



NSW Rural Fire Service

Canobolas Zone



2012/2013 Annual Report

“Where Risk Management is our Passion and Hazard Reduction is our Priority”

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OUR VISION

The Canobolas Zone of the NSW Rural Fire Service will be a leader in support and innovation to our volunteers who will provide the highest standard of excellence in the protection of our community from fires and other emergencies.

OUR MISSION

To provide a cohesive, enthusiastic Volunteer Rural Fire Service trained and equipped to meet the needs of the community in an efficient, effective and professional manner. Our leadership and management systems will equip our volunteers and brigades to be a leading and respected resource within the NSW Rural Fire Service.

1. Executive Overview

The 2012/2013 fire season was very busy and we experienced fast running grass fires in the Canobolas Zone. Our intense fire activity commenced on Sunday 23rd December 2012 with numerous fires in the Gooloogong, Billimari and Mandurama areas from lightning strikes. These conditions continued through the new year with two Section 44 declarations for the Long Point and Goldings fires. For the period from the 23rd December 2012 to the end of January 2013 Canobolas Zone experienced some 74 fires and burnt 2156 hectares of country.

Seasonal conditions continued to have an impact on hazard reduction activities but Canobolas Zone was again able to achieve 8,806 hectares of completed hazard reduction. This was less than our new Risk Management Plan target of 14,315 hectares but this reduction was caused by the dry spring in 2012 and the wet autumn of 2013 just as the burning window of opportunity was opening.

Our new Risk Management Plan was prepared and submitted for approval during the year.

Financially, we received a slightly increased budget of \$6.82m which was up from the previous \$6.50M in 2011/2012. With this budget we were able to meet our key performance criteria and ensure the future of the Zone.

Two further standard design two bay stations have been completed at Darby's Falls and March brigades. Darby's Falls was opened on 6th October 2012 and March was constructed during 2012/2013 and opened in September 2013.

New Stations were also constructed at Merriganowry and Barryrenie in Cowra Shire and extensions and facilities were added to the Rivers, Mount McDonald, Porters Mount / Holmwood and Gooloogong Stations.

The commitment of our volunteers was recognised with Long Service Medal Ceremonies being conducted at Darby's Falls and Merriganowry with NSWRFs Region West Manager Paul Smith in attendance.

The Canobolas Zone website continues to be our greatest form of communication and for the reporting period we achieved 965,868 visitations. This is an average of 80,489 per month and is an increase on the 50,000 hits per month last year.

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2. COMPLETED CANOBOLAS ZONE PROJECTS FOR 2012/2013

1. Completion of Standard Design Darby's Falls Station and construction of the March Station.
2. Completion of the Eulimore Station and the extensions at Nargong.
3. Accept delivery of 4 new tankers.
4. Oversee internal transfer of 3 tankers.
5. Completed our new holistic whole of business next generation risk management plan.
6. Completed smoke house training facilities at Orange & Cowra.
7. Increased website content and activity.
8. Continuation of our hazard reduction program.
9. Continued the "Gum Tree Meeting" process.
10. Developed our 2013/2015 Strategic Plan with specific 2013 Milestones.
11. Sale of redundant Tankers.
12. Continued the rollout of the Fire Trail Signage Project.
13. Expanded the Canobolas influence within the RFS through various Boards and Advisory Committees where we have representation.
14. Facilitation of a Zone "Exercise" to test the operational capability of our Brigades.
15. Converted the Operations room functionality at FCC to incorporate a "Knowledge Wall" in line with Communications, Command and Control (CCC) Training framework.
16. Completed Stage one of works at the Larras Lee Airstrip.
17. Canobolas Zone hosted a public meeting of the Independent Hazard Reduction Audit Panel and the Canobolas Zone BFMC submitted a written submission to the Panel.
18. Developed the Canobolas Operations Response Code for adoption and implementation in 2013.

3. People

3.1 Membership

During the 2012/2013 period the total volunteer membership increased by 4 personnel across the four local government areas. We had 112 new members and retired or resigned 108 members across the Canobolas Zone. During the past 12 months this small increase is encouraging at a time where the anecdotal evidence suggests a population decline and age increases across rural communities. Whilst the average age of our membership is increasing it is clear that the greatest challenge over the next decade will be the renewing our workforce whilst maintaining the local knowledge and fire behaviour and suppression capability that is interwoven into the skill set of our more senior members.



