

BUSH FIREbulletin

THE JOURNAL OF THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



The road ahead

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE FIRES HAVE BEEN THROUGH?

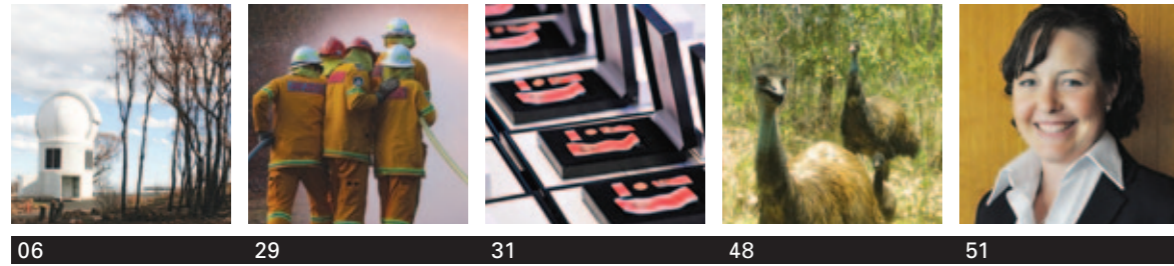
IN THIS ISSUE:

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK
– INTRODUCING THE CAT 6 AND CAT 13
ST FLORIAN'S DAY AWARDS

THE COMMISSIONER VISITS BOTSWANA
WOODFORD HITS 90 YEARS
SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYERS ACKNOWLEDGED



Contents



06 29 31 48 51

01 FOREWORD	40 BRIGADE IN PROFILE
02 IN FOCUS	40 Woodford Rural Fire Brigade - celebrates 90 years
04 AFTERMATH AND RECOVERY	28 GENERAL NEWS
4 Instant drought	44 Private Investors - employers supporting NSW RFS volunteers
6 After the fact	48 One Step Ahead - Quick results for the Hotspots Fire Project
10 A thousand words	51 Amy's story
16 The Nimmitabel Post	53 BUSH FIRE BULLETIN SURVEY
34 GENERAL NEWS	
18 New kids on the block	
20 Testing times	
24 Keep an eye on your environment	
25 LIFT OUT	
25 NSW RFS PPE: World class protection	
29 GENERAL NEWS	
29 Hornsby/ Ku-ring-gai firefighters tested	
31 St Florian's Day: The very best of the NSW RFS	
35 Action plans: an update on public awareness of bush fire preparedness	
37 A partnership forged in fire - The work of the NSW RFS in Botswana	

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Foreword



We have seen in recent times the devastating impact fires can have on communities. Once the fires have been put out, the important work of recovery remains.

The 2012/13 fire season was intense and difficult with around 7,500 bush and grass fires throughout the season and 1.5 million hectares burned. With an emergency such as the January 2013 bush fires, there are always opportunities to learn and improve.

There have been extensive after-action reviews for the fires and many of these have revealed the importance of pre-incident planning. It has also been noted that the ready access to external resources such as specialist firefighting teams, heavy plant as well as aircraft through the State Air Desk significantly minimised the damage and consequences of these fires.

Throughout last fire season 62 houses were destroyed. Understanding the damage and the fire behaviour that led to the losses is paramount for fire managers everywhere. The Bush Fire Impact Analysis teams were busy from September through to the end of January 2013, gathering information about the losses and much of this information can be seen in this edition of the *Bulletin*.

The response of residents in the stress of an approaching fire is another rich source of knowledge for the Service. In February this year the NSW RFS requested the Bushfire CRC to conduct research into the bush fire preparedness and behaviour of residents for three of the major fire areas at Coonabarabran, Shoalhaven and Yass.

The thirst for information from the public was a standout feature of the fire season, including an incredible response from the community which saw a dramatic increase in downloads of the Bush Fire Survival Plan. A report on the success of the Prepare Act Survive public awareness can be seen in this issue.

The recent fires have also demonstrated the benefits of a modern fleet. Recently, the Service has launched two new firefighting vehicles, the Cat 6 and Cat 13. These have undergone extensive testing by members across the State.

While technology, aircraft and trucks are important, we cannot lose sight of the extraordinary work of the firefighters. We tend to reflect more on the losses from a fire season, rather than on the disasters that were averted and the property and lives that were saved. It is our people, those on the fire-front and those behind the scenes as well as those from other agencies, who ultimately made the difference.

While the January fires are still a recent memory, a new bush fire season is upon us. After a very mild, and for some areas a very warm winter, the potential of the season ahead can't be ignored.

Every fire event is an opportunity to learn and improve. It's important that we build on the successes of last season but never ignore the real impact that bush and grass fires can have on people and communities.

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Steer in the station



On a Sunday morning in early June 2013, a steer escaped from the Ulmarra Campdraft and found its way into the back entrance to the Clarence Valley Fire Control Centre. It jumped two concrete stairs to enter the FCC and then slipped on the tiles and ended up with its head in the gyprock wall (see right). Damage was minimal, no-one was hurt thankfully (including the steer) and it has made for light entertainment in the small village of Ulmarra. The Campdraft Society has agreed to repair the damaged wall. After his trip to the fire station, the guilty steer was seen heading out of town (above left). Story courtesy of Tania Crane

A new NSW RFS website



During the January 2013 bush fires, the NSW RFS website proved itself to be the primary source of information for bush fires in NSW with traffic similar to those experienced during the 2009 Black Saturday bush fires in Victoria. To meet the ever-increasing demand for online information a new website is being developed. The site will display current fire information more prominently on the front page, be accessible on mobile and tablets, and have a new design to make it easier to find information quickly. The site will be launched in late 2013, depending on fire activity at the time.

The most trusted Australians



Paramedics and firefighters share pole position as the most trusted professions according to a 2013 Reader's Digest survey. Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said: "Our firefighters don't do their job for the accolades or praise, but it is great to see how much people appreciate what they do each and every day. I note that also featuring in the top 10 most trusted professions are rescue volunteers (#3) and farmers (#10) meaning many of our volunteers would fall into more than one 'most trusted' category. This reflects the kind of people we are lucky enough to have volunteering with the NSW RFS."

Bryce's time to shine



On Thursday 16 May Bryce Reardon was named NSW RFS Cadet of the Year after completing the NSW RFS Secondary School Cadet Program in 2012. Fifteen year old Bryce was presented with his trophy by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Michael Gallacher, in an award ceremony at Parliament House. Bryce, who is now in Year 10 at South Grafton High School, was selected from a field of over 800 students from 68 NSW high schools and commended for his work ethic, determination and leadership qualities. The Cadet program was about "helping your team mates and being a good role model", Bryce said in his acceptance speech. His experience with the program has inspired him to apply for membership of the Southampton Rural Fire Brigade.

Bush Fire Bulletin is Number One



The Bush Fire Bulletin is the most popular way for NSW RFS members to receive information. Over 450 NSW RFS staff and volunteers have so far completed a survey on communications and engagement in the Service, where the Bush Fire Bulletin was named as the number one. The other top ways of receiving information are the eBulletin, Brigade meetings, Intranet (staff only), emails from District, MyRFS, social media and the NSW RFS public website. The Bush Fire Bulletin Readers Survey continues in this issue.

A tireless and genuine gentleman



North Gundagai Brigade awarded Life Membership to its longest serving member, Denzil Ballard, at a surprise function on Friday 26 July 2013. Denzil attended his first fire in 1944 and members gathered to toast his commitment and dedication to the Service. Accompanied by his wife Madeline, Denzil was visibly moved when over 70 of his peers applauded as he was presented with his Life Membership Plaque. As each of his comrades stepped up to the microphone to relate stories of Denzil's time with the brigade, the applause grew. Denzil is involved in so many other community activities such as the Men's Shed as well as the Gundagai Riverfest Committee that he said he doesn't have time to slow down - he has a lot more to do. He was even overheard asking one staff member to check his pager in case it might be playing up.

In the footsteps of the explorers



Five dogs, four horses and seven people: The Blue Mountains Blue Wave Bicentenary Re-enactment Crossing of the Blue Mountains in May 2013, was a wonderful 21-day event tracing the original steps of the explorers Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth. The re-enactment team attempted to keep to the 1813 time frame and route, however, as there has been 'some' development in the Blue Mountains over the past 200 years, the walking party required an escort. The local NSW RFS obliged with a Cat 1 and Personnel Carrier at the front and rear of the party. All traffic management was under the direction of the NSW Police Force and in conjunction with SES.



Instant drought

These photos show parts of the Pimpara Lake Station near Broken Hill. On the left can be seen the effect of last Summer's fire that has left the land bereft and unproductive. On the right is an area which, despite very sparse rainfall, is still supporting significant grazing feed and vegetation.



Pimpara Lake: burnt in January 2013

After the fires come through in far western NSW, the land can plunge into an instant drought. While much of the attention last Summer was on fires closer to the seaboard, nearly a quarter of a million hectares was scorched in the far west in four big fires. Here, Inspector Robyn Favelle, Operations Officer, Far West Team dispels some of the myths about the true impact of those big, big fires.

Out west is the land of big skies, big hats and big fires!

The summer of 2012/13 resulted in four Section 44 declarations for the Far West Team, more than 217,000 hectares of grazing country burnt and a further 500,000 hectares burnt on the border country with South Australia and Queensland.

It was a long, hot summer for the exhausted volunteers of the State's Far West team

with dry storms bringing multiple ignitions from lightning strikes.

NSW RFS staff and volunteers in the far west are often asked why we work so hard to put out bush fires out here: 'After all, it's just waste country isn't it? Just let it burn,' they say.

Just to be clear: It is not waste country.

It is, however, very productive grazing land and home to many hardworking families. It also contains some of the most spectacular National Parks in the State. It is an area filled with amazing people and amazing scenery. It is also an arid and fragile environment, prone to drought and flooding

Pimpara Lake: unburnt this year, still supporting significant grazing feed

rains, usually followed by fires on a large scale.

Most land managers are reluctant to let fires become too big and risk losing valuable stock feed, with the added risk of plunging the land into an instant drought. These large hot landscape fires can also have a devastating impact on the environment, scorching the earth and increasing the risk of invasive native scrub species taking hold on the resulting degraded land.

The Sandow family of Pimpara Lake Station, north of Broken

Hill, have had their fair share of serious fires over the past two summers. In January 2013, a fast moving wildfire raged towards the homestead as the family and other local RFS volunteers worked frantically to control it. They eventually pulled it up just three kilometres from the homestead, but not before it burnt out over 10,000 hectares.

Ruth Sandow has been observing the impact of fires on their property and says the contrast between the burnt and unburnt country is amazing. Lack of decent rain since the

fires has resulted in parts of Pimpara Lake looking like a desert, while the unburnt areas still have good dry feed.

This contrast is best illustrated in these two photos taken by Ruth. The photos also explain why the brigades of western NSW prefer to contain a wildfire as quickly as possible, even though it may appear relatively safe to let them run in such a remote, sparsely populated area.



After the fact

ABOVE: NSW RFS member Brydie O'Connor at the fireground of the Wambelong fire which made international headlines when it threatened the Siding Spring Observatory. Photo courtesy of the Bushfire CRC

Even before the 2012/13 fire season had come to a close, the NSW RFS was seeking to learn the lessons from the fire season. In February 2013, the Service requested the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre to find out more about the bush fire preparedness and behaviour of residents affected by some of the State's most significant fires. Here the Bushfire CRC's Communication Officer Nathan Maddock outlines the research conducted.

The 2012/13 fire season will be remembered across NSW as one of the worst in recent times. In total, 62 homes were lost, while January 2013 saw NSW face a significant period of both bush fire danger and activity. Catastrophic Fire Danger Ratings were issued for the first time across a number of areas, including urban centres.

"NSW experienced the most challenging bush fire season in around a decade," said Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons. "Temperature records were broken and some areas witnessed the worst

fire danger conditions ever experienced."

In order to maximise the lessons learnt from the bush fire season, the NSW RFS requested the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (Bushfire CRC) to undertake community-based research in the three key areas of people's preparation, decision-making and actions during the fires.

The fires of interest for the research were at Dean's Gap in Shoalhaven, Cobbler Road near Yass and the Wambelong fire in Coonabarabran. The Wambelong fire made international headlines when it

tore through the Warrumbungle National Park and parts of the renowned Siding Spring Observatory.

"These were three of the most significant fires in NSW," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said, "Both the Dean's Gap and Cobbler Road fires started under Catastrophic conditions on 7 January, whilst the Wambelong fire on 12 January was particularly large, intense and impacted greatly on the community.

"The NSW RFS saw these fires as an opportunity to take a close look at what people did before, during and after

the fire, and learn from their experiences. The research is part of the continuing relationship between the NSW RFS and the Bushfire CRC, which helps all agencies better understand people's actions and ensure lessons are learned," he said.

The Bushfire CRC established the NSW Task Force which started work on 18 February. Researchers organised field trips to the three locations and called on the assistance of NSW RFS staff to conduct the interviews. They visited the areas where the three fires took place recording



the interviews on paper and as audio recordings. A total of 17 researchers from the Bushfire CRC and 19 NSW RFS members were involved in the interviews.

The Bushfire CRC team was led by Research Manager Lyndsey Wright and Chief Investigator Dr Jim McLennan, with research staff comprising of researchers from Bushfire CRC partner universities La Trobe, RMIT, Canberra, Canterbury, Tasmania, CQU and the Australian National University.

