



RFS

District Information Pack

Sutherland

The Sutherland District is located approximately 25Km south of Sydney and incorporates the Sutherland Shire Council area (population 232,369).

The land covered under the Sutherland Bush Fire Risk management plan is 368,800ha (368 sq km).

Significant bush fires have been experienced over the years with the average interval being between 5 to 7 years. These fires have occurred throughout the Shire with severity largely influenced by long term rainfall deficiencies and weather conditions conducive to an elevated fire danger.

The major ignition causes in the Sutherland Shire are:

- Human activity (deliberate or accidental)
- Lightning

A significant threat emanates from the restricted access lands (Department of Defence (Holsworthy Training Area) to the west of the Sutherland Shire due to the nature of activities carried out on this land.

The population of the Sutherland Shire area is approximately 230,000 people. Sutherland Shire is located at the southern coastal border of the Sydney metropolitan area, about 26 kilometres from the Sydney CBD. Sutherland Shire is bounded by Bankstown/Canterbury Local Government Area and the Georges River in the north, the South Pacific Ocean in the east, Wollongong City and Royal National Park in the south and Deadman's Creek, Woronora Dam and Campbelltown and Liverpool Cities in the west.

The area has a very low percentage of the community who cannot speak or understand English.

The nominated Incident Management Facility is the Illawarra Sutherland District Fire Control Centre located at 126 Wilson Parade, Heathcote NSW 2233. The Primary Local Emergency Operations Centre is also located at the Illawarra Sutherland District Fire Control Centre at Heathcote.

The Sutherland and Illawarra Districts have been merged. Please refer to the Illawarra District Information Pack for details relevant to the Illawarra Local Government Area.

1.1. Contact Information

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| District Office Address: | 126 Wilson Parade, Heathcote NSW 2233 |
| District Office Phone: | 02 8508 4040 |
| After Hours Contact: | via State Operations on 02 8741 5400 |
| A PSN Radio Channel: | 143 SUTHE A – Primary Dispatch Channel |
| B PSN Radio Channel: | 243 SUTHE B |
| PMR Channel: | N/A |
| ESO Conversion Chart: | Please see file in folder for relevant conversion information |
| Fire Weather Forecast Area: | Greater Sydney |
| Local Government Area: | Sutherland |

1.2. Topography

The area is predominantly residential, with large areas of native vegetation such as the Royal National Park (15,000ha), Heathcote National Park (2,700ha), Kamay Botany Bay National Park, (400ha) and Crown Lands to the west of the District. The Sutherland District is neighboured by the Macarthur District and the Holsworthy Military Range (22,000ha).

The natural features of Sutherland Shire include beaches, wetlands, bays, rivers and Hawkesbury sandstone tablelands dissected by deep river valleys and vegetation covered gorges. There is approximately 160km of urban/bushland interface, and approximately 200km of foreshore waterways including 4km of beaches.

The driest months are historically from July to October in both the western and eastern parts of the District due to the influence of westerly winds. The area is subject to coastal rainfall and hence the western areas of the Sutherland Shire experience less rainfall than the coastal regions.

1.3. Vegetation

The Sutherland District is characteristic of Hawkesbury Sandstone vegetation formations, with a combination of Dry Sclerophyll forest and Coastal Heath. The eastern parts of the Royal National Park and Kamay Botany National Park are dominated with Coastal Heathlands, while the western parts of the Sutherland District are dominated by Dry Sclerophyll Forest.

Heathland - generally contain a relatively high proportion of fire prone species. Fuel loads are typically continuous from ground to canopy. Potential fire intensities are generally related to the height of the heath.

Dry sclerophyll forests – generally have a dry understorey of grasses and shrubs, which burn readily under a much broader range of conditions than other forest types. Very high to extreme fuel levels (up to 25 t/ha) and relatively open canopies allow sunlight and wind to quickly dry available fuels, giving these forests the potential to support high intensity bush fires.

1.4. Climate

The Sutherland Shire has a temperate climate with generally warm summers and mild winters.