AAR for the Long Point Fire February 2013

TABLE 1 - Membership

	Members 01 July 11	Members 30 June 12	Members 30 June 13	Difference +/-
Blayney	352	395	402	+7
Cowra	671	705	698	-7
Orange	191	207	221	+14
Cabonne	1091	1133	1123	-10
Total	2305	2440	2444	+4



AAR for the Nangar Road Fire February 2013



HR Clifton Grove

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3.2 Staff.

Permanent staff levels remained at 8, with no disruption through secondments or transfers. Arthur Sharp is to be congratulated on the announcement of his AFSM in the June 2013 honours list for his many years of dedication and commitment to the NSW RFS.

The staff structure as at 1 July 2012 was:

Zone Manager	David Hoadley AFSM
Operational Services Co-ordinator	Brett Bowden AFSM
Assets and Infrastructure Co-ordinator	Arthur Sharp AFSM
Membership Services Co-ordinator	Nils Waite
Assets and Infrastructure Officer	Steve Smith
District Support Officer	Roy Ferguson
District Technical Officer	Geoff Selwood
Administration Officer	Liz Lewis

Canobolas Zone has successfully operated for the year on the new realigned management structure which was implemented in 2011/2012 and the following structure has proved to be very successful.

- Management
- Operational Services
- Membership Services &
- Infrastructure and Assets

3.3 Community Consultation.

The “Gum Tree” meeting brand is gradually being picked up by other districts across the State and the concept has been incorporated into other areas to develop the consultation process.

The objectives of these meetings remain:

- ❖ To improve communication and understanding between our volunteers and staff.
- ❖ To build lasting and long term relationships and alliances with our volunteers and communities.
- ❖ To really engage with our volunteers by listening to their needs or concerns.
- ❖ The promotion of mutually beneficial results.
- ❖ Identify and build upon our common ground within the RFS.

Key activities included:

- Gum Tree Meetings.
- Risk Management Plan meetings were held at Baldry, Manildra and Cowra.
- Community Protection Plan meetings were held at Cumnock.
- Open Day activities were conducted across the Zone.
- School visits were undertaken.
- Small Farm information days were conducted in conjunction with DPI.
- Brigades have been active in their communities promoting the “Bush Fire Survival Plans”.

Our ideas were presented to the Independent Hazard Reduction Audit Panel in our submission as well as in the public forum that we hosted in Canobolas in November 2012.

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3.4 Canobolas Zone Website.

The Canobolas Zone website continues to improve and meet the needs of our volunteers and the wider community. The site at <http://www.canobolas.rfs.nsw.gov.au> has now become the major medium by which we communicate all activities with our Brigades and support personnel.



Now into its fifth year of professional site management where regular updates occur, the site has developed into an important information source for all fire related activities, events and research that impacts on the local population. Canobolas Zone will ensure that this level of resource continues to grow for the benefit of our communities.

Media links will continue to be maintained to capture public news stories that relate to the NSW Rural Fire Service and the Canobolas Zone and its people.

The activity level for the site for the past year is detailed below in Table 2 along with a comparison of previous year's figures.

TABLE 2 - Website Hits Monthly Summary

Month	Hits 2012/13	Hits 2011/12	Hits 2010/11
July	56,108	39,058	19,858
August	80,201	40,504	30,515
September	87,875	47,633	26,479
October	86,962	52,717	25,750
November	87,933	51,097	18,837
December	83,199	46,507	28,678
January	94,126	45,637	31,332

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February	78,038	49,774	33,928
March	79,746	76,359	40,260
April	74,656	54,452	36,550
May	83,114	54,421	41,212
June	73,910	40,548	41,950
Total	965,868	598,707	375,349

3.5 Cadets.

The RFS Secondary Schools Cadet Programme is run over ten weeks and is open to Year 9 and Year 10 students. This year the programme was conducted at Orange Christian School (20 students).