Throughout February, March and April 2013, research teams visited the areas surrounding Coonabarabran, Yass and Shoalhaven to interview affected residents. In total 238 interviews were conducted with residents. These included interviews with those who experienced the fires, those who were nearly impacted and those who would have been affected had circumstances changed. In addition, an online survey was conducted with a random sample of 975 residents of affected communities.

"These three fires were chosen for the research due

to the extent of areas burnt," Research Manager Ms Wright said. "Each fire had the potential for more extensive losses than was experienced – houses, stock and possibly lives."

"A large number of houses were lost around Coonabarabran, and stock losses were particularly significant around both Coonabarabran and Yass," she explained, "but both could have been much higher, if it were not for a combination of fortunate weather changes, enormous efforts by NSW RFS volunteers and the response from residents to minimise the impact."

Interview questions were based around:

- bush fire preparations
- recall and understanding of bush fire information
- understanding of, responses to and perceived usefulness of the bush fire warnings prior to, and during the fire
- experiences and behaviour during the fire

Importantly, the research experience of the Bushfire

CRC in conducting this type of research was taken into account, following similar research undertaken following the 2009 Black Saturday bush fires in Victoria, the Perth Hills and Lake Clifton (Western Australia) fires in 2011 and the Tasman Peninsula bush fire in early 2013.

Chief Investigator Dr Jim McLennan noted that that similar research had proven very valuable in measuring the level of preparedness of the residents.

"Readiness for a bush fire threat in a given location is usually related to the history of bush fire in the area," he said.

"For any given household, a bush fire is a rare event with most households in bush fire-prone areas not threatened by a fire in the life of the household. Therefore, perceived risk of a bush fire is commonly low."

The research looked into the preparedness of long term residents, as well as 'tree change' or 'sea change' residents. Previous research has shown that 'lifestyle' residents may not be as prepared as people who have

lived in a particular area for a long time.

"We looked at how confident residents were in their ability to safely defend or evacuate, and how well they understood what this actually involves. Were people fully aware of, not just the physical efforts required to safely defend a home from bush fire, but the significant mental effort required too?"

"Similarly, what was the understanding of the 'right time' to evacuate to ensure the safety of all members of the household?" Dr McLennan added.

It was the honesty and enthusiastic response from the interviewees that has made the research so valuable.

"Community participation in the research was fantastic which enabled a good cross section of the community to be interviewed," Ms Wright said, "The data will provide substantial depth for NSW RFS to explore for a long time."

"The Bushfire CRC would like to thank the communities around Coonabarabran, Yass and Shoalhaven for that."

Dr McLennan drew comparisons between bush fire safety and road safety.

"Communicating community bush fire safety is not easy; there is no silver bullet. Similarities can be made with reducing the road toll. It is now second nature to buckle up, stay under 0.05 and more recently, practice safe driving with mobile phones. But the reduction in the road toll was the cumulative effect of education, engineering and enforcement, which took decades to achieve across Australia. Why would raising community bush fire safety be any easier?"

"Fire agencies need to look for additional ways to raise householder awareness of risk and encourage planning and preparation. This needs to be beyond the passive availability of community education material on websites and in paper publications," Dr McLennan said.

The research methods adopted by the Task Force ensured preliminary findings were available to the NSW RFS quickly. More detailed analysis of the data from the Task Force

will provide NSW RFS with the evidence base to review policies and practices prior to the 2013/14 fire season.

A full report of the findings from this research is currently being collated and will be available to NSW RFS members later in 2013.

FAR LEFT: Bushfire CRC researcher Brenda Mackie and NSW RFS Community Protection Planning Officer Andrew Nicholls discussing a day's interviews at the Yass Fire Control Centre. Photo courtesy of the Bushfire CRC
ABOVE LEFT: Bushfire CRC researcher Toni Domaschitz (left) and Elise Tasker, Copacabana Brigade at a housing estate on the edge of Yass. Photo courtesy of the Bushfire CRC
ABOVE RIGHT: Chief Investigator Dr Jim McLennan interviewing residents in Coonabarabran. They had a lucky escape when the fire literally licked their verandah (see lower left of the photo). Photo by Brydie O'Connor

The NSW RFS response

The Bushfire CRC research is an opportunity for the NSW RFS to not only learn from these fire events, but also to contribute to the national research work which helps us better understand people's reactions during bush fires.

Some key results from the research include:

- There is still a strong sense of complacency in the community, with 58 percent of people who received fire-related information across summer taking no action at all - despite many living in high risk areas.
- There is a large proportion of the population, living in high risk areas, who believe they are not at risk.
- People will react differently to the information they receive, and will often seek confirmation from family or friends before deciding to take action.
- While many people had good intentions about planning and preparation before the fires, many did not carry out the work.
- Intrusive warning methods such as telephone warnings are now the preferred method of delivery for the community, but the use of online channels and face-to-face communication is still important.
- There is a need to continue the use of clear and unambiguous language in warnings.

The NSW RFS is now reviewing the Bushfire CRC research, as well as other research projects conducted in other states in recent months. Once this is complete, the results of the research will be communicated more broadly.

A thousand words

These pictures, taken after a bush fire has been through, tell a thousand words. Bush Fire Building Impact Assessment analysts use these photos and other data to tell the story of the fire's path, its direction, temperature and behaviour.

Here Iona Cameron, Acting Senior Project Officer, Community Planning summarises some of the data collected from fires of the 2012/13 fire season.

In the aftermath of each of the recent bush fires, Bush Fire Impact Analysis (BIA) teams were quick to follow up to assess damage to habitable structures and collect data to better protect the community from bush fires in the future.

Between September 2012 and late January 2013, 12 BIA teams were deployed across NSW to 10 fires to assess the impact of those fires on habitable structures.

Bush Fire Building Impact Assessment (BIA) is the survey of habitable buildings and their immediate surrounds that have been impacted or threatened during a bush or grassfire.

The purpose of BIA is for the timely and accurate reporting of destroyed and damaged structures during a fire, to collect data for analysis and policy development and for bush fire risk management treatment review. A social

survey may also be carried out to assist with research into human behaviour immediately before, during and after a fire.

A BIA Team consists of two to four people with a variety of expertise and experience in bush firefighting, building construction identification and Community Engagement. Each team takes note of the condition of the structure and surrounds taking numerous photos in the process.

A total of 147 dwellings were assessed from September 2012 to the end of January 2013. Of those, 62 were destroyed, 24 were damaged and 61 were untouched. Close to 100 of the 147 dwellings were surveyed as a result of the Wambelong fire.

Summary of BIA activity from September 2012-March 2013

Date Fire Started	Fire Name	BFMC	Dwellings Destroyed	Dwellings Damaged	Dwellings Untouched
05/09/2012	Dorian	Snowy-Monaro	1	-	2
20/10/2012	Gibsons Plantation	Taree	3	2	
20/10/2012	Gungully	Taree	-	-	6
16/12/2012	Geegullalong	Young	-	-	3
23/12/2012	North Logan	Canobolas	1	-	4
02/01/2013	Stanford	Hunter	-	-	14
06/01/2013	Yarrabin	Orana	3	2	3
08/01/2013	Cobbler Road	Harden	-	-	3
12/01/2013	Wambelong	Coonabarabran	53	19	23
18/01/2013	Millingandi	Bega Valley	1	1	3



← September 2012
Dorian, Snowy-Monaro,
One destroyed, two untouched

The first BIA team of four for the 2012/13 fire season was deployed was to a fire which started on 5 September 2012, south of Berridale. The team assessed three dwellings, of which, one was destroyed and two were untouched. The dwelling which was destroyed (left) was constructed in the 1920s of concrete and sandstone blocks and had a corrugated iron roof.

The presence of green lawn and unburnt fuels surrounding the dwelling and outbuilding indicated that the primary mechanism of bush fire attack was ember attack. It would also appear, however, that strong winds contributed to the damage caused by the fire.



← October 2012
Gibsons Plantation, Taree.
Three destroyed, two damaged

The Gibsons Plantation fire started on 8 October 2012 but did not impact any structures until 12 days later. A BIA team of three surveyed five of six dwellings impacted by the fire. The sixth dwelling was not accessible during the survey.

The three destroyed dwellings (one is seen left) were constructed of rough sawn timber and did not appear to have ember protection on doors or windows.

The dwelling which sustained light damage was the only permanently occupied property. It was constructed of stone, rough sawn timber and corrugated iron. Active property protection limited the level of damage.

The dwelling which sustained superficial damage was constructed from painted weatherboard and had an open sub-floor space.

October 2012 →

Gungully, Taree
Six untouched

While the initial impact on structures at the Gibsons Plantation Fire on 20 October 2012, a new fire ignited at Gungully. Due to the proximity of these two fires, the same BIA team carried out both assessments.

A total of six dwellings were assessed at Gungully, all of which were untouched by fire (right). It was found that all surveyed properties had well-maintained areas around the dwellings. There was evidence of active defence at some of the properties during the fire. The largest loss of assets assessed, were vehicles with eight cars, two tractors and one truck destroyed.



← December 2012

Geegullalong, Young
Three untouched

A grass fire started on 16 December 2012 in Boorowa and impacted structures the same afternoon. A BIA team of three commenced the survey on 18 December.

Three dwellings were assessed during the survey, all were untouched (left). Evidence gathered during the survey suggests that firefighting intervention avoided any damage to these dwellings. The dwellings were built from a combination of corrugated iron and fibro cladding. The greatest asset loss as a result of the fire was livestock.

Grazing in the weeks leading up to the fire reduced fuel loads in the paddocks near dwellings.



December 2012 →

North Logan, Canobolas One
Four untouched

Dwellings were impacted shortly after the North Logan fire ignited on 23 December 2012. The BIA assessment team of three conducted the survey on 26 December surveying one destroyed dwelling (right), four untouched dwellings, and four outbuildings.

The destroyed dwelling was a cement rendered brick dwelling. The sub floor vents did not have ember protection.

The fire came close to the four untouched dwellings. Residents reported aerial water bombing saved the dwellings from being impacted by fire.



← January 2013

Stanford, Hunter
Fourteen untouched

On 2 January 2013 a fire started in the vicinity of Stanford Road, Kurri Kurri. Fire crews undertook property protection the same afternoon. Fourteen dwellings were assessed by a BIA team of three.

The dwellings surveyed were not impacted by fire. Sixteen NSW RFS tankers and multiple FRNSW units provided property protection.

All dwellings were single storey with concrete slabs and were brick and tile or corrugated iron construction. The area around all dwellings was considered to be well maintained, with no predominant vegetation adjacent to dwellings. All properties had colorbond fences (as seen left) adjacent to the bushland.



January 2013 →
Yarrabin, Orana
Three destroyed,
two damaged, three untouched

The Yarrabin Fire started on 6 January 2013 and impacted dwellings two days later. A BIA team of two conducted the survey of eight dwellings and 22 outbuildings.

Two of the dwellings destroyed were informal dwellings. One was a shed attached to a caravan, the other was a medium-sized metal shed. The third dwelling was a cottage that was occupied part-time. The main residence on the property was about 120 metres from the cottage and was not impacted by fire. Five caravans were also destroyed.

Based on the scorching of some of the vegetation around the untouched dwellings, the survey determined that these dwellings benefited from aerial water bombing.



← January 2013
Wambelong, Coonabarabran
53 destroyed, 19 damaged,
23 untouched

The Wambelong fire started on 12 January 2013. Three BIA teams of four were deployed for the assessment of close to 100 structures impacted by fire. There were four destroyed dwellings which could not be assessed due to their location and the rain which fell extinguishing the fire.

Of the 53 dwellings destroyed, the construction varied with brick, colorbond, mud-brick (left), fibro, and timber cladding. The level of vegetation maintenance around the surveyed structures varied from well maintained with no vegetation against structures, to trees overhanging roofs.

Not all surveyed dwellings were directly impacted by the fire; some were damaged or destroyed as a result of ember attack.



January 2013 →
Cobbler Road, Harden
Three untouched

Three dwellings were impacted, but not damaged by the Cobbler Road fire on 8 January 2013. The BIA team of two conducted the assessments over the following two days.

During the passage of the fire, one dwelling was occupied by the owners, one was unoccupied and another was unoccupied but was defended by the neighbours.

The three dwellings surveyed were constructed from a variety of materials including brick and fibro cladding with tiles or corrugated iron roofing. Two of the dwellings had garden beds located around the dwellings. Generally the properties were well-maintained. The occupied dwelling was actively defended by the owners and NSW RFS brigades during the passage of the fire.



← January 2013
Millingandi, Bega Valley
One destroyed, one damaged,
three untouched

The Millingandi fire started on 18 January and impacted dwellings the same day destroying one (left). A BIA team of two conducted the survey of five dwellings and nine outbuildings.

Of the undamaged dwellings, one with mud-brick external walls and colorbond roofing also had a well designed sprinkler system which provided protection to the dwelling and associated structures from bush fire attack.

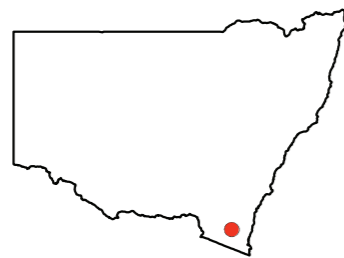
Water-bombing and the ground work of NSW RFS brigades during the fire proved effective in saving structures.





The Nimmitabel Post

Story and photos by Jill Brett, Warringham-Pittwater District



The fire season of 2012/13 was ferocious with NSW RFS volunteers making extraordinary efforts to protect life and property at over 7,500 incidents. Much of the 1.5 million hectares of NSW that was affected by fire was farming and grazing land and farmers were hit hard. Touched by their plight, some NSW RFS volunteers went above and beyond to help farmers get back on their feet through a charity called BlazeAid. Firefighter Jill Brett explains...

