



District Information Pack

Lower Western

Lower Western Zone is located in South Western New South Wales. The nearest major regional city for the majority of the district is Mildura, located in North West Victoria. The area is 4,662,296 hectares comprising 2,548,030 hectares in the Wentworth shire; 2,114,266 hectares in the Balranald Shire.

The population of the Lower Western area is approximately 10,361 people. The major population centres in the Wentworth shire are the townships of Wentworth, Dareton, Buronga, Gol Gol and Curlwaa which are situated along the Murray River. The majority of the population in the Balranald Shire live in the towns of Balranald and Euston. The Lower Western area also has a significant number of seasonal itinerant workers moving in and out of the horticultural areas, Indigenous community fluctuations and a large number of tourists.

The bush fire season generally runs from October to March. Prevailing weather conditions associated with the bush fire season in the area are strong westerly to northerly winds in spring, with high temperatures occurring throughout spring, summer and extending into autumn at times. High temperatures combined with thunderstorm activity through the bush fire season can initiate significant fire events.

Lower Western has on average 5 “notable” bush fires per year. The main sources of ignition in the area are:

- lightning
- escaped campfires
- roadside ignition

These are mainly confined to remote areas.

The nominated Incident Management Facility is the Lower Western Zone Fire Control Centre. This facility is often utilised by many partner and support agencies, as it is the primary Local Emergency Operations Centre for the region.

1.1. Contact Information

District Office Address:	56-60 Mitchell Avenue Dareton NSW 2717
District Office Phone:	03 5027 4422
After Hours Contact:	Via State Operations on 02 8741 5400
PMR Channel:	2221 LWWST P – Primary Dispatch Channel
A PSN Radio Channel:	123 LWWST A – (Not active until GRN coverage available)
B PSN Radio Channel:	223 LWWST B – (Not active until GRN coverage available)
ESO Conversion Chart:	Please see file in folder for relevant conversion information
Fire Weather Forecast Area:	South Western
Local Government Area:	Wentworth, Balranald

1.2. Topography

The Lower Western area is rather unique in its topography as it is predominately flat with few areas of elevation.

1.3. Vegetation

Lower Western District has a variety of fuel types including native and crop grasslands, mallee and black box and red gum along the local and major watercourses.

The Grassland fuel load and fire severity in the area is extremely dependent on weather conditions experienced in the previous months i.e. rainfall and temperatures as well as grazing levels. Grasslands generally begin to cure in early September, with complete curing by mid-December.

Surface fuels within the Mallee forest are typically made up of spinifex (aka Porcupine) and with the right conditions, can be extremely volatile. These surface fuels can foster intense fire behaviour, however, this is heavily dependent on other factors (wind, fuel continuity etc).

Variations in landscape from heavy (bull) Mallee through to open grazing and cropping country typically assist in the overall fire management strategy for the area.

1.4. Climate

The typical / average climate in the Lower Western Zone area is generally hot and semi arid. The temperature variation is distinct with summer temperatures exceeding forty degrees Celsius, and cool to mild winters with frosts occurring on a regular basis. The average summer temperature is 31 degrees Celsius and the average winter temperature is 16.7 degrees Celsius. The annual historical mean rainfall for the Wentworth area is 268mm and 327mm for the Balranald area. Significant variations from these figures have occurred in the last ten years with both areas experiencing prolonged drought conditions followed up by above average rainfall totals in 2010 & 2011.

1.5. Average Weather Data

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Wentworth Post Office recorded by the BoM (last updated 16 July 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	24.5	28.3	31.1	32.9	32.3	29.2	24.0	19.5	16.1	15.6	17.6	21.1
Min Temp (°C)	10.8	13.4	15.7	17.1	16.8	14.5	10.6	7.9	5.8	4.8	6.0	8.1
Rainfall (mm)	27.7	25.1	21.9	21.2	21.2	19.3	18.5	27.4	26.2	23.6	25.7	26.6
3pm Temp (°C)	23.4	27.1	29.8	31.5	31.0	28.3	23.2	18.8	15.6	15.0	16.9	20.1
3pm wind (km/h)	11.5	9.8	9.0	8.6	9.3	7.7	7.4	6.6	7.0	8.7	9.0	10.3
3pm RH (%)	33	29	26	25	27	31	41	49	57	55	47	38

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Balranald RSL recorded by the BoM (last updated 24 July 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	24.6	28.1	30.9	33.1	32.5	29.2	24.0	19.4	16.1	15.7	17.5	21.0
Min Temp (°C)	9.9	12.7	14.9	16.5	16.4	13.7	9.6	6.8	4.4	3.6	4.8	7.2
Rainfall (mm)	31.6	29.2	25.8	23.1	24.3	21.8	24.1	31.2	29.3	26.1	29.4	29.1
3pm Temp (°C)	22.9	25.9	28.4	30.9	30.7	27.7	23.0	18.3	15.2	14.5	16.4	19.5
3pm wind (km/h)	13.9	13.9	13.8	12.6	11.9	11.0	10.5	9.5	10.6	11.5	13.4	13.9
3pm RH (%)	38	34	31	30	32	35	41	52	59	57	49	43

1.6. Known Radio Comms Blackspots

No known communications blackspots as of August 2023.

1.7. Hazards

1.7.1. Transportation

The Sturt Highway is one of the main transportation routes for freight and passengers connecting Sydney to Adelaide at 959km long, with a major section falling within the Lower Western Zone.

Additionally, the Silver City Highway is the second major roadway within the district. A 683km stretch of highway connecting Buronga to the Queensland Border via Broken Hill.

Other major roadways include:

- Ivanhoe Road
- Pooncarie Road
- Arumpo Road

Out of area crews should be aware that many major roadways in the area are dirt roads, with some areas heavily populated with wild animals such as goats, large kangaroos and emus which have the potential to cause collisions.

Transport incidents are a significant hazard along the above mentioned arterial road networks. As a result, the Lower Western Zone manage two accredited Road Crash Rescue brigades being Euston and Pooncarie.

1.7.2. Agriculture

Major silos, cattle/sheep stations, crop land and sale yards are a large part of the Lower Western area and a large employer of many people. These are considered to be areas of risk as if they're affected by fire, this may result in significant impacts on the local economy and livelihoods.

1.7.3. Horticulture

Makes up a significant part of the industry in the area. A large variety of fruits and vegetables including citrus, grapes for wine and many different varieties for the dried fruit industry are grown in the area.

1.7.4. Human Settlement

Residential areas that include urban bush/shrub/grassland interface and rural properties are significantly increasing within the area. Most of the populous settles within the River Group of brigades.

1.7.5. Infrastructure

- Utility substations
- Hospitals or Medical centres
- Aged care centres
- Remote airstrips
- Education facilities
- Tourist facilities
- Water Works

1.7.6. Cultural

Significant Cultural sites in the Lower Western District include:

- Mungo National Park
- Wallandra Lakes
- Yanga National Park
- Sites of significance along the Darling, Murray, Murrumbidgee and Lachlan River systems

1.8. Land Management Authorities

Land Manager	% of Area
National Parks & Wildlife Service	3.14
Department of Lands	90.0
Local Government	0.06
Private	2.9
Other	3.9

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

Note: This link will only work with internet coverage.

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