The aims of the cadet training include developing an interest in the RFS and its traditions, provide knowledge of fire safety and preparedness, learning leadership and interpersonal relationship skills and encouraging the cadets to continue an involvement in the RFS and community services and most importantly to provide a sense of community spirit and responsibility.

Students were given hands-on demonstrations of RFS vehicles and equipment, hand tools, communications, map reading, fire fighting, fire behaviour and casualty assistance. They also gained an understanding of the roles of other emergency services when they attended at the CHC Helicopter base and Orange Fire and Rescue station.

The programme is overseen by Canobolas Zone staff and the training is provided by several volunteer members.



Learning about fire behaviour and HR activities



RFS members undertaking pumping training April 2013

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3.6 Learning and Development

Another successful year of training was conducted within the Zone, by our staff and volunteers. During the year a total of 301 hours of tuition has been provided in various RFS qualifications. A large number of volunteers also attended various local workshops during the year which provides the skills needed, but does not provide a qualification.

Canobolas was successful with grants from the RFSA for \$2,800 for the funding of;

- 2 Rescue dummies 50kg Hazmat and 90kg normal – RFSA,

The State Championships was attended again this year with 2 staff providing valuable experience and knowledge in the latest fire fighting techniques and procedures to volunteers.

The Zone's volunteers and/or staff have been involved in the following training activities:

- Aviation Operations
- Rural Fire Driving
- Bush Firefighter
- Bush Fire Support
- Village Firefighter
- Advanced Firefighter
- Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus
- TAE Upgrade Cert IV Training and Assessing
- Crew Leader
- First Aid Application
- Incident Management Workshop
- Incident Management Exercise
- Rural Fire Instructor up-grade to TAE
- Combined Agency Exercises
- Bush Fire Awareness
- Group Leader
- Community Safety Facilitator
- Advanced Resuscitation Techniques
- Communications Centre Assistant
- AED / CPR Workshop
- GPS Workshop
- Urban Search And Rescue
- Command, Control and Communications
- SAP training
- Ethics training

The Zone's volunteers and/or staff have also been involved in the following activities:

- Frost Fest
- Region West Cadet training/exercise day
- Joint Training with FRNSW
- ANFD Site stand
- Canobolas Conference
- Police Anti-Terrorism Meeting
- RFSA Conference



A crew about to attack a gas fire at a Village Firefighter Course April 2013

The SAP data base system had some teething issues and these have been worked on throughout the year. There has been a number of improvements that has assisted staff to complete work in a reasonable time frame. This year also found the RFS upgrading the MyRFS web site and Online learning system with the Safety and Volunteer Inductions being completed by new members over the internet directly inputting the qualification. Region West Online learning option through the Moodle network has expanded the number of courses to include First Aid Application, Group Leader and Rural Fire Driver. This system only covers the theory component that can be adapted to Online learning.

Training is still being taken out to the brigades as requested or held close to where the majority of the participants, on a particular course, reside.



SES Cadets receiving instruction on bush fire behaviour

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Volunteers and State Forests conducting a HR Burn Roseburg SF



Cadets learning hose rolling and bowling

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House fire Newbridge January 2013



Morning of 10th August 2012 snow covered FCC

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3.7 Financial

The Canobolas Zone received a total allocation from the Rural Fire Fighting Fund of \$6,823,936 for the 2012/2013 year. Each Council received the allocation as shown in Table 3:

TABLE 3 – RFFF Allocation

		Percentage of Allocation
Blayney	\$1,551,391	22.56%
Cabonne	\$2,434,289	36.11%
Cowra	\$1,621,027	24.25%
Orange	\$1,217,229	17.08%
Total	\$6,823,936	

Our Councils are responsible for contributing 11.7% to the total budget.