Let me get this straight first up, I know nothing about fencing!

One Sunday morning last summer my husband Terry and I were listening to the ABC Radio and heard about a voluntary group called BlazeAid.

BlazeAid is a volunteer-based organisation that works with families and individuals in rural Australia after natural disasters such as fires and floods. Working alongside the rural families, their volunteers help to rebuild fences that have been damaged or destroyed.

Terry and I had a couple of spare days up our sleeve, so we decided to give it a go.

We headed to Nimmitabel near Cooma where they were in

desperate need of volunteers. The area around Nimmitabel had been hit pretty hard by the Yarrabin fire in early January where two homes were lost, 12,166 hectares of land burnt and more than 250 kilometres of farm fencing had been destroyed.

Our work day started early with breakfast and a safety talk by Paul, our camp coordinator and fencing expert. Paul kept us entertained every morning with stories about what had happened the day before. All too frequently these stories revolved around Terry and I – like the day we bogged the farm ute.

We spent our days working on different farms around the area, always under the friendly supervision of a crew

leader, who thankfully knew what he was doing. The work was always interesting and it was so rewarding to know we were doing something to help our farmers get back on their feet after such devastation and difficult times.

Over the following weeks we returned to BlazeAid Nimmitabel three times to help with the fences. Why? Because we loved it. Because we felt good about doing it. Because the area and work environment was beautiful. Because we love volunteering. But most of all, because we had become part of the BlazeAid family.

BlazeAid was set up by Kevin and Rhonda Butler in 2009 after the Black Saturday bush fires in Victoria. Kevin and Rhonda

lost their own farm fences in the Kilmore fire and called on family, friends and local volunteers to help them rebuild. Within a week, the fences were completed - a task that would have taken them months to do on their own. Grateful for the assistance they had received, Rhonda and Kevin decided to help a few others with their fences and so BlazeAid was born. BlazeAid quickly grew to giving assistance not only after bush fires, but also after floods and cyclones. In 2013 alone BlazeAid volunteers have been working in Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

Terry and I would like to encourage anyone who has some spare time to volunteer with this wonderful

organisation. It doesn't matter if it's one day, or one month, your time will be put to good use and will be appreciated. You don't need to know how to build fences, you will be shown what to do. All you need is your own accommodation, whether it be a campervan, caravan or tent. All your food will be provided. And you will meet some amazing, inspirational and motivated people.

So, we'll see you out there in the smoke - or on the fenceline.

If you want more information go to www.Blazeaid.com.au.

TOP: Jill Brett from Warringham-Pittwater District, labouring to get the fencing back up on a Nimmitabel farm after the January fires impacted on the area

FAR LEFT: Terry and Jill Brett with Mark Barraclough, at the end of a day's work

ABOVE LEFT: Terry and crew finishing off a new fence

ABOVE RIGHT: Jill Brett bending her back: "We felt good about doing it," she said.

New kids on the block

The NSW RFS Technical and Fleet Services have released two new models of appliances - the Cat 6 Firefighting Appliance and Cat 13 Bulk Water Support Unit.

These appliances carry 9,000 and 11,000 litres respectively. Both are based on the same Single Cab, an Isuzu FVZ 1400, powered by a six-cylinder 24 valve SOHC engine with an Allison six speed automatic transmission configured with a hand lever operated transmission retarder. To improve the vehicles off road capability, the rear axles are fitted with both diff locks and cross locks.

Andrew Canderle, Manager Technical and Fleet Services said the Cat 6 and the Cat 13 bring a greater diversity and capacity to the NSW RFS operations and were designed with a view to the future. They both allow operations to be delivered effectively while using smaller crews, as well as providing improved access to possible water sources.

"The development of these two appliances has been the direct result of dealing with the volunteers who use these vehicles," he said, "We have a

fairly high acceptance for both vehicles by those who have viewed and used them."

Cat 6 Firefighting Appliance

The two key features of the Cat 6 are the extra large water storage and the monitor mounted on its bullbar.

The Cat 6 can be operated by a limited crew, who can fight fires from within the vehicle cabin. The driver or passenger simply selects the correct spray range and water pressure to suit the incident. The operator uses a joystick-style remote control which moves the bull bar mounted monitor on the truck. The Cat 6 prototype also includes an innovative on-board dual storage foam system allowing firefighters to choose either Class A foam for bush fires or Class B foam for vehicle fires.

The flow rate of the monitor is also able to be set with a range between 100 to 475 litres per minute, which would take anywhere from 90 to 20

minutes to empty the tank. This setting allows the crew to adjust how much water is being used at an incident.

Throughout the summer of 2012/13 the Cat 6 undertook field trials at several locations throughout NSW and was put to work on live fire incidents. The Cat 6 was operational at a grassfire in the Orana District in late January.

Superintendent Lyndon Wieland commented on the performance of the Cat 6 at a fast-running grass fire near Jaymark Rd, east of Dubbo in the Mugga Hill Area.

"The crew who operated the truck were very impressed with it," Superintendent Wieland said, "particularly the use of the water canon to take the heat out of the fire in the first instance."

He noted that the biggest advantage was that the Cat 6 can be operated by a single person.

"Out west, sometimes our members are the only ones able to respond to an incident and the local farmers join them later. So this truck is brilliant for us."

Cat 13 Bulk Water Support Unit

The outstanding feature of the new Cat 13 is its extra large water storage on a truck with the size and manoeuvrability of a Cat 1.

The Cat 13 Bulk Water is a bulk water support appliance only. It comes with an 11,000 litre buoy wall and a single 30m live reel. With the pump pressure set at 300kPa it can pump 1,000 litres of water per minute.

The Warringah Headquarters Brigade has taken delivery of the prototype Cat 13 appliance and put it into service at the West Head Fire in January 2013.

Captain of the Warringah HQ Brigade, Kevin Shadforth said the truck was leaps and bounds ahead of anything else that they had used.

Cat 13 Bulk Water Support Unit



"It was running for four days, 24/7 delivering water to water dams and appliances on the firefront," he said, "For my driver's, it's a step above."

"It's easy to drive, easy to stop, easy to operate - and the brakes with 'retarder' are awesome."

"One of the other bonuses is that it improves our ability to crew the vehicle. It only requires a driver with a heavy rigid licence which means there are more people in our brigade who are qualified to drive it."

After their operational experience with the Cat 13 over the 2012/13 fire season, Warringah HQ Brigade provided suggestions and feedback back to the Technical and Fleet Services Team. Their suggestions are being implemented into the future design of the Cat 13.

Both the Cat 6 and the Cat 13 were recently rigorously tested at the NSW RFS Mogo Training Facility near Batemans Bay. After vehicle and pump regimes were conducted, they came through with flying colours. The Cat 6 was taken on a fire trail behind Moruya, along the head of the Moruya River, and handled this steep countryside with ease.

Each appliance is easy to drive with their six speed automatic transmission and the assistance of the six position adjustable retarder. Those who have driven them are appreciative of the capacity of the retarder together with the ability of the appliances being able to be put into 'cross lock and diff lock' to deliver 6x4WD capacity.

"The automatic transmission is a bonus, Captain Kevin Shadforth said, "It is totally different from what we have had in the Service before but it doesn't take much to get used to it."

"There is some debate about automatic gearboxes but in that kind of truck, you can't beat it!"

OPPOSITE PAGE: The Cat 6 Firefighting Appliance underwent testing and assessment at the Mogo Training Facility in May 2013. Photo by Mariell Taylor

TOP: Cat 13 Bulk Water Support Unit At Mogo. Photo by Mariell Taylor

TOP RIGHT: Cat 13 (left) and the Cat 6 (right) at Mogo training Facility in May 2013. Photo by Mariell Taylor

BOTTOM RIGHT: Throughout the 2012/13 summer the Cat 6 undertook field trials at several locations and was operational at a grass fire near Dubbo in January. Photo by Patrick Westwood



Cat 6 Firefighting Appliance



Testing times

The latest in fire appliance technology was put through its paces at the Mogo Training Facility in May 2013. Seven different firefighting appliances valued between \$100,000 and \$380,000 each, underwent rigorous testing over five days.



A trip out to the 4WD Rural Fire Driving Track near Moruya occupied Day Four of the Engineering Field Testing Trip. All the vehicles were challenged by steep terrain and rough conditions.



Assistant Commissioner Bruce McDonald, Director of Infrastructure Services said that before new appliances can be accepted into the NSW RFS ranks, this kind of rigorous testing is essential.

"The NSW RFS continues to embrace new technology in the design and build of new fire appliances to ensure we are delivering the best possible equipment for our members and the communities they serve.

"This testing process ensures that these appliances meet all the essential requirements before being deployed to fire stations across the State," he said.

Seven appliances scrutinised

The seven appliances and vehicles tested as part of the Engineering Field Testing

Trip were the Cat 1 dual cab (automatic transmission prototype), Cat 1 dual cab, Cat 6 prototype, Cat 7 dual cab, Cat 9, Cat 9 Land Rover (prototype) and the Cat 13 Bulk Water Carrier.

The appliances were assessed across a wide variety of test environments including simulations of pumping water from dams as well as on-road and off-road assessments to ensure the vehicles could withstand rugged terrains, such as ramp-overs, steep grades, water crossings and narrow trails.

Two of the seven types of vehicles were prototypes and special focus was on their performance. These state-of-the-art appliances boast some of the latest firefighting technology including the introduction of a remote controlled monitor on the Cat 6

prototype designed for use in grass firefighting incidents.

Schedule of tests

The Engineering Field Testing Trip was undertaken over five days with the first and last day focussing on on-road tests, the second day focussing on operational stowage testing under the guidance of several local brigades, the third day on pump tests, and the fourth day on off-road testing at the Region South 4WD track.

This was the first time this level of comprehensive testing, over such an intensive period, had been undertaken. It was so successful that there are plans to make it an annual event. The tests were designed in line with the NSW RFS training methodologies, SOPs, RFD course (for the off-road tests) and were in line



THIS PAGE: Firefighters were able to check out all the features of the appliances and vehicles and provide comment.



Smoky conditions were simulated to test the new High-Vis marking (not shown here) and LED emergency lighting



Engineers from NSW RFS and Isuzu discussing the new mounting system on the Cat 6

This will allow everybody to have input into new designs ...Experience can be used to create better vehicles.

with specifications (such as those for NSW RFS pumps). Testing was quite rigorous and conducted over a variety of scenarios.

The NSW RFS Technical and Fleet Services Team and Eurobodalla staff and firefighters were on hand to assist with the testing and to provide feedback. Representatives from the cab chassis manufacturers, Isuzu and Gilbert and Roach, were also present.

Valuable feedback from firefighters

Volunteers firefighters from Surf Beach, Malua Bay, Broulee, Moruya, South Durras, Turross Heads, Narooma, Cobargo, Bega and Candelo Brigades were all part of the testing exercise. Eurobodalla North Deputy Group Captain Trevor Fletcher said the testing exercise was impressive.

"This will allow everybody to have input into new designs," he said, "Experience can be used to create better vehicles."

The Technical and Fleet Services Team were equally happy to receive the feedback from local firefighters. "We can design and build these vehicles," said one NSW RFS designer, "but we need feedback on what goes in and on them from those who use them on the fireground. "It

(the Engineering Field Testing Trip) has been great," he said, "because our volunteer firefighters have picked up lots of areas where little changes can be made to make the appliances even easier to work with."

Venue

The Mogo Training Facility, near Bateman's Bay, and a nearby 4WD Rural Fire Driving Track provided ideal conditions for testing the vehicles. The trip to and from Mogo allowed for on-road testing, and the Mogo Training Facility itself provided a dam for pump testing and plenty of room to inspect and test the seven appliances. The fourth day of the Engineering Field Testing Trip included tests in more rugged terrain on a 4WD track located just west of Moruya, not far from Mogo.

New designs and new equipment assessed

Throughout the five days, assessments of equipment and new designs such as new remote controlled monitors and changes to cabin and body layouts were undertaken.

Day 2 involved an opportunity to engage and interact with local volunteers in operational and stowage tests. The locals guided the RFS Designers through a series of operational risk assessments. These

assessments focussed on the typical use of the appliances including testing the latest designs to improve access, egress, equipment stowage and de-stowage, pump accessibility and use, and hose work for each appliance.

The event was a huge success in gathering invaluable feedback and Technical and Fleet Services Team would like to thank the local volunteers for taking the time to share with us their views and provide such vital information that will assist in developing future designs for these appliances.

Pumps

Pump testing, supported by industry technical representatives, included flow, suction and pressure tests on all vehicles at the Mogo dam.

High Visibility markings and lighting tests

Examinations were made of the proposed new high visibility markings and LED emergency lighting for NSW RFS appliances.

Smoky environments were simulated using smoke machines and low light conditions so that the effectiveness of the new High-Vis marking combined with LED emergency lighting, could be compared with the current markings and current rotating

beacons. Feedback gathered from the volunteers was very consistent and overwhelmingly in support of the new markings.

Assessment of alternative work-light options and work-lighting layouts were also undertaken.

Off-road tests

An off-road test at the 4WD Rural Fire Driving Track near Mogo was held on the fourth day. Representatives from both Isuzu and Gilbert & Roach were in attendance and were able to capture technical data regarding the performance of the vehicles and to gain first-hand experience of some of the types of fire trails these appliances are likely to travel on.

On-road handling

On road tests included taking two challenging routes to and from Mogo to assess the ergonomics and handling of each appliance.

