



RFS

District Information Pack

Southern Highlands

1. District Details

The Southern Highlands Team includes the Local Government Areas of Wollondilly and Wingecarribee Shires. Wollondilly Shire is located at the south-western fringe of the Sydney metropolitan area, approx. 75 kms from the Sydney CBD. Wingecarribee Shire is located in the Southern Highlands Region of New South Wales, about 110 kilometres south-west of the Sydney CBD.

The Traditional Custodians of the Southern Highlands are the Gundungurra and Tharawal People.

The Southern Highlands area is 525,700 hectares with over 60% of the area covered by forest and classified as Water Catchment. This area includes the main towns of Bowral, Mittagong, Picton, Moss Vale and 63 villages/ townships.

There are eighteen (18) villages and four (4) large towns that form part of an extensive urban interface with considerable bushland. This is compounded by a major state highway and the Sydney to Melbourne rail line traversing parallel to adjacent bushland interface. Residents of non-English background form a small percentage of the population and are generally dispersed throughout the Local Government Areas

Tourism has a major effect on the local economy.

Close proximity to major urban centres of south west Sydney and the Illawarra exposes the area to many land owners commuting in and out of the highlands. A significant number of land owners also do not reside within the boundaries of the area.

On average the Southern Highlands experiences 400 bush and grass fires per year, of which a small number can be considered major fires. Main sources of ignition are:

- lightning strikes
- escaped pile burns
- arson

Southern Highlands Team has an active and experienced aviation group.

Airbase locations:

- Nattai Airbase - Burragorang Map S34 02 29 / E150 29 0
- Oakdale Airbase - Burragorang Map S34 04 13 / E150 26 49
- Water NSW Nepean - Bargo Map S34 19 49 / E150 36 33
- Wollondilly RFS STN - Barralier Map S34 20 44 / E150 13 28

Nearby Available airports:

- Mittagong Airfield 4 km East of Mittagong. Private Club Airfield.
- Wedderburn Airport 4km N/E of Appin township. Private Club Airfield.
- Camden Airport. 17km North of Picton. Certified Public Airport.

The Nominated Incident Management Facilities are Wollondilly FCC at Picton for Level 1 and 2 incidents and Wingecarribee FCC at Mittagong for all levels 1, 2 , 3 Incidents.

1.1. Contact Information

District Office Address:	Picton FCC - 65 Bridge Street Picton NSW 2571 Mittagong FCC – Cnr Priestley & Ethridge Streets Mittagong NSW 2575
District Office Phone:	02 4677 7000 or 02 4868 5500
After Hours Contact:	Via State Operations on 02 8741 5400
A PSN Radio Channel:	141 STHHL A – Primary Dispatch Channel
B PSN Radio Channel:	241 STHHL B
PMR Channel:	NA
ESO Conversion Chart:	Please see file in folder for relevant conversion information
Fire Weather Forecast Area:	Illawarra/Shoalhaven
Local Government Area:	Wollondilly, Wingecarribee

1.2. Topography

Both Wollondilly and Wingecarribee have a mix of deep sandstone gorges, gullies, sandy soils and an extensive urban Interface.

Much of the area is located at or above 640m above mean sea level.

The Wollondilly and Wingecarribee Rivers flow through the West of the Southern Highlands, through deep sandstone valleys and much of this area forms part of the catchment for Warragamba Dam and includes national parks and forestry land.

1.3. Vegetation

The Southern Highlands has a combination of remnant rainforest and heathland, rugged eucalypt bushland, and hobby farms. Hobby farms consisting mostly of small crops and livestock.

The unique climate and rugged landscape of The Southern Highlands has produced a diverse range of flora and fauna and remains the largest Koala habitat and population in southern Sydney.

Fuel loading is variable across both LGA's, the lowest ranging between 2.5 – 4.5 t/Ha

1.4. Climate

The typical climate in the Wollondilly/ Wingecarribee area is variable due to topographical and altitudinal differences. The low altitudinal areas north of the highlands experience a warm temperate climate with peak rainfall in the summer and autumn months. The bush fire season in this area is generally from August to December but can extend to March depending on the onset of summer rainfall. South of the highlands is considerably higher in altitude and experience a relatively cool temperate climate with predominantly summer rainfall and the bush fire season generally runs from October to March.

Prevailing weather conditions associated with the bush fire season in the Wollondilly/ Wingecarribee area usually coincide with strong southwest to northwest winds and influenced by drought and rainfall conditions. There are also frequent dry lightning storms which occur during the bush fire season.

