



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



NSW RFS ANNUAL REPORT

2014/15

1

Introduction

Contents

2

Management and Governance

3

Summary Review of Operations

4

Key Focus Areas - Corporate Plan

5

Financial Statements

6

Appendices

A close-up photograph of a firefighter's hands holding a metal fire nozzle. The firefighter is wearing a bright yellow jacket with reflective silver stripes. The nozzle is made of polished metal and has a chain attached to its handle. The background is blurred, showing other parts of the fire scene.

2

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Legislation and governing bodies

The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) is the lead combat agency for bush fires in NSW. For over 100 years we have been a significant part of the history and landscape of NSW. Working closely with other agencies we also respond to a range of emergencies including structure fires, motor vehicle accidents, floods and storms that occur within rural fire districts.

The NSW RFS is widely acknowledged as the largest volunteer fire service in the world. Members of the NSW RFS are trained to very high levels of competence to ensure they know what to do in any emergency.

The Service aims to reduce the likelihood and consequence of bush fires occurring. This involves comprehensive risk management programs to reduce bush fire hazards and fire ignitions. It also involves the development of regulations for bush fire prone areas.

Legislation

The management and operational responsibilities of the NSW RFS are set down clearly in the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and can be summarised as follows:

- Protection of life and property for all fire-related incidents within all rural fire districts in the state
- Safety and welfare of all volunteers
- Provision of effective training and resources to rural fire brigades
- Provision of emergency assistance to other emergency service organisations.

A number of amendments were made to the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and introduced in December 2010. The amendments formalised arrangements for Neighbourhood Safer Places and the responsibility of the NSW RFS Commissioner to issue warnings to the public about bush fires.

In 2013 the Hazard Reduction Audit Panel made 18 recommendations. The NSW Government accepted and implemented 18. Eight of the recommendations required legislative changes which were included in the *Rural Fires Amendment Bill 2013* which has been passed by NSW Parliament. The Bill amended the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, the *Rural Fires Regulation 2013*, the *National Park and Wildlife Act 1974* and the *State Emergency Management Act* to:

- Extend the objectives of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* to include the protection of infrastructure, environmental, economic, cultural, agricultural and social assets from damage by fire (in addition to property).
- Task the NSW RFS with the protection of infrastructure, environmental, economic, cultural, agricultural and social assets from damage by fire (in addition to property).

- Give the NSW RFS Commissioner quality assurance powers of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans, including the power to direct a Bush Fire Management Committee to amend plans.
- Give the NSW RFS Commissioner power to conduct hazard reduction (HR) work on land without owner or occupier consent after reasonable attempts are made to contact the owner or occupier. The NSW RFS must attempt to serve notice of work to be carried out and conduct an inquiry of not less than seven days to identify the owner and their current location.
- Include fire trails in the definition of HR.
- Require public authorities to report annual HR activity to the NSW RFS by July 30 every year, instead of September 30.
- Require public authorities to provide monthly updates about planned HR activities that did not take place.
- Allow three year HR certificates to be issued for regular HR work that will only have a low environmental impact. The previous maximum was one year.

In the reporting period amendments were made to the *Rural Fires Act 1997* to include:

- the 10/50 vegetation clearing scheme which allows people to clear certain vegetation near their homes to improve protection from bush fires
- fine for arson-related offences were increased
- issuing of infringement notices to those who discard lit cigarettes

NSW Government and Ministry

As a department of the NSW Government, the NSW RFS comes under the Emergency Services portfolio within the Justice Cluster. The Hon. Stuart Ayres was Minister for Police and Emergency Services for the reporting period until 2 April 2015. At that time the Hon. David Elliot MP, Member for Baulkham Hills, became the Minister for Emergency Services including responsibility for the NSW RFS.

Protection of all life
and property for
all fire-related incidents
within all rural
fire districts
in the state

NSW RFS Commissioner

The Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling the activities of the Service and has other functions conferred or imposed on him by or under the *Rural Fires Act 1997*. It is the Commissioner who invokes section 44 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* in order to declare a bush fire emergency.

NSW RFS Executive

The day-to-day management of the Service is carried out under the direction of the NSW RFS Executive.