Higher rainfall occurs in summer while late winter and spring tends to be drier due to the influence of westerly winds. The area is subject to coastal rainfall and hence the western areas of the Sutherland Shire can be considerably drier than the coastal regions.

The start of an average fire season coincides with the arrival of the warmer weather, normally October or early November. If the spring period has been drier than normal, then the season may commence earlier due to the strong westerly winds which often prevail during late winter and spring (Aug/Sep).

The most extreme seasons will generally occur during late December or early January if summer rain has not occurred and may continue through to March if summer rainfall does not occur, particularly through February.

1.5. Average Weather Data

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Lucas Heights (ANSTO) recorded by the BoM (Last updated 3 July 2024)

| Element (Mean) | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|
| Max Temp (°C) | 21.6 | 23.4 | 25.7 | 25.9 | 26.0 | 24.7 | 22.3 | 18.9 | 16.2 | 15.8 | 17.2 | 19.5 |
| Min Temp (°C) | 11.9 | 13.7 | 15.9 | 17.4 | 17.6 | 16.1 | 13.3 | 10.1 | 8.2 | 6.6 | 7.4 | 9.4 |
| Rainfall (mm) | 71.6 | 91.5 | 76.2 | 96.6 | 111.3 | 128.1 | 93.9 | 76.0 | 102.1 | 62.6 | 68.8 | 50.6 |
| 3pm Temp (°C) | 19.6 | 21.5 | 23.7 | 24.2 | 24.3 | 23.1 | 21.0 | 17.7 | 15.2 | 14.8 | 16.0 | 18.0 |
| 3pm wind (km/h) | 13.1 | 14.1 | 14.9 | 13.7 | 12.5 | 11.1 | 10.4 | 9.3 | 9.8 | 10.5 | 12.6 | 13.2 |
| 3pm RH (%) | 57 | 57 | 57 | 62 | 63 | 63 | 58 | 58 | 61 | 52 | 51 | 52 |

1.6. Known Radio Comms Blackspots

- Woroonora River SW around 'The Needles'
- Royal National Park – Wattamolla Garie Beach, Grays Point (Hacking River – Reeds Point)

1.7. Hazards

1.7.1. Transportation

A1/ M1 Princes Hwy. This road runs north south through the District. Heathcote Road runs east west through the southern part of the District and is used by many heavy vehicles. New Illawarra Road/ Alford's Point Road is another significant road running north south in the western part of the District. Each of these roads run through dense bushland and may be used as a control line in the event of a bushfire.

The main Illawarra rail link mainly runs adjacent to the Princes Highway through the district. Suburban and intercity rail services run on this line taking passengers from the urbanised area north to the Sydney CBD. Significant numbers of heavy freight trains (mainly coal), run south to coal loaders further down the coast and return empty.

1.7.2. Human Settlement

Significant ridge top residential settlement across the Sutherland District.

High visitation to the Royal National Park increases significantly during public and school holidays particularly in Bundeena, Maianbar, the Audley precinct and the coastal beaches of Wattamolla and Garie.

1.7.3. Hazardous Facilities

Australian Defence Force (Holsworthy Barracks and Live Firing Range) is also partly located within Sutherland Shire on the western side of Heathcote Road.

The Lucas Heights Waste and Recycling Centre is located on the northern side of the intersection of Heathcote and Old Illawarra Roads. This facility takes waste from much of Sydney.

The western edge of Sutherland district is adjacent to the Liverpool Military Area. This area has been utilised for live ordnance training for a significant period of time. In the past this has included areas of Heathcote National Park and bushland to the east of Heathcote Road. Unexploded ordnance has been found in these areas (particularly east of Heathcote Road).

The Kurnell peninsula consists of a residential area, the AMPOL bulk fuel storage facility, a Desalination Plant, increasing industrial development, Kamay Botany Bay National Park.

1.8. Land Management Authorities

| Land Manager | % of Area |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| National Parks & Wildlife Service | 45 |
| Crown Lands | 7 |
| Local Government | 7 |
| Private | 23 |
| Gandangara LALC | 2 |
| Department of Defence | 9 |
| ANSTO | 1 |
| All other (including waterways | 6 |

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

Note: This link will only work with internet coverage.

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