The route south from Sydney saw the convoy travelling down the M7 onto the Hume Highway and taking the Mittagong exit down into Kangaroo Valley. From there the convoy travelled across to the Princes Highway, down through to Nowra ending up in Mogo (South of Bateman's Bay). The route challenged the convoy with a long steep

descent and a winding road into Kangaroo Valley, as well as some highway driving along the coast.

The route north, however, proved to be even more of a challenge for the convoy. After leaving Mogo the convoy travelled up the Princes Highway onto the Kings Highway and then onto the Goulburn-Braidwood Road before joining the Hume Highway at Goulburn onto Sydney. This route tested the convoy's ability to travel up long, steep, winding roads and both country roads and freeway conditions again.

The data collated during the field trip will enable the Technical and Fleet Services Team to identify, analyse and assess safety, technical, financial and quality risks associated with these appliances. The next step will be to progressively incorporate strategies for the treatment and monitoring of these risks within both business and technical planning process to deliver further improvements.

A brief video has been collated about the Engineering Field Testing Trip and can be found on MyRFS.

Further tests will be undertaken in the coming months in other conditions including grassland and sandy environments.

The NSW RFS Fleet

The NSW RFS operates a broad range of fire appliances for prevention, mitigation and suppression activities, as well as during training and in support of other emergencies. The NSW RFS has some 4,000 firefighting appliances and 3,500 command, logistics and support appliances to fulfil this requirement.

The role of the Technical and Fleet Services Team is to ensure that all categories of appliances are both performing as designed, and addressing the operational requirements of the organisation. To deliver this they are responsible for development, coordination and management of the engineering components of design, production and delivery of appliance construction programs, the re-deployment of vehicles under the second hand appliance program, as well as the passenger vehicle fleet.

The Manager Technical and Fleet Services, Andrew Canderle said, "The aim is to ensure our appliances are 'fit for purpose' and are able to effectively operate in all conditions our volunteers will face."



Go to the official NSW RFS Youtube Channel to watch a short video: NSW RFS News - Engineering Field Testing. www.youtube.com/nswrfs



Scan this to go direct to the video

Your eye on the environment

By Olenka Rudewych, acting RFS Meteorologist and Laurence McCoy, Senior Fire Behaviour Analyst

On 26 June 2013, the Bureau of Meteorology unveiled its new map-based interactive weather viewer, MetEye™, which replaces the existing Forecast Explorer.

This new resource will help people access real-time, user-friendly weather information, and brings together the most popular elements of the Bureau's website into one convenient platform.

MetEye allows you to:

- Easily search for your local weather data
- Save your favourite locations
- Pan and zoom to any area in Australia
- Combine and animate the latest weather and forecast weather on one map e.g. rain radar, cloud, temperature, rainfall, wind, waves
- Display more detail for each day of the week in tables

Along with the map views, detailed forecast data is also available as a text view in MetEye, for any location, letting you see current conditions, forecasts and warnings summarised on one page.

The text view provides even more detail, with links to:

- Detailed three-hourly forecasts for the next week
- Extended seven-day forecast for a longer description of forecast weather conditions for your place
- Radar link to your nearest radar
- Satellite picture showing the clouds in your area

MetEye, however, will only provide limited fire weather specific data (Dewpoint, Mixing Height and Drought Index). As a result, the NSW RFS is taking a lead role in partnership with NSW and ACT

firefighting agencies to build a fire specific weather viewer. This viewer will have at least the functionality of the fire weather Forecast Explorer with a number of additional benefits. These include the ability to view on mobile devices and being able to overlay multiple weather variables.

It is expected that the fire weather viewer will be available to all NSW RFS members before the start of the fire season in 2013.

MetEye does not replace the Bureau's official forecasts and warnings. Forecast weather data is routinely updated twice a day at 6am and 6pm local time, while observational data is updated every six (rain radar imagery) to sixty minutes (satellite imagery), depending on what is being displayed.

MetEye should not be used for critical decision making, and is intended to be used in conjunction with the Bureau's official text forecasts and warnings. It is an experimental service and the graphical forecast data is not always updated as regularly as the official text products.

The full suite of MetEye services is now available in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia. Queensland and the Northern Territory have access to all MetEye information except forecast services, which will become available by early 2015.

For people interested in trying MetEye, providing feedback, or for more information go to www.bom.gov.au/australia/meteye.



TOP RIGHT: MetEye computer screen image displaying the weather forecast for Sydney for the next seven days.
BOTTOM RIGHT: MetEye computer screen image displaying the latest weather conditions and the seven-day forecast for Sydney

World class protection

The Personal Protective Equipment worn by NSW RFS firefighters is the best protection in the world. Over years of rigorous testing those 'yellows' not only meet industry standards, but in many cases exceed them.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) are terms that are often interchanged. For the record, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) refers to protective clothing, helmets, goggles, or other garments or equipment designed to protect the wearer's body from injury. So essentially, PPE is anything used or worn by a person to minimise a risk to the person's health or safety.

The purists of the world will tell you, quite correctly, that PPE should only be considered as a control measure when the chance to minimise or eliminate exposure to a risk cannot be lessened in any other way. So, essentially PPE does not control the hazard at the source, rather it is your last line of defence.

For the PPE to offer the protection for which it is designed, it is essential that it fits correctly and that it is used correctly. If your PPE does not fit correctly or is damaged you need to tell your Captain and/or District and seek a replacement or repair.

As a baseline, all the PPE issued by the NSW RFS meets the applicable Australian Standards. Generally, the PPE issued by the NSW RFS exceeds the Australian Standard in specific areas, for example, the RFS goggle has requirements for scratch and

fog resistant lenses, describes a minimum volume inside the goggle and a minimum distance between the lens and the eye, additionally the RFS requires the body of the goggle to resist high temperatures, have a retention strap that will not drip melted elastic when burnt and lenses that deliver an increased level of ballistic impact protection.

The NSW RFS continually works towards improving its PPE. This involves keeping current with Standards, which are generally reviewed and perhaps changed every five years, maintaining an understanding of developments and trends in PPE and undertaking testing, which we do both in Australia and worldwide. As far back as 1995, the NSW RFS conducted its initial test of its bush fire protective clothing in a simulated flash fire chamber. The NSW RFS was the first Australian bush firefighting agency to do so.

The Service continues to conduct this type of testing, generally trialing an alternate fabric or adjustments to design. The testing has been undertaken at the University of Alberta, Edmonton Canada. Why Canada? Because at the time this was the only test facility not associated with a fabric manufacturer and has significant experience in the

provision of independent advice on the specialty textiles being used.

In 2007, the NSW RFS conducted multiple series of tests (each series consist of three tests) at Alberta University which included bush fire and structural firefighting garments. One of these tests involved a complete bush fire PPE ensemble (except for the boots).

The PPE was in the flames for four seconds at temperatures in the range of 800°C – 900°C. The energy the PPE was subjected to was 84 kW/m². It is the same as having 84 one kilowatt bar room heaters crammed into a space one metre by one metre right next you.

Following the test the "yellows" (Bush Fire Ensemble) showed very little damage and were still intact, the helmet and goggles had not melted nor lost their shape, the gloves and hood were still intact. The equipment performed as was intended.

It needs to be stressed that although the equipment has been tested in these conditions, it does not mean that you can now get yourself closer to a fire or place yourself in a more hazardous position.

The selection and evaluation of PPE is an important process. The NSW RFS Equipment

Research and Development Unit develop the specifications for all the PPE issued to NSW RFS members gathered over many years. In the past, groups of NSW RFS volunteers have been used to assess products during tender evaluations and whilst the tender process and evaluation of the products was a formal process, the selection of the NSW RFS members used in the evaluations was not.

NSW RFS Equipment Research and Development Unit will be changing this in the very near future. It is proposed to select 10 members from each Region, chosen from districts across the region so as to maximize the representation and conditions equipment will be used in. These members will in effect become a reference group when new equipment is to be evaluated.

It is not intended that all the 40 members will be called upon all the time, it will depend on the nature of the equipment and the impact it will have on the NSW RFS. For example, in the coming tender for PPE, the entire group will participate. For PPE / equipment which only have a small usage in the Service, such as lifejackets, then it will be a much smaller group.

Your PPE: what makes it world class?

Without PPE

RISKS: head injuries, radiant heat, flying debris, falling branches, embers in hair

RISKS: temporary and permanent eye damage; temporary loss of sight due to dust, embers, heat and smoke; no protection from flames, radiant heat or the impact of flying objects

RISKS: abrasions, burns, severe skin loss; not visible in low light conditions; no protection from heat, flame or flying objects

RISKS: severe skin loss and burns; abrasions and cuts; radiant heat

RISKS: no protection from heat, flames and abrasions

RISKS: significant risk of 2nd or 3rd degree burns to large areas of the body; low visibility; flammable

RISKS: foot and toe injuries from penetrating or falling objects; low protection from radiant heat from the ground, ash or chemicals on the ground; no support for ankles

With PPE

WHITE HELMET WITH HIGH VISIBILITY MARKINGS:

- provides visibility in low light or smoky conditions
- internal harness and frame protects the skull, spine and neck from impact of falling objects
- internal air barrier protects the head from over-heating
- flame resistant material protects head and hair from flames

GOGGLES:

- protects face, eyes and eyesight from the effects of heat, smoke, flames and flying objects
- all materials are flame and fire-retardant
- lens is anti-fogging, anti-scratch
- exact volume of air within the goggles is designed to protect the lens of the eye from overheating
- tested to protect against high impact

NECK FLAP:

- protects neck, hair and ear-openings from dust, embers and sun

COLLAR:

- protects neck and throat from radiant heat, flame resistant

JACKETS:

- significantly reduces the risk of burn injury by protecting from radiant heat flame
- loose-fitting allows air to circulate
- yellow colour provides high visibility during the day
- fluorescent stripes provide high visibility at night
- fabric has high standard of wicking breathability and is hypo-allergenic

FOUR OUTER POCKETS:

- provide storage for goggles, radios, hoods

GLOVES:

- protect hands from radiant heat and flames
- protection against cuts, abrasions and some impact
- inner kevlar cuff protects wrists from injury, abrasions and heat

HIGH-WAISTED PANTS:

- high waists protect kidneys and lower back when crouching
- high waist provides facility for inner utility belt if required
- as for JACKET: provides world class overall protection from burn and heat injuries and high visibility

REINFORCED KNEE PANEL:

- provides protection from abrasions while crouching and climbing
- also provides extra protection for radiant heat when the knee is bent

REFLECTIVE STRIPES:

- enhance visibility in low light conditions

PRESS STUDS AND ANTI-SCUFF HEMS:

- press studs can be clipped to protect from embers, ash
- Nomex hem stops fraying and accidents from tripping or loose fibres catching alight

CALF-HIGH BOOTS:

- leather uppers protect from heat, flame and embers
- height of boot supports ankles
- reinforced soles protect from sharp objects or spikes
- reinforced toe caps protect from falling objects
- soles resistant to acid, oil and chemicals
- dual density provides hard outer and soft sole for comfort
- inner sole is anti-fungal, anti-bacterial



What is different about the new structural PPE?



The NSW RFS is issuing a new structural ensemble. What's different about it?

The current two piece structural ensemble worn by RFS volunteers was certified to Australian Standard (AS) 4967 - 2006 - Protective Clothing for Firefighters. As discussed earlier, Standards change and in 2009 a revised standard came into effect, AS 4967-2009 -Protective Clothing for Firefighters. There is always a reasonable amount of time to transition to new Standards, hence we commenced releasing the revised product earlier this year.

This particular Australian Standard establishes the minimum requirements for structural firefighting protective clothing designed to provide limited protection from thermal, physical and environment hazards encountered during structural firefighting operations.

The 2006 Standard allowed the use of multiple garments to achieve the necessary performance, eg use of structural trousers over the top of bush fire pants, the new standard only allows the use of a single layer ensemble for

certification. It should be noted that standards are not applied retrospectively.

This does not mean that you have to modify the approach of wearing bush fire PPE under the structural if that's how it suits you, however, the new structural is certified as a standalone garment and can be worn with minimal underclothing if you wish.

The new Standard also mandated an increase in the radiant heat resistance and flame heat transfer performance. There was no change in the requirements for resistance to water and

liquid chemicals or water vapor resistance ("breathability").

The jacket will now have an additional high visibility triple trim tape on the sleeves, the trousers will also feature additional material on the knees to reduce wear and minimise the impact on the users when crawling through active structural fire environments.

Q: How can I ask questions or find out more information?

A: You can email your question to Equipment@rfs.nsw.gov.au with contact details and answer will be emailed back to you.

Hornsby/ Ku-ring-gai firefighters tested

Story by Kane Lambkin. Photos by Adam Streichler



Firefighters hold back the flames of a large gas cylinder on fire

Early on Saturday morning 15 June 2013, the residents of Berowra awoke to the sights and sounds of 120 NSW RFS firefighters attending eight separate incidents in the area. Brigades raced to deal with situations such as gas fires, car accidents and medical emergencies. Luckily it was all part of an Exercise designed to test local firefighters.

The annual Hornsby/ Ku-ring-gai District Exercise pits brigade against brigade, competing for points across scenarios that simulate real-life emergency situations. The teams compete in the following events:

- Property protection
- Advanced First Aid and rescue
- Pumping

- MVA
 - Truck and equipment
 - LPG fire
 - Community Engagement
 - Navigation
- While the event does prompt a *friendly* rivalry between brigades, the winners get bragging rights, so the top spot is hotly contested. Some firefighters train for several weeks in preparation for the Exercise!