The final Council contribution for the year was \$561,474 compared to \$447,120 in 2011/2012. Some \$42,057 of this increase was due to the pegging of the reimbursement on VASS charges to the level of the previous year. The split between the Councils is outlined in Table 4:

TABLE 4 – Council Contribution to the RFFF

Council	Actual Contribution
Blayney	\$124,404
Cabonne	\$205,685
Cowra	\$135,841
Orange	\$ 95,543

4. Activities

TABLE 5

Hazard Reduction Work Summary By LGA and Method

LGA	Burning		Mechanical		Other (excl. grazing)		Total	
	Works	Hectares	Works	Hectares	Works	Hectares	Works	Hectares
Blayney	-	-	31	675.97	-	-	31	676.0
Cabonne	14	2,338.75	44	1,373.00	1	100.07	59	3,811.8
Cowra	5	1060.05	81	1,389.34	2	-	88	2,449.4
Orange	2	206.53	139	1,296.81	13	-	154	1,503.3
Other		365						365
Total	21	3,970.3	295	4,735.6	16	100.1	332	8,806

Hazard Reduction Work Summary by Primary Land Manager and Method

Primary Land Manager	Burning		Mechanical		Other (excl. grazing)		Total	
	Works	Hectares	Works	Hectares	Works	Hectares	Works	Hectares
Department of Primary Industries (Crown Lands)	-	100	19	18.65	-	-	19	118.7
Local Government Authority	3	9.53	32	3,616.34	-	-	35	3,625.9
NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service	2	990.06	1	1.41	1	100.07	4	1,091.5
Forest Corporation NSW		844.30						844.3
Other	2	478.88	3	13.92	-	-	5	492.80
Private	13	1,547.96	240	1,084.81	15	-	268	2,632.8
Total	20	3,970.73	295	4,735.1	16	100.1	331	8,806

4.1 Hazard Reduction Results

There was a significant amount of preparatory work done across the Zone in terms of containment line construction and maintenance, however regular wet weather periods during the early Autumn hampered the ability to finalise some of our larger HR Burns as planned. A dry winter and dry spring then made ignition difficult during the early spring period and as such the Zone was not able to realise the full potential of our HR program prior to the onset of the BFDP.

Significantly, however, many smaller HR burns were undertaken along with the Council Roadside Vegetation works to ensure that we had a great level of strategic works completed prior to the Bushfire Danger Period.

TABLE 6 - 5 Year average & Wildfire:HR ratio

Hazard Reduction 2012/2013	8,806 hectares
Hazard Reduction 5 years 2008-2012 average per year	14,687 hectares per year
Area Burnt by Wildfire 2012/2013	2,156 hectares
Ration HR to Wildfire	6.812 to 1 of the previous 5 year average
Total area treated by fire 2012/2013	10,962 hectares

The Canobolas Zone ratio for 2012/2013 was 6.812 hectares of hazard reduction for each hectare lost by wildfire. The Zone benchmark target is set at 7:1.



Volunteers conducting a HR Burn in the Neville area

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Assisting National Parks & Wildfire Service within the Goobang NP



Clifton Grove-Ophir crew conducting the Yellocks HR in eastern Cabonne

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4.2. Hazard Complaints & Permits

The hazard reduction component of Rural Fire Service activities is now undertaken expressly by the Canobolas Zone on behalf of the Councils and incorporates the four areas of

1. Issue of Fire Permits
2. Issue of Hazard Reduction Certificates
3. Management of Hazard Complaints
4. Advice on Compliance to "Planning for Bushfire Protection" in regard to Development Applications.

During the reporting period the Canobolas Zone carried out the works as listed in Table 7.

TABLE 7 – Community Safety Activities

	Blayney	Cabonne	Cowra	Orange	Total	2011/12
Development Applications 79BA / 100B	0	9	4	5	18	4
Permits Section 87 & 88	37	147	126	53	363	339
Hazard Complaints	25	28	63	118	234	270
Hazard Reduction Certificates	7	36	22	57	122	392

Fire Trails

Work has continued during 2012/13 working with validating of all nominated fire trails within our fire trail register.

TABLE 8 – Fire Trails by land tenure

Tenure	Number of Fire Trails	Distance
Councils	6	13.50km
Crown Land	4	9.70km
NPWS	117	341.00km
Forests NSW	160	395.05km
Private	116	421.50km
Wyangala State Waters	15	22.41km

4.3 Fire and Emergency Incidents

Fire Season 2012/13 commenced as at 1 October 2012 and the Zone experienced “routine” conditions and incidents. On 23 December, however, the first major fire events occurred with multiple ignitions in the area around Merriganowry and Billimari in the Cowra LGA. The “North Logan Rd” fire was the most significant ignition and resulted in the loss of 1 homestead, sheds and various lots of machinery after burning 420ha of agricultural land.