The Executive consists of the Commissioner and the Service's Executive Directors, Chief Financial Officer and Directors. A profile of each of the Principal Officers can be seen on pages 28-9.

Review of Executive Structure

Arrangements under the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (the *GSE Act*) and direction from the Public Service Commission required all agencies to review their executive structure. Under the *GSE Act*, the senior executive structure

incorporates all former Senior Executive Service (SES) and former Senior Officer (SO) roles. Former SES roles are now referred to as Executive Directors instead of Directors and former Senior Officers are now referred to as Directors. For further information on the *GSE Act* reforms refer to page 40.

Corporate Executive Group

The Corporate Executive Group (CEG) comprises the Executive Directors, Chief Financial Officer and Directors of the Service and representatives of the NSW Rural Fire Service Association (RFSA), which is the representative association of the volunteers and staff of the NSW RFS. Its principal role is to consider and provide advice to the Commissioner on strategic issues affecting the Service. Details of representation and attendance at this Group are set out in Appendix 4.3.

Governance Committees

Three bodies are empowered by legislation to assist in the operation of the NSW RFS, they are the:

- Rural Fire Service Advisory Council
- Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee
- Fire Services Joint Standing Committee.

Rural Fire Service Advisory Council

The Rural Fire Service Advisory Council (RFSAC) is established under the provisions of Part 6 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*. The Council advises and reports to the Minister and the NSW RFS Commissioner on any matters relating to the administration of the Service. It also provides advice to the Commissioner on public education, programs relating to rural fire matters, the training of rural firefighters and Service Standards. Details of representation and attendances at the Council are set out in Appendix 4.3.

Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee

The Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee (BFCC) is established under the provisions of section 46 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*. The Committee is chaired by the NSW RFS Commissioner and supported by the Service.

The BFCC is responsible for planning in relation to fire prevention and coordinated bush firefighting. It also advises the Commissioner on bush fire prevention and mitigation and coordinated bush fire suppression.

The BFCC constitutes Bush Fire Management Committees (BFMCs) for all rural fire districts

and areas with significant risk of bush fire. It also approves Operations Coordination and Bush Fire Risk Management Plans that are prepared by the BFMCs. Details of representation and attendance at this Committee are set out in Appendix 4.3.

Fire Services Joint Standing Committee

The *Fire Services Joint Standing Committee Act 1998* provides for the establishment of the Fire Services Joint Standing Committee (FSJSC). The major functions of the Committee are to develop and submit to the Minister strategic plans for the coordinated delivery of urban and rural fire services at the interface; to undertake periodic review of fire district and rural fire district boundaries; the minimisation of duplication and the maximisation of compatibility between the NSW RFS and Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW). The Committee is chaired alternately by the Commissioners of FRNSW and the NSW RFS. Details of representation and attendance at this Committee are set out in Appendix 4.3.

Audit & Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee provides assistance to the NSW RFS Commissioner by overseeing and monitoring the governance and accountability requirements of the NSW RFS. The Committee is chaired by an independent member and advises the Commissioner on a range of matters including: the effectiveness of the Service's internal audit function; legislative compliance; the financial statements and financial reporting of the Service; risk and control frameworks; business continuity and corruption prevention activities. Details of representation and attendance at this Committee are set out in Appendix 4.3.

Consultative & stakeholder committees

Consultation with our stakeholders and related agencies plays a key role in the governance of the NSW RFS.

NSW RFS / RFSa Consultative Committees

The Rural Fire Service Association (RFSa) is a state-wide non-partisan member association and a valued partner of the NSW RFS. The NSW RFS Commissioner relies on a number of consultative committees, comprising RFSa representatives and senior staff of the Service, for advice on NSW RFS operations and management.

The Committees that met in the reporting period were: Community Engagement, Membership Services (including the Young Members Group, a sub-group of the Membership Services Consultative Committee), Infrastructure Services and Operations.

Details of representation and attendance at Committee meetings are set out in Appendix 3.11.

Local Government Liaison Committee

The principal roles of the Committee are to discuss and resolve significant issues of a strategic nature that are of mutual interest to local government and the Service.

Details of representation and attendance at this Committee are set out in Appendix 4.3.

