



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

MEDIA RELEASE

Leading experts to share experience in engaging communities

25 May 2022

More than 400 emergency management and community engagement practitioners from across Australia will gather in Newcastle this week to discuss best practice and share their experiences in engaging with communities to improve community safety and build resilience.

The 21st Australian Community Engagement and Fire Awareness (ACEFA) conference, hosted by the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS), will include presentations from leaders in emergency services, case studies and research from around Australia, and masterclasses in the foundation skills required to undertake community engagement.

NSW RFS Commissioner Rob Rogers said the theme for this year's conference was "Compassion. Grit. Innovation – Engaging with our communities when times are tough" with speakers and presentations highlighting the importance of community preparation in light of the recent fires, pandemic and floods.

"The conference will consider and discuss the latest research and best practice in engaging communities on preparation, response and recovery to natural disasters," Commissioner Rogers said.

"We'll hear directly from communities affected by the Black Summer fires and the recent flooding, to discuss public information and warnings, management and engagement during operations.

"This conference will help leaders in fire and emergency services, government and the private sector better understand how to engage with communities ultimately helping residents better prepare for and protect themselves during disasters."

Along with workshops, eight keynote speakers include:

- Jacqueline Maxted and Michael Hilliard who were behind the documentary feature film, *A Fire Inside*, which explores the inspiring community response to the 2019/2020 fire season.
- Todd Sampson, host of award-winning Discovery Science TV series *Redesign My Brain*, who will show delegates how to boost creativity and brain power.
- NSW RFS members who will share their experience of the 2019/20 fire season and flood response in NSW.

Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience and Minister for Flood Recovery Steph Cooke will also address the conference to discuss her recent experiencing travelling through flood affected areas and the importance of engaging with communities.

The ACEFA conference will be held from 26-28 May 2022 at the Newcastle Exhibition and Conference Centre, in conjunction with online components and is sponsored by the NSW Rural Fire Service Association.

A full program can be found here: <https://nswrfs.eventsair.com/acefa2022/program>

