive public feedback. Kids had a ball dressing up and driving the truck. Positive connection with local school.” Winmalee volunteer.

“Personally I felt the open day was a big plus for our Brigade. The public are more aware of how to prepare for fires and know their local fireys!” Grafton volunteer.

## Open days help locals prepare

Feedback from volunteers through an online survey indicates that 75 percent believe Open Day helped people who attended to prepare for fire. Over 80 percent believed those who attended were better informed about the RFS and 51 percent reported potential new members. Most brigades had between one to five inquiries from people interested in joining.

Organising an Open Day can be a big task – and many volunteers reported that the RFS Open Day Newsletters which were available on MyRFS and through Fire Control Centres provided many useful ideas and advice,

such as resources available and examples of events held by other brigades.

Volunteers asked for more advice on how to do static and active displays, resource information, a focus on rural and village brigades, examples of what worked, where to get assistance and provision of a timeline and framework to organise the event and assign tasks.

A range of promotional material was distributed for brigades to use. The most popular were the posters and banners followed by the flashing fire trucks, cut out fire trucks and RFS tattoos. Most brigades received their posters and promotional material in time (64 percent) with the remainder requesting speedier delivery. This will be taken on board for next year’s logistics.

## News media publicity gets on board

The media strategy generated more than 50 newspaper articles on Open Day in local newspapers in the lead up to the event. Thirty five radio segments and 11 television news spots were achieved between 15 to 18 September across all the major stations in NSW. This included an entire ABC Country Hour broadcast to promote the day on Friday 15 September.

Practically all of the media spots included the key message of encouraging people to attend RFS Open Day on 16 September in order to learn how to prepare property and find out more about the RFS.

## VOLUNTEERS WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY INDICATED THEY WOULD LIKE EVEN MORE PUBLICITY TO ENCOURAGE ATTENDANCE

### Congratulations!

Participating brigades are congratulated for their hard work in hosting Open Day events in 2006. These events have contributed to acknowledging the hard work RFS volunteers do in their communities and in providing bushfire prone residents with information to prepare.

### 2007 Preparation

Almost all volunteers who took part in the survey said they would participate in RFS Open Day again, and their suggestions will help improve the 2007 event which will be held on Saturday 15 September.

The aim is to provide more advice on event planning and promotion through guidelines and newsletters. Preparation will start earlier to ensure resources are available on time.

**From left to right:** Bourke volunteers attended the Yaama festival with the FireWise message. Photo by Ross West

A Heathcote volunteer with children experiencing “firefighting” using knapsacks. Photo by Greg Ray

Old and new were on display at Barmedman RFB.

Brisbane Waters RFB held a static display, barbecue and had their fire boat and tankers on show.

A petting zoo was just one of many drawcards at Trenayr’s event. Photo by Marcia Le Busque

All kitted out with Luddenham Brigade. Photo by Cathie Chalkley

The SES joined in at Lochinvar. Photo by Daniel Johnson

A stove fire demonstration was organised by Narellan volunteers. Photo by Cassandra White  
Ready to respond with Lakesland Brigade. Photo by Lorna and Peter Sparkowski

Jump on board with Sandy Point Brigade. Photo by David Brown

Big Dog entertained kids at Central Cessnock’s open day. Photo by Erin Jackson

Bundanoon RFB also celebrated its 60th on 16 September 2006. Photo by Alan Fairbrother



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Overall, how appealing did you find this edition?

- Very appealing
- Fairly appealing
- Neutral
- Fairly unappealing
- Very unappealing

Comments: .....

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For each of the following, please indicate or comment on the features you were interested in reading in this issue (tick column applicable)

	Yes, I was interested		
<b>Incidents</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> .....
<b>General News</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> .....
<b>Spotlight on Volunteers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> .....
<b>Training</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> .....
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Please list the types of stories, or specific story ideas, you are interested in reading in the Bushfire Bulletin

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## NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

15 Carter Street  
Homebush Bay NSW 2127

Locked Mail Bag 17  
Granville NSW 2142

t: 02 8741 5555  
f: 02 9737 0171

e: [media@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:media@rfs.nsw.gov.au)  
w: [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