Stakeholder liaison and collaboration

The Service is also represented on a number of external organisations:

- Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) and its various groups
- Association of Environment Education (NSW) Border Liaison Committees
- Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre
- District Emergency Management Committees/ District Rescue Committees
- Emergency Services Communications Working Party
- Emergency Services Industry Reference Group
- Emergency Services Personnel Support Advisory Group
- Environmental Education Officer's Group/Fire Protection Association
- Museum Education Officer's Group
- National Aerial Firefighting Centre
- NSW Health Disaster Management Committee
- Emergency Service Organisation Work Health and Safety Consultative Committee
- Standards Australia - various committees
- State Emergency Management Committee/ State Rescue Board
- National Emergency Management Committee
- Fuel Loads Management Working Group
- The National Bush Fire Arson Prevention Working Group.

Governance & Ethical Standards

Governance is a strategic early warning system

Governance

The annual review of NSW RFS Corporate Governance Statement was undertaken in July 2014 utilising the analysis questions from the Audit Office of NSW. Directors and managers with key governance responsibilities contributed to the review.

The review highlighted improved controls in the Service's governance arrangements. In the areas of:

- Fraud and Corruption – which moved from Substantially in Place to Fully in Place
- Compliance Management – which has moved from Partially in Place to Substantially in Place
- Internal Controls – which has moved from Partially in Place to Substantially in Place
- Stakeholder Communication – which has moved from Partially in Place to Fully in Place

During the reporting period work commenced on aligning the NSW RFS Governance Fire Tower Model to the 2015 update of the Audit-Offices' Lighthouse Governance model. Work will continue on this program into 2015/16 as part of the annual update of the Corporate Governance Statement.

The NSW RFS Corporate Governance Statement is available on the public website and the NSW RFS staff intranet.

Ethical Standards

Code of Conduct and Ethics

A comprehensive review of the Code of Conduct and Ethics (the Code) was undertaken and a revised Code developed. The Code aligns with the Code of Ethics and Conduct for NSW government sector employees contained in Section 2.2 of *Behaving Ethically: a guide for NSW government sector employees* published by the Public Service Commission. The revised Code was circulated to all staff and volunteers members soon after the reporting period. It provides a broad framework to:

- guide daily professional and personal conduct of all NSW RFS members as they undertake their duties and activities and provide a service for, and communicate with, the NSW community;
- support sound and ethical decision-making and efficient, effective, and prudent use of resources;
- assist NSW RFS members to decide on an appropriate course of action when they are faced with an ethical issue or situation;
- assist NSW RFS members to recognise and avoid behaviours that are inappropriate or have the potential to involve, or be perceived to involve, corruption, maladministration or waste, and provide guidance with respect to the reporting of such matters;
- provide transparency to enable public scrutiny and ensure a merit based, apolitical and professional Service; and
- support compliance with the NSW Government's mandatory conduct standards outlined in *Behaving Ethically: A guide for NSW government sector employees*.

Code of Conduct & Ethics Training

Code of Conduct and Ethics Training was delivered to salaried members across the state with six training sessions held in 2014/2015:

- three courses as part of State Mitigation Support Service Crew Induction (35 staff trained)
- two courses as part of Operations Officer Training Program (16 staff trained)
- one course as part of Operations Customer Service Centre Induction (11 staff trained)

A strategy is currently being developed to expand the program of Code of Conduct and Ethics training to volunteer members focussing initially on Group Captains and other senior volunteer members.

Professional Standards Unit

Information sessions on reporting conduct issues, ethical leadership, and workplace information were conducted around the state in 2014/2015 including:

- Region West Group Captains Forum (11 July 2014)
- Region North Senior Volunteer & Operations Officer Forum (2 August 2014)
- Chaplaincy and Family Support Conference (6 August 2014)
- Region East Group Officers Conference (24 August 2014)
- Region East Business & Administration Officer Forum (27 August 2014)
- Lower Hunter Captain & Group Captains Forum (30 August 2014)
- Critical Incident Support Services (CISS) Team Training (31 August 2014)
- CISS Team Training (Child Protection) (28 March 2015)
- District Managers Forum (28 May 2015)

Providing advice, education, training and mentoring to members in fraud prevention and corruption issues is an integral part of the Service's ethical commitment. In the reporting period the following three Policies and Service Standards were reviewed:

- gifts, benefits and bribes;
- conflicts of interest, and
- fraud and corruption prevention.