Local residents got to see firsthand the types of situations firefighters face every day, with many turning up to cheer on the brigades.

Group Captain and event organiser Grant Wargren says the Exercise is of great importance to the community.

“It is one of the ways that the District ensures that volunteer firefighters are trained to a high level and that they are ready to respond to a diverse range of incidents,” he said.

“The Exercise is important to our firefighters and other volunteers as it provides an opportunity to test their skills against those of other brigades within the District, and adds a healthy dose of competition between each brigade as they strive for excellence.”

Firefighters enjoyed the event saying the scenarios give them the opportunity to work as a team in a challenging environment, with the ability to work safely and effectively together under pressure.

Local residents got to see firsthand the types of situations

firefighters face every day, with many turning up to cheer on the brigades. It was a great opportunity for the members of the NSW RFS to interact with the community and show off the amazing things they do.

The winners of the Exercise were Ku-ring-gai Brigade, with Cherrybrook Brigade coming in second and Berowra Waters Brigade in third place.

TOP: Final map and equipment check at the navigation event.

TOP RIGHT: First Aid kit and AED required - firefighters rush to assist at the First Aid event

MIDDLE RIGHT: Event marshals brief firefighters on the task ahead.

LOWER RIGHT: In the end, it is all good fun.



The very best of the NSW RFS

Firefighters honoured on St Florian's Day

Photos by Adam Hollingworth

Around 60 NSW RFS members were honoured on St Florian's Day this year for their outstanding achievements and dedication.

St Florian is the patron saint of firefighters and his day, 4 May has been chosen as the day for the NSW RFS to present awards for outstanding service to its members.

Representing Minister for Police and Emergency Services was the local member for Strathfield, Charles Casuscelli, MP who presented the St Florian's Day awards along with the Commissioner. The Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons paid tribute to all serving firefighters and volunteers who continue to follow in the footsteps of St Florian.

“Awards given today recognise the very best of the NSW RFS. While every day we have people who serve their community, today we honour those who have exceeded even our own high expectations.

“I am proud to award commendations to men and women who have helped prevent a suicide, assisted NSW Police in the search and arrest of Australia's (then) most wanted man, Malcolm Naden, and walked the Kokoda Track with the children and grandchildren of injured or fallen firefighters.

“Other actions which have been formally commended today include the foundation members of an innovative new remote firefighting unit in Macarthur, and others who helped drive the process from conception to reality.

“A number of units and staff are also being recognised for their outstanding work in providing assistance to the NSW SES during devastating

floods that hit the State in the past two years.

“Volunteers and staff from a variety of backgrounds and from right across NSW have been recognised today, showing that outstanding service is not limited to any one person, rank, location, or brigade.

“It is clear that the NSW RFS is in good hands, with people

such as these stepping up to help protect, educate and help their communities.

“Today I would personally like to thank both the award recipients for their dedication to the Service and to the community, and the families that support these outstanding RFS members,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.



ABOVE: Nearly 100 members gathered at the NSW RFS Headquarters for the St Florian's Day ceremony on 4 May 2013.



**COMMISSIONER'S
COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE**

Group Captain Craig Bardney and Group Captain Colin Smeeth - Myall Park Brigade and Wyangan Brigade, MIA Zone, Region South For work on devastating floods of 7 March 2012, coordinating the massive cleanup of Yenda Township.

Firefighter Vernon Dunning - Cooma Brigade, Monaro, Region South Vernon was pivotal in the delivery of the NSW RFS Secondary Schools Cadet Program to the Monaro area, instrumental in the training of more than 200 cadets.

Group Captain Leslie Fowler - Central Warren Brigade, North West Zone, Region West Coordinated response to major cotton fire in the storage area at the Queensland Cotton Facility on the outskirts of Warren in September 2012, he was the only person named in the debrief for his cool, calm and positive leadership which saw all the emergency services working cooperatively.

Deputy Captain Raymond Hehir - Murrumbateman Brigade, Southern Tablelands Zone, Region South Ray's efforts and time

in the building of the extension to the fire station. The facility is now at a stage where it can house all of the Brigade's trucks and equipment.

Captain Leslie Irvin - Barellan Brigade, MIA Zone, Region South On Saturday 3 March 2012 significant flooding occurred across south west NSW resulting in large amounts of flood water, the isolation of the township and the loss of essential services. Leslie, with the assistance of the local police officer, took charge and initiated the evacuation of residents.

Firefighter Judith Moore - Eurobodalla Fire Control Support, Far South Coast, Region South Judith has assisted with the coordination of district events and numerous brigade support services throughout the Shire.

Senior Deputy Captain Helen Riedl - Malua Bay Brigade, Far South Coast, Region South Helen is the driving force behind Community Engagement within the Far South Coast Team.

Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM - Director, Operational Services During the Royal Commission into the 2009 Black Saturday

Bush Fires in Victoria, Rob represented NSW in two Royal Commission hearings and continues to represent NSW at the highest levels to establish improved public warning systems.

Captain Brian Schloeffel - Burrabadine Brigade, Orana, Region West Brian is tireless in attending callouts, his expertise and diligence has resulted in his crews maintaining an exemplary safety record and he has been instrumental in the fundraising and construction of the Burrabadine Brigade Station.

Rebel Talbert - Group Manager, Operational and Mitigation Support Services Rebel was instrumental in the development of the Prepare. Act. Survive Program as a replacement for 'stay and defend' and the Federal Bush Fire Warnings Task Force which updated the Fire Danger Rating scale and established warning arrangements. She has assisted in establishment of the Rapid Aerial Response Teams as well as the enhancement of Remote Area Firefighting Teams.

Dominic Lane, AFSM - (Former) Director, Regional and Infrastructure Services

A member of the RFS for nearly 30 years, Dominic has contributed as both a volunteer and staff member. He conducted the recent rank review, one of the most comprehensive and exhaustive consultative and open reviews undertaken by the RFS.

Firefighter Malcolm Weir - Gerringong Brigade, Illawarra, Region East Malcolm is the longest serving Captain of his brigade and remains active, attending many call outs. The brigade still looks to Malcolm for advice on many brigade decisions.

**COMMISSIONER'S
CERTIFICATION OF
COMMENDATION (INDIVIDUAL)**

Sharon Saunders - Coordinator, Audit, Inquiries and Legal, NSW RFS Headquarters Volunteers, staff and the legal team representing the State have all expressed their gratitude for Sharon's tireless work to support them throughout the large and complex legal proceedings following the 2001 fires.





Action plans

An update on public awareness of bush fire preparedness



Photo by Anthony Clark

Planning to make a plan is not a plan. That was the message from the NSW RFS to the public for the 2012/13 fire season. But did the message get through? Group Manager Corporate Communications, Anthony Clark, tells us that this year the people of NSW are taking more action to protect themselves from bush fire.

COMMISSIONER'S UNIT CITATION FOR SERVICE

Eurobodalla Training Centre Support Group - Far South Coast, Region South This group dedicates their time to grooming and maintaining the Training Centre to be the place of excellence it is today, ensuring that NSW RFS volunteers can be trained and supported to a high standard.

Moree Brigade and Narrabri Headquarters Brigade - Namoi Gwydir, Region North Tireless work following extensive flooding in northern NSW that affected many parts of the community.

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATION OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

Bland Temora Zone volunteers and staff - Region West During the 2012 flooding that inundated much of NSW, Bland Temora Zone volunteers and staff provided emergency flood assistance to seven

out-of-area communities at the same time as the Bland Temora Zone was experiencing significant flooding across their own communities.

Gloucester/Great Lakes Team - Region East The team played a critical role in support of the NSW Police Force operation, Strike Force Dirkin, in their search, apprehension and arrest of fugitive Malcolm Naden (Australia's then most wanted person).

Hazelbrook Brigade - Blue Mountains, Region East For preventing a suicide attempt in Kedumba National Park, and providing a safe refuge, reassurance, care and compassion for the individual until an ambulance arrived.

Lake Albert Brigade - Wagga Wagga, Riverina Zone, Region South An extraordinary rain event that led to flash and riverine flooding throughout the Murrumbidgee floodplain, saw the Lake Albert Brigade dedicate many hundreds if not thousands of hours to both the response and

recovery phases of the event, providing meals to local and out-of-area crews from early morning to late evening.

Macarthur Remote Area Firefighting Team (RAFT) Brigade - Macarthur Zone, Region East Following the establishment of the concept of new small teams to undertake Remote Area Firefighting (RAFT), these volunteers undertook an intensive regime of training, testing and medicals, becoming qualified in a very short period to meet the challenge of deploying to their first Remote Area Firefighting Team job in October 2011, at Cliff Drive Blue Mountains.

NSW RFS Courage Under Fire, RFS Kokoda Trek Initiative An initiative to take a small group of adults, children and grandchildren between the ages of 16 and 25 of fallen or seriously injured firefighters on a journey to trek Kokoda - a potentially life changing experience of courage, endurance, mateship

and sacrifice - the values and qualities of those Australian soldiers who fought along the Kokoda Track almost 70 years earlier.

MIA Zone, Region South Tireless work following extensive rains in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) resulting in major flooding that affected many parts of the community.

Riverina Zone, Region South Tireless work following extensive rains in the Riverina Zone, resulting in major flooding that affected many parts of the community.

The successful Prepare. Act. Survive. public awareness campaign has been running since 2009 and in 2012/13 the campaign focussed on encouraging people to complete a Bush Fire Survival Plan.

The range of the 2012/13 campaign was extensive. Running from September 2012 to February 2013 it included coordinated television, radio, online, print and outdoor advertising, for example:

- 2,500 booked TV spots in Sydney, Northern NSW, Southern NSW and Albury television markets
- An integration arrangement with Channel Seven, including a feature on Better Homes & Gardens, a 60 second TV spot with Tom Williams, and a news credit placement
- More than 2,500 booked radio spots
- Radio 'live reads' involving staff or senior volunteers on 23 regional radio stations
- Feature 'wraparounds' in community newspapers
- Translation of campaign content into 13 community

languages, which appeared in non-English publications

- Pre-campaign research was conducted to benchmark community perceptions and levels of preparations prior to the commencement of the campaign.

At the conclusion of the campaign, post-campaign research was conducted by Mediacom Insight, using an online panel of 400 people across NSW.

Campaign awareness

- 60 percent of people recall the campaign unprompted. This is the highest level ever achieved by a NSW RFS campaign
- 67 percent of respondents recall seeing the campaign when prompted with images from it
- 35 percent of respondents recall 'planning' as the key message of the campaign, while 50 percent recall 'general preparation information' as the key message.
- 69 percent of respondents recall the tagline Prepare. Act. Survive.

Television remained the main medium for building awareness, with 88 percent recalling the advertisements on television.

Planning

The level of preparedness and confidence is now at its highest level, with 50 percent of people stating they are confident or very confident, while 46 percent state they are prepared or very prepared.

The NSW RFS website remains the first choice for people when they are seeking information to bush fires (62 percent), however only one in eight actively seek out information.

Forty percent of people state they now have a plan for what to do when a bush fire starts. There has been a marked drop in the number of people who 'haven't thought about' making a plan.

Twenty four percent of people state they have an official Bush Fire Survival Plan.

Seventy one percent of people who have a Bush Fire Survival Plan have completed it. This is an increase from 50 percent at the end of the 2011/12 season.

The level of preparedness and confidence is now at its highest level, with 50 percent of people stating they are confident or very confident



Seventy-one percent of people who have a Bush Fire Survival Plan have completed it. This is an increase from 50 percent at the end of the 2011/12 season.

Preparation

People continue to take the easy, minimal cost actions to prepare their homes including having a well-maintained garden, cleaning gutters, removing fuel and trimming branches.

People who have completed the Bush Fire Survival Plan generally do more preparation around their home, compared to those who do not have a Plan.

Downloads of the Bush Fire Survival Plan

During the life of the campaign (1 September to 31 March)

there were 68,674 downloads of the Bush Survival Plan from the NSW RFS website.

This figure is way beyond our target of 25,000 downloads, being 274 percent of the target.

During this time, there were 97,606 visits to the specially created Bush Fire Survival Plan page on the NSW RFS website. This means that 70 percent of people who visited the page downloaded the plan.

Conclusion

It is clear from these results that the campaign has been successful in building

awareness. Of particular note is the success in focusing on a simple, clear message of having a Bush Fire Survival Plan.

It is also worth noting that while the 2013 January bush fires have assisted in raising awareness, the targets for Bush Fire Survival Plans downloads were exceeded, even if the busiest period in January was excluded from the figures.

Taking the Bush Fire Survival Plan to the next level

The second year of the three-year Prepare Act Survive campaign is about to begin, with a big focus on mobile and digital media.

Research has shown one of the most used sources of information during a fire is a mobile phone, so work is underway to make the Bush Fire Survival Plan more accessible.

A mobile and tablet version of the Plan is being developed, which will provide people with tips for preparing, as well as information during fires. This will complement the Fires Near Me smartphone application.

The Prepare Act Survive campaign will start appearing on TV, radio, print, online and outdoor media in October 2013.



A partnership forged in fire

The work of the NSW RFS in Botswana

Photos courtesy of Andrew Macdonald

IF YOUR FAMILY DOESN'T HAVE A PLAN, PREPARE TO LOSE EVERYTHING.

COMPLETE YOUR BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLAN NOW.

PREPARE ACT SURVIVE RFS.NSW.GOV.AU 1800 679 737

In May 2013 Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons returned from a tour of Botswana extremely proud and humbled by the work of the NSW RFS in that country.