On 1 January 2013 a fire was lit through Fireworks activity in a remote part of the Long Point area (Cabonne) on the Macquarie River. This fire was declared a S44 Emergency on this day and was brought under control some 8 days later after burning 475ha of private property in very difficult terrain.

The S44 declaration was declared for all of the Canobolas Zone and this meant that every fire occurrence between the 1st and the 15th of January were managed as part of that declaration. In total this incorporated 22 other incidents with the following three being significant fire ignitions

- Shiel Fire Woodstock 434.77ha
- Nangar Road Eugowra 228ha
- Baldry Road Cumnock 40ha

Losses incurred during the BFDP included 40 Sheep and 20 Cattle along with 20kms of fencing, the majority of these were at the Shiel Fire, Woodstock.



Long Point Fire January 2013 – looking south

Incidents

Brigades responded to a total of 483 incidents during the 2012/13 reporting period. The table below details the responses by Council area and the historic totals since 2006/07.

TABLE 9 – Incidents Totals 2012/13

	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
Blayney	88	55	58	62	47	46	78
Cabonne	199	173	151	152	155	139	230
Cowra	94	82	102	57	78	99	98
Orange	102	84	85	69	71	58	122
Totals	483	394	396	340	351	342	528

The total number of incidents that occurred during the reporting year had increased by 89 over that of the previous year and in the process, recording our most active year since 2006/07. Many of these incidents occurred in the period between 23 December 2012 and 30 January 2013 demonstrating just how dry and volatile the landscape was at the time.

Non Bush/Grass Fire Incidents

Of those incidents listed in Table 9 the below listed Table 10 identifies those incidents that are not fire related but rather Motor vehicle accidents (MVA's), false alarms and good intent calls.

TABLE 10 – Non Fire Incidents 2012/13

	MVA's		False alarm		Good intent	
	2012/13	2011/12	2012/13	2011/12	2012/13	2011/12
Blayney	23	22	3	0	12	3
Cabonne	47	36	5	21	11	12
Cowra	21	17	3	10	7	12
Orange	19	15	5	1	7	13

The other indicator of Brigade activity that counts total *actual* responses is a true measure of total Brigade activity. It has been a Canobolas Zone practice for some time, particularly during the summer months, to respond multiple brigades to reported incidents to ensure rapid containment and sufficient personnel resources. By capturing the primary AND supporting brigades who are responded to each reported incident, a true picture of the activity level can be appreciated. Table 11 highlights this activity.

TABLE 11 - Total Responses 2012/13

	Incidents	Total Responses
Blayney	88	130
Cabonne	199	224
Cowra	94	300
Orange	102	150
Totals	483	804

The previous reporting period showed a total response tally of 535.

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Out of Area Assistance

Canobolas Zone maintains an Out of Area Assistance Plan that establishes the protocols and resources available to immediately assist our neighbouring Districts following any request.

During the reporting period local RFS resources were dispatched on one occasion only to assist with the fire fighting effort at the “Geegullalong” fire within the Boorowa LGA during November 2012. Due, in part to our own busy fire season no other requests were received to task units.

Table 12 - Deployment statistics S44 Boorowa

Volunteers	Tasked DTZ	Tanker	Task	Days/Shifts	Total man/shifts	
4	Cowra	Darby's Falls	Firefighting	3	12	
4	Cowra	Holmwood	Firefighting	3	12	
5	Cowra	Waugoola	Firefighting	3	15	
4	Cowra	Waugoola	Firefighting	1	4	
3	Orange	North West	Firefighting	1	3	
5	Orange	Orange	Firefighting	1	5	
2	Cowra	Rivers	Firefighting	1	2	
28				13	53	636 hrs @ 12 hrs per shift

5. Infrastructure and Assets

5.1 Tanker Replacement Plan

Funding of \$844,000 was allocated for new fire fighting vehicles during 2012/13. The Senior Management Team had previously endorsed the recommendation to only purchase new fire fighting vehicles and this was based on the current average age of the Canobolas Fleet and the state and age of second hand vehicles that had been recently allocated.