A Statement of Business Ethics was introduced as part of the Service's Corruption Prevention Framework to ensure a fair and productive relationship between the NSW RFS and its suppliers of goods and services.

The Statement of Business Ethics includes general guidelines on a wide range of topics including:

- ethical communication between the private sector and NSW RFS members
- conflicts of Interest
- gifts, benefits, hospitality and promotions
- donations and fundraising
- sponsorship
- confidentiality
- Intellectual Property
- private employment and post-separation employment
- Child-safe/Child-friendly Workplace
- use of NSW RFS equipment, resources and information

The Services Professional Standards Unit investigates serious alleged breaches of the NSW RFS Code of Conduct by members, or any other alleged improper conduct (including criminal matters) and serious performance-related matters. The Unit manages allegations of unethical behaviour, misconduct, fraud, corruption and maladministration by Service members including Public Interest Disclosures.

Strong professional working relationships are maintained with various relevant external agencies, including the NSW Police Force, ICAC and the NSW Ombudsman's Office and the Commissioner has mandatory legislative reporting requirements to ICAC as well as the NSW Ombudsman in respect of any complaints or requests for information referred from these agencies.

Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) Public Inquiry

On 11 May 2015 the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) announced a public inquiry into alleged corruption and fraud relating to inappropriate procurement activities involving two former NSW RFS staff members and a volunteer member. The hearing into this matter was held in June 2015 and the Commission will report its findings and any recommendations in due course. The NSW RFS has cooperated fully with the Commission and will continue to assist to the fullest extent possible.

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

Operations Infrastructure Services Membership & Strategic Services Executive Services

Response & Coordination

Technical & Fleet Services

Membership Services

Financial Services

Coordinated Risk Management

Assets & Infrastructure

Corporate Planning, Learning & Governance

Corporate Communications

Community Resilience

Information Communications & Technology

Health, Safety & Welfare

Program, Audit & Inquiries

Operational & Mitigation Services

Professional Standards Unit

Customer Service Centres

Chaplaincy & Family Support Network

Regional Services

Volunteer Relations & Workforce Planning

Principal Officers and Government Senior Officers

NSW RFS Commissioner

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons has more than 30 years experience with the NSW RFS serving as both a volunteer and salaried officer.

In 1998 he was appointed an Assistant Commissioner with the NSW RFS and has held portfolio responsibilities for Operations, Strategic Development and Regional Management. In 2004 he was appointed the inaugural Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) Visiting Fellow to the Australian Institute of Police Management (AIPM) for a period of 12 months.

In September 2007 Mr Fitzsimmons was appointed Commissioner of the NSW RFS. He was appointed a Director of the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) in March 2008 and was the Chair of the NAFC Board from 2009 to 2013. He is also a member of the NSW State Rescue Board and was appointed Chairman in 2008. In December 2009 he was appointed a Director on the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre. He was appointed a Board Member of the NSW Government Telecommunications Authority in July 2012.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons was awarded the National Medal in 1999 and the Australian Fire Service Medal in 2001.



Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM

Executive Director Operations

Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers, AFSM

Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers joined the NSW RFS in 1979 as a volunteer member of the Belrose Brigade.

In 1995, Deputy Commissioner Rogers commenced his career as a salaried officer as Deputy Fire Control Officer for the Greater Taree District. Since 2002, he has held various executive positions responsible for Regional Management, Risk Management, Community Safety and Operations.

In 2004, he was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal. In July 2008, Deputy Commissioner Rogers was appointed Director Operations which brought together the two service delivery areas of Community Safety and Operations into a single cohesive team. In 2011, he was appointed Deputy Commissioner.

In May 2013, the Service undertook a realignment that included the Regional Services Directorate being amalgamated into the Operations Directorate.

Deputy Commissioner Rogers represents the NSW RFS on numerous international and national bodies including the International Association of Fire Chiefs, International Asian Fire Chiefs, the Wildland Fire Policy Committee, National Bush Fire Arson Taskforce and several AFAC Groups.