TOP: A hazard reduction burn was conducted as part of Hazard Reduction (Prescribed Burning) training.

The Botswana Fire Management Program (BFMP) is in its fourth year and so far more than 70 NSW RFS members have travelled to the southern African country to assist in building an effective fire management capacity.

"It is one thing to see the reports and to talk to the people who have been part of the program," the Commissioner said, "but to see the work firsthand and to actually experience the impact that the RFS has had on the country and people of Botswana, is very very humbling."

Disastrous fires in Botswana in 2008 saw more than 11 million hectares burned and a further 13 million hectares burned in 2010. Sadly, a total of 12 people died due to the fires.

The international response to assist Botswana included an initiative from the NSW RFS to establish the Botswana Fire Management Program. The five year program is supported by the State and Federal Governments through AusAID and the Australia-Africa partnership facility.

The goal of the BFMP is to develop firefighting capability, strategic fire management and fire line decision making. So far more than 70 members, including 45 volunteers, of the NSW RFS have travelled to Botswana to deliver training in Basic Firefighter, Crew Leader, Train the Trainer, Introduction to Incident Control Systems, Wildfire Investigation and most recently Hazard Reduction (Prescribed Burning).



To date the program has trained over 3,000 Botswana firefighters and this number will steadily increase over time.

To date the program has trained over 3,000 Botswana firefighters and this number will steadily increase over time. The NSW RFS has tailored a number of mainstream training courses to suit the course for conditions in Botswana, including training trainers who can offer this course into the future.

Assistance offered by the NSW RFS has also seen delegations from Botswana visit NSW for training and briefing. In March 2013 a delegation of five members of the Botswana Department of Forest and Range Resource (DFRR) visited Australia and toured a number of Fire Control Centre's and firegrounds. It is hoped that a further five Botswana will be deployed to NSW in January 2014 in what is hoped to be a on going collaboration.

In May 2013 the Commissioner responded to an invitation from the then Minister for the Environment, Wildlife and Tourism to visit Botswana. It allowed the Commissioner to

see the impact of the program and also to attend the Second National Fire Management Conference.

During his visit to Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, Commissioner Fitzsimmons met with the new Minister, Tshakedi Kharma, brother of the President and enthusiastic supporter of the program along with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry. The Minister was able to advise that not only has the number of fires been reduced in recent times, but also the size of fires that do occur has been greatly reduced. These two key indicators, the Minister said, testified to the success of the BFMP to date.

The two-day National Fire Management Conference was held in Kasane in the north east of the country and home to the Chobe National Park. It was an opportunity to reflect on the significant achievements of the BFMP so far. It also outlined the current level of bush fire

preparedness around each of the country's 10 Districts.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons spoke at the conference about the bond that exists between the NSW RFS and the Department of Forest and Range Resources. He expressed his hope that the partnership would continue after the Federal Government funding ceases at the end of 2014.

Hazard Reduction training

While the conference was running, three NSW RFS volunteers were conducting Prescribed Burning (Hazard Reduction) training nearby.

The training was the first of its kind in Botswana where the prescribed burning was conducted specifically to protect life, people and property.

Around 50 firefighters and fire managers attended the course with the majority of the attendees being employees with either the Botswana Department of

Forestry and Range Resources (DFRR) or the Botswana Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP).

A variety of strategies were the subject of the intensive training with an emphasis on hands-on rather than theoretical training. Asset Protection Zones were established around a village and burning was used to widen some key fire breaks.

Warwick Teasdale from Gosford, Andrew Macdonald from Macarthur and Rick Davies from Monaro were the course facilitators. While they were familiar with the subject matter, the course proved fairly unusual for the Australians. Throughout the deployment they found themselves calling for armed protection from lions, dealing with elephants straying onto the fireground, using fire beaters to extinguish several hectares of fire that had escaped and being entertained at breakfast by a crocodile!

For those Botswana fire managers who were taking

the course however, it was unusually valuable. Mr K Mathame, Department of Forestry and Range Resources said: "The NSW Rural Fire Service and Department of Forestry and Range Resources bilateral cooperation has been a wonderful experience. I have been involved in this program since its inception in February 2009 and I can see that this program will benefit Botswana as a whole."

On the last day of the National Fire Management Conference the attendees joined the course to observe the Hazard Reduction (Prescribed Burning) training in progress. The Australian facilitators were able to demonstrate the process of carrying out a hazard reduction burn and the advantages of using prescribed burning as a fire management tool.

"It is not until you see firsthand the enormity of the job facing the Botswana Government in establishing a national capacity to deal with bush fires," course facilitator Andrew Macdonald

said, "that you realise the importance of the role that the RFS is playing as strategic advisers and trainers to this Program."

"For those volunteers and staff of the RFS who have been lucky enough to be involved in the BFMP it would be fair to say that we have returned home satisfied knowing that we have made a small difference to the lives of others who live in a very different part of the world."

Further support from Australia

Australian Government support of Botswana also includes the donation of superseded Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) from the NSW RFS and National Parks and Wildlife.

Coinciding with the Second National Fire Management Conference the Australian High Commissioner, Mr Graeme Wilson was also able to handover 400 items of protective firefighting clothing worth more than \$65,000.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Prescribed burn trainees at the end of the course with the NSW RFS volunteers who led the course, Warwick Teasdale from Gosford, Andrew Macdonald from Macarthur and Rick Davies from Monaro

LEFT: Andrew Macdonald at the HR burn welding a fire beater used to control the burn

TOP RIGHT: The Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons addressed the Second National Fire Management Conference in Botswana

BOTTOM RIGHT: On the last day of the National Fire Management Conference the attendees joined the course to observe the Hazard Reduction (Prescribed Burning) training in progress

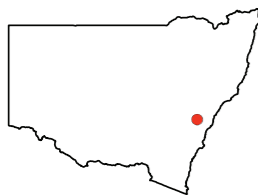
BRIGADE IN PROFILE

Woodford Rural Fire Brigade celebrates 90 years

By Carmel Gammal and John Grimshaw, Woodford Brigade



Woodford Brigade, in the lower Blue Mountains, recently celebrated 90 years of operation with a special event and medal ceremony for some of its long serving members.



In the course of preparing for the day, some of the brigade members delved into history to piece together the story of the Woodford Brigade's 90 years. The process began with sorting through the many crates of paperwork, photos and other relics stored in the ceiling space above the brigade office.

The results have been surprising.

Here is a little something of the story so far...

1923-1957

On Friday 12 January, 1923, in the wake of a severe bush fire season, Gustavus Waterhouse, a successful businessman and President of the new Blue Mountains Shire Council, chaired a meeting at the Woodford Methodist hall to establish a Bush Fire Brigade in the village. The objectives of the brigade were firstly, to cut fire breaks and to gain local

knowledge about the village's properties in preparation for a fire and secondly, to protect life and property when there was a fire.

The meeting elected Billy Watson, a builder originally from the east end of London, as Captain, and he remained in this position until 1948. Two deputies were also elected, Waterhouse himself became Secretary and Treasurer and another six people, including the owner of the Woodford Academy (now the oldest existing building in the Blue Mountains), formed the rest of the Executive Committee.

In 1923 Woodford was a popular tourist destination during holiday season but its permanent population was only about 300 people in fifty households. At this time, the telephone exchange was only seven years old and the Great Western Highway was

still designed for horse and carriage. Throughout this time, Woodford was one of those small townships where everybody knew everybody else and there was an active community life.

Like many townships in the Blue Mountains, Woodford had seen its fair share of bush fires - the first reported since white settlement was in January 1814.

There are few records for the period 1923 to 1957, but there are newspaper reports which tell of volunteer firefighters from Woodford protecting Woodford and other Mountain villages during fires. The fires of 1935 are documented in *The Telegraph* of November 23, 1935 including photos of firefighters working in Woodford. Later in 1944, one of our members was knocked over by a terrified wallaby which had leapt out

of the smoke and straight into him. Interestingly, the *Central Queensland Herald* of 7 December, 1944 showed some of the destruction of houses in Woodford.

One brigade member recalled that the equipment of the 1930s comprised rakes, cornbags, leather beaters and about 12 buckets, each with a rope and hook. There was a tomahawk in each bucket for making holes in water tanks. A row of buckets filled with water was also kept at the railway goods shed. Transport in those days was in the Brigade Captain's ute, which also had a ladder.

David Tarleton joined the brigade in 1949 at age 15. He said he can't remember if he actually officially 'joined', he just remembers going out with the guys cutting fire trails for the next 15 years. The crews

would cut the trails, leave them for a month, and then burn them at night. Being a youngie, he said, he was tasked with painting Woodford on the handles of the rakes and shovels.

By 1949 Bob Williams was the Brigade Captain. He erected a large brass bell in his own front yard to alert the village in the event of a fire. It could be heard for a mile around. This bell is now in the brigade's meeting room.

Later there was an electric siren mounted on a power pole which was used to summons brigade members, a piece of technology that the 'naughty boys' of the neighbourhood played with. In later years, these 'naughty boys' included a young Keven Wright, now one of the brigade's deputies.

Captain Bob Williams also owned a 1936 Ford two-

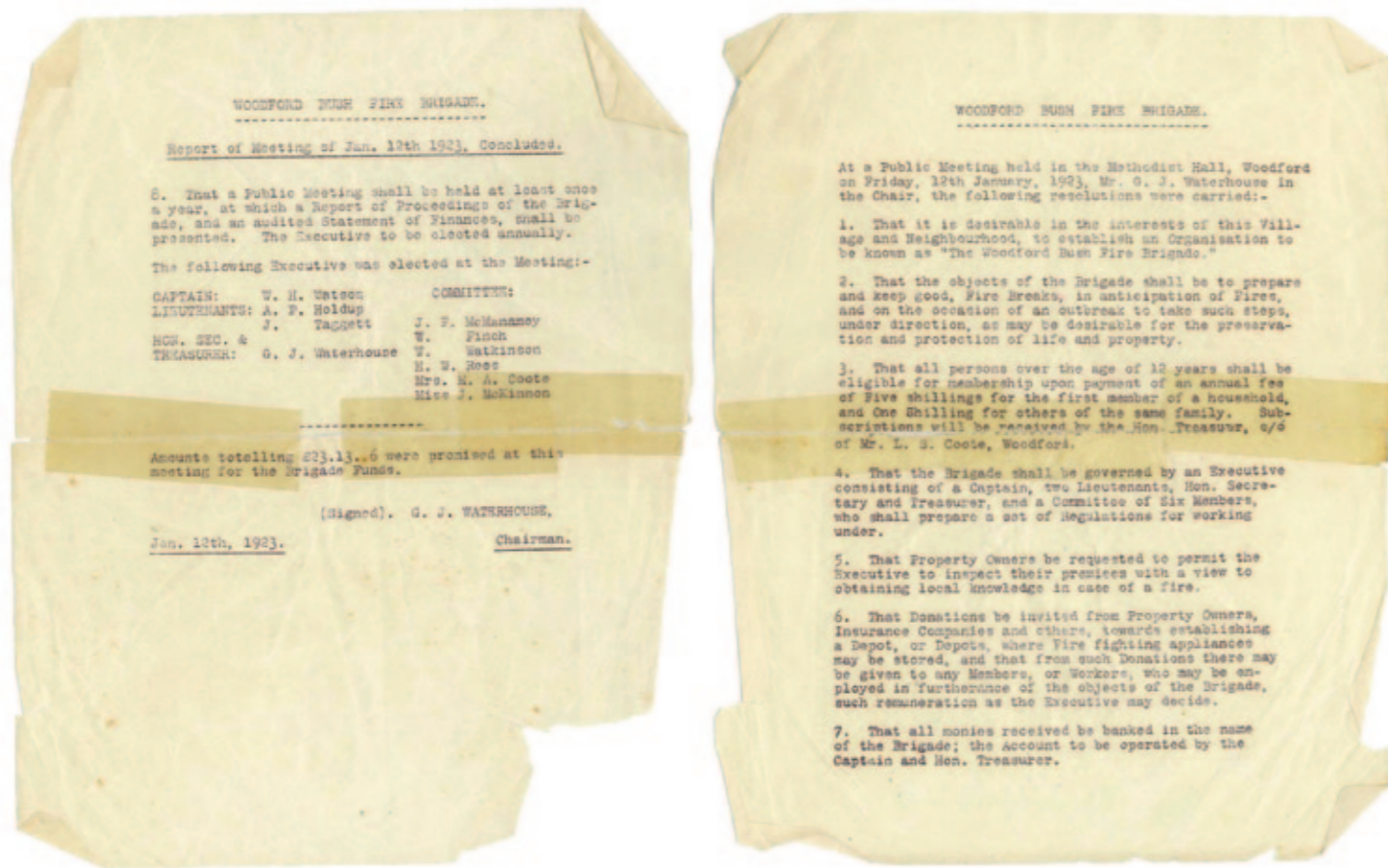
seater and it was in the back seat of this vehicle that firefighting equipment was crammed in the event of a fire. All other firefighters used private vehicles to get to the fireground, with those having a car picking up those who didn't. Private vehicles were also used by family members who wanted to find out what was going on or to take food to the firefighters.

Up until 1957, members in the brigade would decide what they were going to do during a fire. There were not enough resources to take the fight to the fire in the dense bushland, so the firefighters would wait for the fire to come to them. Radio communication was still in the distant future and the Captain would have to drive around to see what was going on.

In 1952 the government required that Bush Fire

Brigades in areas controlled by the Town Brigades be disbanded. Woodford Brigade, however, continued to be active, albeit underground. Newspaper reports corroborate these - volunteer firefighters were active defending Woodford during the 1957 fire season.