1.5. Average Weather Data

Summary of major climate statistics for Camden Airport AWS recorded by the BoM (last updated 4 July 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	24.4	26.3	28.6	29.7	28.6	26.9	23.9	20.6	17.8	17.4	19.1	22.1
Min Temp (°C)	10.1	13.0	15.3	17.0	16.8	14.9	11.0	7.0	4.6	3.0	3.9	6.8
Rainfall (mm)	65.2	76.9	58.0	83.5	101.9	102.0	68.6	52.6	64.1	39.9	40.8	39.0
3pm Temp (°C)	22.4	24.3	26.8	27.7	26.9	25.4	22.5	19.3	16.5	16.0	17.7	20.3
3pm wind (km/h)	17.7	17.7	18.5	17.2	15.5	15.0	13.8	12.5	13.9	14.6	16.8	18.1
3pm RH (%)	47	50	46	49	52	52	52	52	53	50	43	44

Summary of major climate at Moss Vale AWS recorded by the BoM (last updated 4 July 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	19.7	22.0	24.2	26.1	24.4	22.0	19.1	15.4	12.5	12.0	13.5	16.9
Min Temp (°C)	7.8	10.5	12.3	14.3	14.1	12.1	8.6	4.8	3.5	2.5	3.0	5.4
Rainfall (mm)	52.6	75.1	62.8	65.5	101.9	93.4	64.3	50.4	79.7	61.4	54.1	40.6
3pm Temp (°C)	17.5	19.9	22.0	24.2	22.7	20.6	17.7	14.2	11.6	10.6	12.2	15.2
3pm wind (km/h)	Data Not Available											
3pm RH (%)	51	56	52	51	60	59	58	60	63	61	53	51

1.6. Known Radio Comms Blackspots

The Southern Highlands District has a very good system working along ridge tops, once travel commences down into the valleys reception can become quite patchy

1.7. Hazards

1.7.1. Transportation – Major Traffic Routes

- Hume Motorway in the north from the Nepean River overpass south to Paddy's River.
- Illawarra Highway from Sutton Forest east to Robertson and the escarpment.
- Remembrance Driveway from Camden south over Razorback to Bargo.
- The Main South Railway runs north south through the Southern Highlands.
- Picton Road, Primary East West road transport route connecting the Hume Highway and Princess Freeway.
- Appin Road, East West road connecting Campbelltown and Princes Motorway at Bulli Tops.

1.7.2. Railway

The Southern Highlands Line runs from Camden in the north through to Goulburn in the south.

There are 13 stations on the Southern Highlands Line including the Railway Museum at Thirlmere. Thirlmere is part of the historical line which branches off at Picton through to Buxton and the Railway Museum.

1.7.3. Extensive Urban Interface

Areas that are at extreme risk are those predominantly western villages backing on Catchment/NPWS, Silverdale south to Mittagong and the eastern area around Darkes Forest. There are areas at high risk from Bundanoon to Wingello from south NPWS/Forestry.

1.7.4. Mining

There are both active and inactive underground coal mines throughout the Southern Highlands. Trails on inactive mine sites have a history of collapsing and require prior permission from the appropriate land holder and a safety briefing

1.7.5. Agriculture

Hobby Farms - Livestock / Cropping

1.7.6. Local Industry

Mining, Lime Production, Aquifer, Viticulture, Poultry Production, Equine Establishments, Tourism.

1.7.7. Aviation

Sydney Skydivers – Aerodrome Drive, Wilton – Drop zone for skydiving operator

1.7.8. Special Fire Protection Facilities

Mining, Lime Production, Aquifer, Viticulture, Poultry Production, Equine Establishments, Tourism. Across The Southern Highlands there are 31 Primary Schools, 8 High Schools, 2 Hospitals, 1 TAFE, and a University of Wollongong Campus. Many Aged Care facilities are also located throughout Wollondilly and Wingecarribee.

1.7.9. Energy/Water

Both Wollondilly and Wingecarribee form part of the catchment area for Northern Shoalhaven, Wollongong and Sydney. Combined, they provide approximately 97% of Sydney's water supply.

1.8. Land Management Authorities

Land Manager	% of Area
National Parks & Wildlife Services	Data currently under review by BFMC
LMPA	
Local Government	
Private	
Forest Corp	
All Other	

For more specific data on the Southern Highlands District, please follow the link to the Wollondilly/Wingecarribee Bush Fire Risk Management Plan [here](#).

Note: This link will only work with internet coverage.

For further information regarding the Southern Highlands District Information pack, please contact the Operational Improvement team via **email at** operational.improvement@rfs.nsw.gov.au