Executive Director Membership and Strategic Services

Ms Bronwyn Jones

Ms Bronwyn Jones was appointed to the NSW RFS in November 2008.

Prior to joining the Service, Ms Jones had extensive senior level experience in strategic planning and reporting, human resource management and project delivery gained in various public sector agencies, including the Premier's Department, the Department of Community Services, NSW Police Force and IAB Services.

She holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Labour Relations and the Law (University of Sydney); a Master of Arts (Interdisciplinary Studies) degree and a Master of Commerce (Human Resource).

Executive Director Infrastructure Services

Assistant Commissioner Bruce McDonald, AFSM

Assistant Commissioner Bruce McDonald was appointed as the Director Infrastructure Services for the NSW RFS in May 2013. Mr McDonald joined the then Bush Fire Brigade in 1980 and progressed through the organisation, holding various brigade positions culminating in Group Captain in the mid-1990s.

He commenced as a salaried officer in 1998 in the role of Deputy Fire Control Officer - Operations, bringing to a close a 25-year management career in the automotive industry. Since 2001, Assistant Commissioner McDonald has held various management positions at NSW RFS Headquarters, including State Operations Officer, Manager Operational Communications and Group Manager Assets and Infrastructure.

In 2008 he was seconded to head up the implementation of a SAP Enterprise Resource Planning System replacing the Service's Finance and Procurement systems. Assistant Commissioner McDonald was awarded an Australian Fire Service Medal in 2011.

Executive Director Executive Services

Mr Brad Scutella

Mr Brad Scutella has been employed in the NSW and Commonwealth Public Sector since 1980. Over his career he has principally worked in legal related areas in the NSW Police Force, Transport and Australian Securities and Investment Commission. Prior to his appointment to the NSW RFS in April 2015, he held the positions of Special Adviser and Chief of Staff to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

In 2001 Mr Scutella was awarded a scholarship from the Independent Commission Against Corruption. He attended the ICAC scholarship course in Corruption and Anti-Corruption at the Australian National University as both a participant and lecturer.

Mr Scutella is a Solicitor of the Supreme Court of NSW and has responsibility for managing the Executive Services Directorate.

Executive Director Executive Services (until October 2014)

Mr Richard Lyons

Mr Richard Lyons has been employed in the NSW Public Sector since 1979. Over his career he has principally worked in policy-related areas in the Health and Attorney-General's Departments, the Ministry of Police and, prior to this appointment to the Service in August 2008, he held the position of Director, Office of Emergency Services for 13 years.

Mr Lyons holds tertiary qualifications in Science and Law.

On 7 October 2014 Mr Lyons commenced a period of leave prior to his retirement in April 2016.

NOTE: Mr Stephen O'Malley acted in the role of Executive Services Director between October 2014 and the appointment of Mr Brad Scutella in April 2015.

Arrangements under the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (the *GSE Act*) and direction from the Public Service Commission required all agencies to review their executive structure which occurred in the reporting period. Under the *GSE Act*, the senior executive structure incorporates all

former Senior Executive Service (SES) and former Senior Officer (SO) roles. Former SES roles are now referred to as Executive Directors instead of Directors and former Senior Officers are now referred to as Directors. For further information on the *GSE Act* reforms refer to page 40.

OPERATIONS	
Director Response and Coordination	Assistant Commissioner Steve Yorke, AFSM
Director Coordinated Risk Management	Assistant Commissioner Stuart Midgley, AFSM
Director Community Resilience	Mr Corey Shackleton
Director Operational & Mitigation Services	Ms Rebel Talbert
Director Customer Service and Support	Mr Jeff Lucas
Director Regional Services	Assistant Commissioner Jason Heffernan
INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES	
Director Assets & Infrastructure	Chief Superintendent John Parnaby
Director Information & Communications Technology	Mr Matthew Smith
MEMBERSHIP & STRATEGIC SERVICES	
Director Membership Services	Mr Daniel Moroney
Director Corporate Planning Governance & Learning	Mr Stephen Glassock
Director Professional Standards	Ms Helen Colbey
EXECUTIVE SERVICES	
Director Corporate Communications	Mr Anthony Clark
Chief Financial Officer	Mr Stephen O'Malley