



# RFS

## District Information Pack

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### Northern Rivers

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Northern Rivers Zone is located in Northern Eastern NSW and incorporates the Lismore, Richmond Valley & Kyogle Local Government Areas with a total population of 75,945 (43,667 in Lismore ,23,490 in Richmond Valley & 8788 in Kyogle)

The land covered by the Northern Rivers Risk Management Plan covers a total 793,000ha (7930sq km) with 4 main population centres (Lismore, Casino, Kyogle & Evans Head) and numerous smaller rural communities.

Lismore and Kyogle are also home to Rural Land Sharing communities which are small to medium size single title blocks populated by up to 200 different households or dwellings. The region's population is increasing at a rate of about 0.6% per annum. Major employment sectors include retail, tourism, health and community services, manufacturing, education, business services and agriculture. Industry sectors such as education, media and creative industries, horticulture, residential development, forestry, meat and dairy, and aquaculture are emerging as areas with strong growth prospects. Northern Rivers Bush Fire Risk Management Plan 2021 Page 10 of 60 The major agricultural commodities produced in the Northern Rivers include dairy, tropical fruits, cattle, poultry, plantation forests, soy bean, sugar cane and aquaculture. In recent years, many new and niche agricultural operations have emerged in the region.

The Northern Rivers Risk Management area has on average 120 bushfires per year, of which 7 on average can be considered to be major fires. The main source of ignition include:

- pre bushfire danger period burns
- illegal burning off
- arson
- escapes from legal burning off
- lightning

Rural land sharing communities and isolated rural residential type settlements which are generally located in more remote areas of bushland, have been identified as potentially impacting on the ability of certain sections of the community to prepare themselves for bush fire. The relative bush fire hazard is often high and access limited. The lack of bush fire protection strategies combined with low or sub-standard building designs is a common characteristic. In the absence of adequate bush fire management practices, it is considered that a severe bush fire could significantly impact on some of these developments resulting in loss of assets and possible loss of life.

The Northern Rivers BFMC area commences its Bush Fire Danger Period on the 1st of September each year in recognition of a typical early onset of bush fire dangers across the region. This is one month earlier than the statutory period. In a typical year, the Bush Fire Danger Period generally ends in February due to typically high rainfall that occurs in the late summer months. This is assessed by the BFMC each year and varied as required.

Like most of NSW, 2019 was the worst fire season in living memory for the Northern Rivers Zone, with multiple fires burning out a total of around 300,000ha right across the Zone including, rainforest in the Nimbin area with no record of fire intrusion before.

Northern Rivers (Particularly Lismore) is also frequent to major - catastrophic flooding.

## 1.1. Contact Information

<b>District Office Address:</b>	40 Neville Bienke Memorial Drive Casino NSW 2470
<b>District Office Phone:</b>	02 6663 0000
<b>After Hours Contact:</b>	Via State Operations on 02 8741 5400
<b>A PSN Radio Channel:</b>	132 NTHRS A - <b>Primary Dispatch Channel</b>
<b>B PSN Radio Channel:</b>	232 NTHRS B
<b>PMR Channel:</b>	NA
<b>ESO Conversion Chart:</b>	Please see file in folder for relevant conversion information
<b>Fire Weather Forecast Area:</b>	Far North Coast
<b>Local Government Area:</b>	Lismore, Richmond Valley, Kyogle

## 1.2. Topography

The area is broad and consists of a coastal plains, Farming lands, significant waterway of the Richmond / Wilson rivers along with the Richmond Range & Great Dividing Range.

The landform ranges from sea level at Evans Head & Broadwater to an elevation of 1160mtrs in the North West on Mt Nothofagas and 342mtr at Mt Neville in the South West.

## 1.3. Vegetation

The area has a wide variety of vegetation types depending on the location varying from Coastal Heathlands, Dry Sclerophyll, Wet Sclerophyll, Rainforest, Woodlands, Wetlands and managed pastor.

A strip of Coastal Heath is located between Evans Head and Broadwater that contains a mix of Dry Sclerophyll as well.

Surrounding the River system (Richmond / Wilson) is mainly managed pastor (cattle) mixed with seasonal cropping such as sugar cane.

Areas of the Lismore & Kyogle LGA are home to world heritage listed rainforest that during dry times are threatened by fire (2019).

The Richmond & Great Dividing Rang is mainly Dry Sclerophyll and the area where most of the major fires within Northern Rivers start.

## 1.4. Climate

The typical / average climate in the Northern Rivers BFMC area is warm subtropical with a well-defined summer / autumn rainfall peak (January to March) and a dry winter and spring. The climate in forested areas at higher altitudes tends towards warm temperate. The temperature and rainfall conditions vary across the district. The rainfall can be unreliable during the late winter / spring period, particularly on the lower altitude landforms.

The bush fire season generally coincides with strong south-west to north-west winds, which tend to prevail during late winter / spring (August / September) and often result in high to extreme fire danger days, particularly where the drought indices are low. The majority of serious bush fires occur from this period until the onset of summer rains, which normally start from December and continue through to autumn. Longer fire seasons are experienced when summer rainfall is lower than normal, with the bush fire season extending through summer to early autumn.

## 1.5. Average Weather Data

**Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Lismore Airport AWS recorded by the BoM (last updated 19 April 2024)**

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	27.3	28.6	29.6	30.2	29.5	28.2	25.9	23.3	20.8	20.9	22.8	25.6
Min Temp (°C)	12.7	15.2	17.4	18.7	18.7	17.4	14.0	9.5	7.9	6.1	6.6	9.6
Rainfall (mm)	92.2	94.0	138.1	144.3	142.5	181.4	108.6	66.0	100.5	34.0	54.3	44.6
3pm Temp (°C)	No data available											
3pm wind (km/h)												
3pm RH (%)												

## 1.6. Known Radio Comms Blackspots

Northern Rivers has extensive radio coverage and is only known to be limited in areas shadowed by multiple valley systems like that occurred in The Channon, Grevillia & on the Air Weapons Range South of Evans Head.

The District has access portable repeaters that can be deployed in the event of increased fire activity in these areas.

## 1.7. Hazards

### 1.7.1. Transportation

- The Pacific Motorway (M1) traverses the Eastern parts of the Zone and is a dual carriageway that transports a large amount of mixed goods via B-Doubles.
- The Bruxner Hwy (B66) exits the M1 at Ballina and heads in a Westerly direction toward Tenterfield.
- The Summerland Way (B91) links Grafton to Casino, Kyogle through to the QLD border at Woodenbong.
- Sydney Brisbane train line dissects the Zone travelling through Casino & Kyogle carrying hazards goods, freight and passengers daily.

### 1.7.2. Agriculture

The Northern Rivers is home to large cattle farming along with open plain cropping such as sugar cane. Processing facilities are located in Broadwater for Sugar cane and meatworks located in Casino & Booyong.

### 1.7.3. Energy and Water

- At McKees Hill is a 330kv substation that supplies the entire region with power and several 132kv feeders come from this location to parts of the Northern Rivers.
- Rocky Creek dam is located near Dunoon and feeds a majority of the Northern Rivers Zone water supply.

### 1.7.4. Aviation

Lismore & Casino have Council operated airfields with commercial airlines no longer operating from either location. Smaller aircraft do frequent both fields with fuel located at Lismore and firefighting retardant at Casino.

## 1.8. Land Management Authorities

Land Manager	% of BFMC Area
National Parks & Wildlife Service	14.89
Forestry Corporation NSW	11.5
Department of Lands	2.79
Private/Other	70.77

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

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

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

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