The severe bush fire season of 1957 was a turning point for Bush Fire Brigades across NSW. The authorities saw that volunteers had a crucial role to play in protecting the community. Len Warburton, Woodford's milkman, became Captain in this year, and changes over the next two decades laid the foundations for what we are now familiar with. These covered changes in legislation, technology (transport, equipment and communications), training and the management of firefighting.



ABOVE: The minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Woodford Bush Fire Brigade, 1 December, 1923

The era of the Blitz

The Minutes of Woodford Brigade from 1959 to 1972 show that the brigade was keen to adopt whatever technological changes were becoming available as well as to demand changes to funding, training and management.

The first big change was the transition from using private vehicles to the acquisition of the Blitz - an ex-Army short-wheel base petrol Ford. In September 1959, 100 pounds was paid to Council toward its

purchase and within six months it had been delivered, together with a new Wisconsin engine and Norvert pump.

The Blue Mountains District was encouraging brigades to learn about and use their new tools, truck and skills. Once the Blitz arrived, Woodford was able to participate in the next field day organised by the District, winning a thermos flask for coming second in the tanker race.

A little over a year later the Minutes note that the Blitz was

not in good mechanical order. It was a second hand ex-army truck, what could possibly go wrong? Well, there was excessive oil consumption, the gears would not engage and it kept breaking down. They generally needed to clutch start the truck.

Despite all of this, the Blitz was a hard working truck, however it needed a place to live. The brigade approached the Railways Department to make land available. This was agreed to, and although the site was

prepared by late 1960, Council postponed construction and a building was not complete until mid-1962. It became known as the Fire Hut. Members had to make the access to the highway for the Blitz. Somewhat fortunately, the members at the time thought to cut a steep trail so they could clutch start the truck as they responded to an incident.

The first meeting held at the Fire Hut was in August 1962. A telephone was connected - the number was 6-446, and



these are still the last four digits of the brigade phone number today. Members built a cupboard to store tea, sugar and cups, and 12 stackable chairs were bought. A year later strip heaters were added - little by little the hut was made more comfortable.

Car phone junior

In 1960 the Blue Mountains Fire Control Officer (FCO) demonstrated to the brigade the use of a 'radio telephone'. The Minutes record that: "it is hoped that ALL brigade vehicles will eventually be fitted with a two-way radio telephone." Council generally regarded the widespread distribution of radios as cost prohibitive, but did obtain two later in the year. One was given to Woodford and fitted to the Blitz.

Former Captain Ray Bent's memories of 'car phone junior' are distinct. It had valves, not transistors. It had two red

lights, one for standby and one for receive. If the unit was left on, the valves would blow. To use it you had to switch it on and wait for it to warm up before being able to transmit. Clearly, this radio was not the answer to their problems, so in 1966 the brigade bought two walkie talkies. Then, in 1969 the first steps of the radio procedures we use today were adopted. Other pieces of equipment that we so take for granted today included in 1960, a compass was acquired from Fire Control and the price of torches was investigated; in 1964, Council supplied a permanent standpipe for filling tankers and in 1965 a hose drying pole was installed. In 1965 the brigade sent a letter to the FCO expressing concern about the lack of coordination and direction at fires and suggested that an officer be appointed for this. In 1969 the brigade bought a Land Rover, but it could not fit into the Fire Hut. This began

the negotiations with Council for extensions to the Fire Hut which was not resolved until 1978.

Engaging the community

From the 1970s Woodford's population began to increase rapidly. For the brigade this presented a new set of challenges. No longer did everyone know everyone else in the village, and many of the new residents knew nothing about bush fires.

In the 1990s, under Captain Greg Frullani, the brigade began activities designed to put the brigade at the heart of community life. These ranged from a Santa run to establishing groups in streets under a Fire Warden. The fruits of this work in the community were clearly seen during the Mt Hall fires in 2001-2. When 300 firefighters came from around the country to fight those fires, 94 members of the community stepped up to provide the

catering, preparing breakfast, lunch and dinner over the duration of the fire.

After the Mt Hall fires, the brigade held 10 meetings in the affected streets to debrief the residents. The outcome was the establishment of 27 FireWise groups which went on to function very successfully to maintain the community's bush fire preparedness and to keep the community informed during incidents.

The current Captain Wayne Ashcroft, is another long serving member, chalking up 20 years of service in 2013. Under his stewardship, the brigade remains a close-knit, family friendly and welcoming collection of people. The members train regularly together and prepare for the sort of fires that have been long experienced in the Mountains - as well as the search and rescue operations which are part of life in the Mountains. Like any brigade in any small township, they struggle to find the new members and they work hard to fund raise for the ongoing costs of running a brigade.

Looking back over the last 90 years of the Woodford Brigade's life, it is clear that despite all the changes, there is an enduring spirit of commitment to one another and to the community that keeps the enthusiasm and the brigade alive.



1960: Woodford Crew with the Blitz truck



1978: New Shed Dedication



1975: Field day at St Columbas School



1995: Building the extensions



1996: The Opening of the shed extensions with NSW RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg (far left)

Private investors

Employers supporting NSW RFS volunteers

A program has been developed to recognise the significant behind-the-scenes contribution employers and self-employed volunteers make to the NSW RFS.



Launching the Supportive Employer Program at Wenty Leagues Club Minister for Police and Emergency Services Michael Gallacher with Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and (left) Kingsley McGarrigle, General Manager NSW Government for Telstra and (right) Wenty Leagues Club interim CEO Mark Sheridan. They are accompanied by members of the Westleigh Brigade and the Hornsby/ Ku-Ring-Gai District. Photo by Brendan Doyle

From those nominations 12 businesses and self-employed volunteers were chosen as winners of the inaugural Supportive Employer Special Commendation Awards. The 12 winners represent organisations large and small, ranging from corporations to one-person businesses across NSW.

On Monday 14 January 2013 three firefighters from Westleigh Rural Fire Brigade joined a wider Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai, Warringah and Hills Strike Team scheduled to work out of Nowra on the Deans Gap fire. An hour out of Sydney, the Strike Team was urgently redirected north to assist with the unfolding bush fire emergency in Coonabarabran.

One of the three Westleigh members on that Strike Team headed to Coonabarabran was Adam Streichler. When not in NSW RFS uniform Adam works as the Food and Beverage Manager at Wentworthville Leagues Club in western Sydney, and initially he applied for annual leave to attend the fires.

When the Board of Wenty Leagues became aware of the reason for his absence, as a gesture of goodwill, they decided to immediately reinstate Adam's annual leave. Furthermore they then set about implementing an Emergency Service leave policy to allow volunteers like Adam an additional week of paid leave to attend emergencies.

Launch of the Supportive Employer Program

By way of acknowledging the Wenty Leagues Club, the official launch of the NSW RFS Supportive Employers Program was launched there on 6 March 2013.

The Program has been developed to recognise the significant contribution

employers and self-employed volunteers make to the NSW RFS.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Michael Gallacher, launched the Program and noted that employers who actively encourage employees to volunteer are leading by example through investing in both their own people and the local community.

"Put simply, without the support of employers NSW RFS firefighters cannot perform their roles," Minister Gallacher said.

Inaugural Special Commendations for twelve employers

A central aspect of the new Supportive Employers Program is the annual Supportive Employer Special Commendation Awards. Following the launch in March, NSW RFS members were invited to thank an employer for their support by nominating them for the awards.

From those nominations twelve businesses and self-employed volunteers were chosen as winners of the inaugural Supportive Employer Special Commendation Awards. The twelve winners represent organisations large and small, ranging from corporations to one-person businesses across NSW. They all have one thing in common – a commitment to helping the community by releasing volunteers during work hours or, if they are

self employed, by sacrificing income to fulfil their role with the NSW RFS.

All winners received a certificate of appreciation and a Special Commendation trophy presented by their local District.

One of the winners was The Armidale School (TAS) in northern NSW. TAS Headmaster Murray Guest said the school was proud to be given the award under the inaugural RFS Supportive Employer Program.

"As a member of the regional community and with many boys from rural areas, we are proud to be able to support the Rural Fire Service, both by supporting staff who volunteer their time and expertise, and with a program that provide real and meaningful training that helps the boys to be better citizens," he said.

Blue Mountains District Manager, Superintendent David Jones, presented two Special Commendations for his area at Valley Heights Rural Fire Brigade on 27 May 2013. Representatives from Telstra and Gow Gates Insurance were proud to receive their trophies.

In Hornsby Superintendent Mark Sugden presented Zoetis Australia with a Special Commendation trophy on Friday 28 June 2013.

Mike van Blommestein, Zoetis Vice President and General Manager, Australia and New Zealand, accepted the award on behalf of Zoetis.

"It is indeed an honour to receive this recognition from

the NSW Rural Fire Service. It is a reflection of our efforts to go beyond medicines and vaccines, and make a difference in the community we live and work in."

Through the Supportive Employer Program, the NSW RFS will continue to publically acknowledge the vital contribution employers and self-employed volunteers make to our efforts to protect the community. There are three ways Districts and Brigades can use the Program to recognise their own local employers:

1. Nominate a supportive employer for the annual Supportive Employer Special Commendation Awards – nomination forms are available on MyRFS or www.rfs.nsw.gov.au and generally close around April each year.
2. Request a Certificate of Appreciation in the name of a supportive employer – these can be sent out any time of the year.
3. You can also download the Supportive Employer Program toolkit which includes thank you letter templates and suggestions for local recognition programs. It also contains information for employers and volunteers about the work of NSW RFS members and the incidents we attend.

If you would like more information about the Supportive Employer Program please email volunteer@rfs.nsw.gov.au



RIGHT: NSW RFS New England Zone Manager Superintendent Steve Mephram, presents The Armidale School Headmaster Murray Guest with an NSW RFS Supportive Employer Special Commendation award. (Back Row L-R) Steve Bishop, Murray Guest, Supt. Steve Mephram, Bevan Michel, Ralph Hunt, and Pat Bradley. (Front Row L-R) Max Laurie and Joel Blackwell

Through the Supportive Employer Program, the NSW RFS will continue to publically acknowledge the vital contribution employers and self-employed volunteers make to our efforts to protect the community.

2013 Special Commendation Winners

Braidwood & Bungendore Community Bank

Scott Hart of Braidwood Rural Fire Brigade nominated this Community Bank for its generous support of local brigades, active encouragement of volunteering and for allowing him to attend incidents whenever possible.

Brunswick Byron Pest Control

Mark and Leah Ross are self-employed volunteers who also employ one of their children in the family business. All

three are active members of the Mullumbimby Rural Fire Brigade and give a lot of their time to the brigade, managing their business around fire calls and other NSW RFS activities.

Chesterfield Australia

Chesterfield Australia is a family owned company supplying rural industries farming machinery and equipment. The Warren branch was nominated by Trades Assistant Shaun Doughty for promoting volunteering in the workplace and supporting employees to take time off to attend NSW RFS incidents and training exercises.

Gow-Gates Insurance Brokers

Nominator Bert Clarke of Valley Heights Brigade states that in the 20 years he has been a member of the NSW RFS the company has fully supported his volunteering activities and have promoted his RFS achievements in the company newsletter. The company advises Bert's clients of his commitments, particularly during fire season, and of their support.

Illawarra Coal

Dane Coulter of Thirlmere Brigade nominated his employer Illawarra Coal for

their generous and flexible paid volunteer leave policy and the Matched Giving Program, which provides a \$10 matched donation for every hour employees spend volunteering. Illawarra Coal operates in the Illawarra and Wollondilly regions of NSW.

Impact One

Christopher Muscat is a self-employed musician who is an active member of the Huskisson Brigade. He manages his volunteering activities around his paid work as singer and keyboardist for venues and private functions around the NSW South Coast.



LEFT: Sue Alexander, Company Secretary of Gow Gates Insurance Brokers with Bert Clarke, a Gow Gates employee and volunteer with Valley Heights Brigade

MIDDLE LEFT: Telstra representatives Jenna Missingham and Kingsley McGarrigle accepting their Special Commendation Award from Superintendent Jason Heffernan, A/Manager Region East (left) and Superintendent David Jones, District Manager Blue Mountains (right)

BOTTOM LEFT: Westleigh member Adam Streichler with his supportive employer, Wenty Leagues interim CEO Mark Sheridan. Photo by Kane Lambkin

BELOW: Dane Coulter from Thirlmere Brigade (far right) nominated his employer Illawarra Coal for the commendation. John Brannon (far left) accepted on behalf of the company. Belinda Brotherton, Martin Surrey and Richard Cotterill from the Southern Highlands RFS also attended the presentation



Junction City Transport

Roger Ley has been nominated by the Captain of the Burren Junction Brigade as a self-employed volunteer. Roger owns Junction City Transport and is also a very dedicated member of the brigade. Roger is always willing to attend incidents event if it means putting his work on hold, as well assisting with his tools, equipment and expertise to do minor maintenance jobs for the brigade.

Schweppes Australia

Andrew Henderson of Londonderry Brigade has worked for Schweppes Australia for six years and during that time they have supported him by releasing him to attend emergency incidents on full pay, even if that meant paying a contractor to cover Andrew's position. Schweppes has a generous Emergency Services Leave Policy.

Telstra Corporation

All Telstra employees can take general volunteer leave to participate in either a non-profit organisation of their choice or team volunteering through one of Telstra's charity partners. In addition they provide Emergency Response Leave for Telstra employees who are members of recognised emergency organisations such as the RFS.