Two new Multi Purpose Cat 1 units, 1 Cat 7 and 1 Cat 9 were allocated into the Blayney, Millthorpe, Cumnock and Clifton Grove Ophir Brigades respectively.

TABLE 13 – Tanker Receivals 2012/13

COUNCIL	BRIGADE	TANKER
Cabonne	Cumnock	New Cat 9
Blayney	Blayney Millthorpe	New Cat 1 New Cat 7
Orange	Clifton Grove Ophir	New Cat 1



New Blayney Cat 1 Tanker



New Isuzu Cat 1 Tankers delivered

5.2 Maintenance

A total of \$504,564 was allocated to the Canobolas Zone for maintenance funding across the fleet, stations, communications and ancillary equipment.

All fire fighting vehicles were treated to either a Minor or Major Service simultaneous with a roadworthy inspection and an inspection of the carried fire fighting equipment. These works commenced from July 2012 and concluded during December 2012.

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The Service centres for these works are decentralised to limit the amount of travelling required by volunteers, as well as constrain the fuel expenditure. These centres have all been selected for their capability and expertise in providing the required maintenance for heavy vehicles and have all gained the certification required to perform the RTA HVIS (Heavy Vehicle Inspection Scheme).

The approved service centres are:

- Central West Mechanical
- Cowra Truck Wreckers
- Molong Tyre & Mechanical
- BK & BS Burn Canowindra
- Hamilton's Mobile Mechanical Repairs Cudal
- PGR Mechanical Repairs

5.3 Station Upgrade Program

There was an allocation of \$335,901 for new Fire Station builds for the 2012/13 financial year, When combined with carried over funding the following projects were undertaken:

- Completion of the Darby's Falls 2 Bay Standard Design Station.
- Completion of the Nargong Station extension and the addition of facilities.
- Construction of the March 2 Bay Standard Design Station.
- Stage 1 of the construction of the Barryrenie Station.
- Stage 1 of the construction of the Merriganowry Station.
- Stage 1 of extensions to include meeting room, toilets and kitchen at Rivers, Gooloogong, Mount McDonald and Porters Mount / Holmwood Stations.

Stage 2 of these projects will be funded in the 2013/2014 year with the completion of the interior fit out of these extensions and Stations.



Barryrenie Brigade Station



Merriganowry Brigade Station

5.4 Fire Control Centre Usage

The Canobolas Zone continues to be used on a regular basis for State, Regional and Zone meetings and training events. Several Government Departments and private businesses also hire our rooms for activities and training sessions.

This additional use assists in maintaining a very high visual presence in the eyes of our community with flow on effects to aid our aim and vision.

Highlights this year have been the:

- RFS Media Courses
- Canobolas Zone Conference.
- RFS ID Card training
- GIS Training.
- Region West Incident Management Workshop
- NSWRFs Command Control and Communications
- NSWRFs State Mitigation Crews Training and Induction
- Greater Western Area Health Service
- Rescue and Response Training
- District Emergency Management Training
- RTA
- Department of Primary Industry

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6. Planned Projects for 2013 - 2014

- Developing the Canobolas Zone Business Model to link our next generation risk management plan to all Zone activities.
- Develop and implement the 2014 Milestones for the Canobolas Zone Strategic Plan.
- Complete and adopt the Canobolas Zone Strategic Goal.
- Identify and implement opportunities to achieve our hazard reduction targets.
- Further enhance hazard reduction and containment lines on private property.
- Continue the “Gum Tree Meeting” process.
- Completion of the Larras Lee Airstrip Stage 2.
- Completion of Standard Design Station at Borenore.
- Construction of a new Station with facilities at Byng / Emu Swamp.
- Extension to the North West Station.
- Completion of Stage 2 of facility upgrades at Barryrenie, Merriganowry, Porters Mount, Rivers, Gooloogong, Mount McDonald and Mullion Creek.
- Accept delivery of 4 new tankers.
- Oversee internal transfer of 3 tankers.
- Complete the rollout of the Fire Trail Signage Project.
- Completion of the Canobolas Zone filing project.
- Continue to expand the Canobolas influence within the RFS through various Boards and Advisory Committees where we have representation.