The Armidale School

Staff at the Armidale School, an independent boarding and day school in northern NSW, have the flexibility to attend incidents with their brigades during work hours when circumstances permit. They also assist delivery of

bush fire training to around 20 students per year through a youth development partnership program with the New England Zone. Last year the school granted leave for a staff member to represent the NSW RFS in Botswana.

Wentworthville Leagues Club

Adam Streichler is a volunteer with Westleigh Brigade who was deployed to Coonabarabran in January 2013 and had to leave work at short notice. Due to Adam's situation the Board of Directors has implemented a generous and flexible Emergency Services Leave Policy for Club employees who volunteer.

Zoetis Australia

Zoetis, Australia's largest animal health company was nominated by two employees in recognition of the company's active support for volunteers engaged in community services by providing paid Volunteering Leave of at least four days per year. Emergency service volunteers are entitled to additional paid leave.



One step ahead

Quick results for the Hotspots Fire Project

By Lana Andrews, Jessica Wells, John Allen and Jamie Bertram.
Photos by NSW RFS and Jamie Bertram

Throughout 2011/12 the Hotspots Fire Project was very active in the Corindi Valley, on the State's Mid North Coast, with dramatic results in the 2012/13 fire season.



In August and again in October 2012, fires burned in the Corindi Valley but both were significantly contained due to excellent preparatory work by the NSW RFS and local landowners as part of the Hotspots Fire Project.

The Upper Sherwood Creek Fire, in late August 2012 was contained at 113 hectares when tracks identified during a Hotspots program were used to contain the bush fire and minimise the spread onto neighbouring properties.

The Plum Pudding Fire in the Conglomerate State Forest took off on 20 October 2012. The fire burned for nine days in the State Forest and had the potential to destroy life and property as well as damaging threatened species' habitats and rainforest. The fire was contained to only 1,000 hectares due to the response of local volunteers as well as

the excellent hazard reduction treatments on the properties on the perimeter of the fire.

The Corindi Hotspots Program in 2011/12 resulted in very good on-ground risk management outcomes improving both protection to the community as well as improving biodiversity values.

The Corindi Valley

The Corindi Valley sits between Coffs Harbour and Yamba on the NSW Mid North Coast. It is within the traditional lands of the Gumbaynggirr people and the dominant land uses are grazing, horticulture, forestry and lifestyle farms. Landholders are drawn to the Corindi Valley for many reasons – beautiful forests, great beaches, productive farmland, fabulous views and a secluded and quiet lifestyle - and they live with bush fire risk every day.

Extreme Risk

The Corindi Valley is identified as Extreme Risk in the Mid North Coast Bush Fire Risk Management Plan. It has a history of significant high-intensity bush fires where losses of houses, structures, and horticultural assets have been significant.

With this history of frequent high intensity bush fires, the NSW RFS, Nature Conservation Council of NSW and several partner agencies, worked together to deliver community engagement and hazard reduction activities in the Corindi Valley throughout 2011/12 under the banner of the Hotspots Fire Project.

One of the main goals of Hotspots Fire Project is to work with landholders to help them understand their level of risk, and the biodiversity and cultural values in their local area.



TOP: Local landholders work together with neighbours and representatives from other agencies to create a fire management plan for their property.

LEFT: An important family sighting: monitoring cameras detect a family of coastal emus at a Hotspots burn site.

The Hotspots Fire Project is a State-wide, interagency program which uses a collaborative approach to managing fire for biodiversity and risk. It was established in 2005 and is delivered by the NSW RFS and the Nature Conservation Council of NSW. The NSW RFS are a key project partner providing staff, volunteers and resources to the program.

So far, across NSW the Hotspots Fire Project has delivered 109 workshops to 1,493 landholders developing 640 fire management plans covering over 140,000 hectares.

In the Corindi Valley in 2011/12 the Hotspots program kickstarted the following mitigation activities:

- Two Hotspots workshops attended by 33 landholders from diverse backgrounds
- 22 Fire Management Plans covering 1,677 hectares
- 12 Hazard Reduction Certificate Applications
- Six hazard reduction burns, with RFS assistance at four burns
- Five APZ mechanical works
- A monitoring program for the endangered North Coast Emu
- Firewise training and Bush Fire Survival Plans completed

Following on from the community engagement work during Hotspots, a Community Protection Plan has been initiated for the Red Rock community which is located in the Corindi area.

Hotspots ran two workshops with landholders in 2012, covering information on risk and biodiversity, as well as developing a fire management plan and information on how to plan and conduct a small prescribed burn.

"Knowing that there are treatments that can be done to minimise the loss of assets is a great thing," said one Corindi participant.

"We believe the program is a sensible approach," wrote another participant, "we are able to have a well maintained property to protect us against the threat of fire."

As a result of the program, several Hazard Reduction Certificate (HRC) applications were received by the NSW RFS Mid North Coast Customer

Service Centre. This resulted in an increase in hazard reduction activities in the area, many of which were carried out with assistance from State Mitigation Support Services (SMSS).

When the fires at Upper Sherwood Creek Fire in August and Plum Pudding Fire in October took off, the Hotspots work was put to the test. The results underscored the importance of preparation and community engagement in the work of the protecting the community from bush fire.

Quicker response

The relationships between landholders and firefighting agencies established through Hotspots led to a rapid response to the bush fire attack.

Local community able to make better decisions

Throughout both fires the local community were able to make better decisions and take responsibility, working together with their neighbours and the fire agencies.

Fire prevention

Perhaps most importantly, the reduction of hazard and preparation of the land had made the fires less dangerous and less likely to spread.

Hazard reduction work in the area around Murphy's Road helped contain the Plum Pudding Fire in October. Prior to this fire, all the residents along Murphy's Road had some type of treatment put in place on their properties. Treatments ranged from extensions to APZs (Asset Protection Zones) around dwellings and along fence lines, to control line identification for future treatment. All the properties along this road were well prepared for the impact from fire due to the amount of treatment that had occurred.

The Upper Sherwood Creek Fire, which started on 27 August 2012 burnt an area of 113 hectares. Approximately 30 hectares of that was on one Hotspots participants' property. Prior to the fire, NSW RFS staff had undertaken a property assessment following on from the Hotspots workshop, and internal tracks had been identified to be used for future control lines for a planned burn. These tracks were used to contain the bush fire and minimise the spread onto neighbouring properties.

Managing fire for biodiversity

Maintaining and improving biodiversity is one of the key aims of the Hotspots Fire Project and in Corindi the endangered North Coast Emu was of concern.

The North Coast Emu is an endangered population whose habitat stretches from Corindi, north of Coffs Harbour, west to Main Camp, south of Casino and north to Evans Head. Many of the Hotspots prescribed burns are within areas identified as Emu

habitat with landholders keen to encourage the birds onto their land. Monitoring cameras were set up at one such site to determine if the birds utilised the site post fire. The cameras confirmed a family of North Coast Emus, two adults and three juveniles passing through the burn area. The recent breeding activity was a welcome sign in an area where the Emus are on the decline.

Building trust within the community

The Corindi Hotspots Program has resulted in greater community trust between the NSW RFS, other public land managers and the local community.

The benefits that have flowed into the local community from the Hotspots Program have been significant. Plans are for the work to continue in 2013/14.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to NSW RFS staff and volunteers, the Nature Conservation Council of

NSW, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Forestry Corporation for delivery of the Corindi Hotspots Program.

Thanks to Yarrowarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre for hosting the Hotspots Program.

We would also like to thank our project partners for their ongoing commitment to the Hotspots Program.

Further information

Visit www.hotspotsfireproject.org.au or contact the Hotspots Fire Project on 02 8741 5555 (NSW RFS), email hotspots@rfs.nsw.gov.au or 02 9516 0359 (Nature Conservation Council of NSW), email info@hotspotsfireproject.org.au

BELOW LEFT TOP: RFS members assisting landholders create Property Fire Management Plans. BELOW LEFT LOWER: On the second day of the Hotspots workshop participants observed a hazard reduction burn. BELOW: Hotspots facilitator John Allen shows landholders some of their local species



Amy's story

NSW RFS volunteer and staff member, Amy Blackwood, was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia in 2010. Amy's family have been part of the NSW RFS for three generations, and she herself is the NSW RFS Youth Development Officer and member of Gwandalan-Summerland Point Brigade. In early 2013 Amy returned to work. The Bush Fire Bulletin has followed Amy's story and here Amy herself updates us on the journey she has travelled over the past two and half years



I am honoured to be a part of the NSW RFS and would like to extend my sincerest 'thank you' to my RFS family for all your messages of support, fundraising and support to my family over the last two and a half years.

Your support kept up my spirits and saved my life.

To Narelle (Koteff) my manager, and friend: Thank you for your constant support and help to 'keep my eye on the prize'. It made all the difference.

In October 2010 I was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia (ALL). Eight months of gruelling chemotherapy left me very weak and unable to walk due to nerve damage from the chemo. Yet I was still was not responding to treatment. My only option for remission (absence of cancer) was to go to Germany on a clinical trial for a new drug.

It would be a very expensive trip and several members of the NSW RFS stepped in to help. A fundraising campaign was held which many of you would have participated in. The campaign raised more than \$100,000 to cover medical costs, living expenses in Germany and expenses at home.

In Germany I was accompanied by my father Ray Blackwood (NSW RFS member from Young) and shortly after my partner Brett Tisdell joined me. I have the most amazing partner in Brett, I could not have asked for anything more.

I was only the thirteenth person to ever trial the drug. Fortunately after only two weeks on the trial on the 2 August 2011, I was told I was in remission.

The new drug is amazing. All I felt were the usual aches and pains that you would have if

you had the 'flu and even those only lasted three or four days.

The drug was delivered via a drip in a portable bag that I would carry with me 24 hours a day. This allowed me to be an outpatient for majority of my stay in Germany. Later in my treatment, as my health improved, I was able to take two weeks stints without the drip. This allowed Brett and I do so short trips and some sightseeing.

Negotiating public transport in the wheelchair was a little hard at first and the lengths Brett went to help me were amazing. As my walking improved I was able to be a little more adventurous.

Horse riding is an accepted method of rehabilitation as it helps with core strength, leg strength, balance and coordination. Being an avid horse lover, I was thrilled to try it. Riding those wonderful

TOP: Amy was the MC at the recent Secondary School Cadet Program Cadet of the Year ceremony. Photo by Brendan Doyle

Bush Fire Bulletin Survey



horses in Germany gave me legs when I couldn't use my own. They brought some calm to my mind. It was the first time since diagnosis that I could relax and clear my mind.

I returned to Australia on 27 December 2011 and was

admitted to St Vincent's Hospital for a double cord bone marrow transplant on the 9 February 2012. The time in Germany allowed me to gain the strength that I needed to get through another course of radiation and chemotherapy. This time treatment was in preparation of the bone marrow transplant and was even more intense than before. The transplant was a success and I was released from hospital following a few minor complications three months later.

Although the transplant was successful, I was not out of danger. I had next to no immune system and had to be isolated from everybody except my immediate family for the next six months until my new immune system developed. For the first few weeks we stayed in Sydney in the Leukaemia Foundation's Apartments to be

close to the hospital in case I got an infection. Eventually we were allowed to go home.

Over a period of 12 months I gradually recovered and was able to see friends and get out into society again. I started working a few days from home and am now getting my life back on track.

I am now strong enough to ride the horses, get back into my Youth Development work at the NSW RFS a few days a week, train with my brigade and work on my physical strength and coordination with a personal trainer - all between doctor's appointments!

It was been a difficult few years, but I am so grateful for the support that has been shown to be over this time.



TOP LEFT: The drip was Amy's constant companion while in Germany. Photo by Ray Blackwood LEFT: Those wonderful horses gave me legs when I could not use my own, said Amy. Photo by Brett Tisdell

About you

Are you a:

- Volunteer
- Volunteer and staff
- Staff
- Member of the general public

What is your primary location?

- Regional NSW - North
- Regional NSW - South
- Regional NSW - West
- Regional NSW - East
- Sydney

For NSW RFS volunteers:

Are you a:

- Junior member
- Bush Firefighter?
- Officebearer in the Brigade?
- Group Captain?
- Community Safety Officer?
- Other:

How often do you attend NSW RFS events, meetings or training sessions?

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Several times a year
- Once a year

Communications from the NSW RFS

How do you currently source news about the NSW RFS? (Please select all that apply)

- Your local brigade
- Your local Fire Control Centre
- Bush Fire Bulletin
- MyRFS
- Ebulletin
- NSW RFS Intranet
- Facebook
- The general media

How would you prefer to receive communication about the NSW RFS?

- Email
- Website
- MyRFS
- Social media
- Post

Would you prefer to receive more or less information from the NSW RFS?

- More
- Less
- Same

How do you rate the quality of information from the NSW RFS?

- Excellent
- Good
- Could be improved

Do you consider online communication more effective than printed material?

- Yes
- No

Would you read the Bush Fire Bulletin if it were presented as an online magazine or website?

- Yes
- No

For the Bush Fire Bulletin, what kind of information interests you?

Choose all those that apply.

- Incidents
- Operational Liftouts with 'how to' information
- Messages from the Commissioner
- Good news – successful programs
- Profiles of specific brigades and volunteers
- History
- Awards and Events
- Training information
- Community Engagement tips for volunteers
- Fire Safety messages for the general public
- Information suitable for children
- Innovations and research in firefighting
- Other – please indicate or make suggestions:

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COVER PHOTO: 19 February 2012: Coonabarabran. Around one month after the Wambelong fire hit the Coonabarabran area, research teams visited to interview residents and record the impact of the fire on the landscape. Photo by Brydie O'Connor