

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Annual Report 2011/12

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12



contents

Introduction	1
Management and Governance	15
Key Focus Areas	24
Year In Brief	42
Review of The Reporting Year	64
Financial Tables	84
Appendices	120
Index	144



*'The men and women on the
frontline – our volunteers
– have once again shown
incredible dedication,
commitment and versatility.'*

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM



Firefighter Steve Skinner, Valley Heights Brigade travelled to Region West to assist with the Roadside Vegetation Program on the Barrier Highway. Photo by Robyn Favelle

The Hon Michael Gallacher MLC
Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Level 33
Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister

I have pleasure in submitting to you for presentation to Parliament the Annual Report of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) for the year ended 30 June 2012.

Goal 28 of the State Government's *NSW 2021: A Plan to Make NSW Number One*, was a solid focus for the NSW RFS in 2011/12.

This goal is to ensure NSW is ready to deal with major emergencies and natural disasters, defend against suburban and bushland fires, increase community resilience to the impact of fires through prevention and preparedness activities and to increase hazard reduction across NSW. Full reports on these areas appear in the following pages.

In the reporting period, the NSW RFS declared three days of Total Fire

Bans and three Section 44 Bush Fire Emergencies with one Emergency Alert being issued during the Cliff Drive fire in the Blue Mountains in October 2011.

Community resilience was enhanced with several new initiatives including Community Protection Plans and the Roadside Vegetation Program. The ongoing preparation and protection programs such as Hotspots, Neighbourhood Safer Places, AIDER (Assist Infirm, Disabled and Elderly Residents) and the Mitigation Crews all continued with tangible success.

The *Prepare. Act. Survive.* bush fire and grass fire public awareness campaigns were conducted and a new campaign for the upcoming three years is being developed.

Hazard reduction activity was a focus in the reporting period and despite unfavourable weather conditions including flooding and heavy rainfall, the NSW RFS and partner agencies were able to achieve 82.2 percent of planned hazard reduction activities.

This Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with the *Annual Reports (Departments) Act 1985*, the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*, the *Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001* and *Public Disclosures Act 1994*.

Yours sincerely



Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM
Commissioner



commissioner's report

In an emergency, some of the most important work happens well before the first signs of smoke, or the first truck or crew starts rolling.

Prevention and preparation is a critical part of what we do in the NSW Rural Fire Service and across the year, the Service has not only continued, but strengthened its efforts in these areas. There are examples right across the length and breadth of this State, involving volunteers and staff.

Despite the 2011/12 bush fire season being the culmination of the two wettest consecutive years on record, the NSW RFS and partner agencies were able to achieve 82.2 percent of planned hazard reduction activities. This achievement is quite strong, given the incredibly wet conditions across much of the State.

The Service's Mitigation Crews were able support brigades and volunteers by undertaking more than 2,000 separate jobs across the State, including the preparation of nearly 7,500 kilometres of fire trails and control lines.

There was again a solid commitment from councils with the Service's Roadside Vegetation Program, which resulted in 6,429 kilometres of vegetation treated alongside highways and other roads. These areas have historically been where many fires have started due to high traffic volumes. The management of the fuel in these areas provides improved protection to people, properties and valuable farming land.

Another important program has been the development and piloting of Community Protection Plans. These have been established as part of the ongoing response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, with successful pilot programs in a range of locations ranging from open grassland to isolated bushland and higher density urban areas. Volunteers in particular have been instrumental in delivering this program to local communities.

Throughout the season, the Service strengthened its *Prepare. Act. Survive.* public awareness campaign, supplementing the existing campaign on bush fires with one specifically targeting the increased risk of grass fires. This campaign was directed at high risk areas, particularly those in rural and regional locations, and had considerable success in raising public awareness.

Of course, the Service's focus was not only on prevention and preparation but also on the many and varied incidents we saw across the State.

The most notable of these was the extensive assistance the NSW RFS provided to the State Emergency Service (SES) during some of the worst flooding the State has ever experienced.

Flooding across the north of the State between December 2011 and February 2012 and further flooding across the south-western parts of the State in February and March 2012 saw 2,258 Service members deployed.



The assistance extended to aviation support, with more than 700 deployments made during these flood emergencies. The Service also provided base camps for emergency personnel and community members who had been evacuated from flooded areas.

In October 2011, the NSW RFS also provided support to the SES following damaging storms in the Blue Mountains, which had significant impact on homes and transport infrastructure.

Despite the ongoing wet weather, the season was not devoid of bush fire activity with three Section 44 declarations. This included two in the Blue Mountains where small but fast moving fires quickly impacted on properties. The other, in the far west, was the result of extensive lightning activity which generated a large number of fires.

Across the year, it was encouraging to see so many of our volunteers get involved in our consultative processes. Importantly, these processes ensure volunteer members have a real say in the ongoing development and management of their Service.

The Service's ongoing Consultative Committees, held in conjunction with the Rural Fire Service Association, play a role in discussing key strategic matters for the organisation.

Perhaps the largest effort in this area has been the rollout of regional forums

for volunteers in 32 locations across the State. These have given volunteer members an opportunity to raise questions or concerns, while also giving members of the NSW RFS Executive a chance to better understand the varied issues seen by brigades and explain some of the Service's initiatives and changes.

It has also been encouraging to see so many members embracing some of our programs aimed at retaining and increasing volunteers, ranging from our Flexible Membership Model and the development of the Leadership Capability Framework, to the ongoing Secondary School Cadet program which has again gone from strength to strength. These are all important projects which can assist in strengthening the organisation well into the future.

These are of course just some of the highlights and there are many more which are outlined throughout this Annual Report. Naturally, the year has not been without its challenges and there will no doubt be more in the future, however the Service has responded to these in an agile and considered way.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who has played a role in these projects, programs and initiatives across the year.

In particular I would like to thank the NSW RFS Executive for their leadership in what has been a challenging year.

Of particular note, thank you to Assistant Commissioner Keith Harrap, Director Infrastructure Services, who retired following a long and distinguished career as both a volunteer and salaried member.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Hon. Michael Gallacher MLC, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, as well as Mr Les Tree, the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services and the staff for their assistance over the year.

Thanks must also go to the salaried staff of the Service, particularly for their ongoing focus on ensuring our volunteers have the support, equipment and expertise required to deliver frontline services.

Of course the biggest thanks must go to the men and women on the frontline – our volunteers – who have once again shown incredible dedication, commitment and versatility.

While it has been a season dominated by rain and floods, it is inevitable that fire conditions will return. The ongoing efforts of volunteers in preparing communities and responding to a range of emergency incidents is something the Service and in fact the entire community is rightly proud of.



Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM
Commissioner

nsw rural fire service

our vision

To provide a world standard of excellence in the provision of a community-based fire and emergency service

our mission

To protect the community and our environment we will minimise the impact of fire and other emergencies by providing the highest standards of training, community education, prevention and operational capability

our values

- mutual respect
- adaptability and resourcefulness
- one team, many players, one purpose
- integrity and trust
- support, friendship, camaraderie
- community and environment
- knowledge and learning

our customers

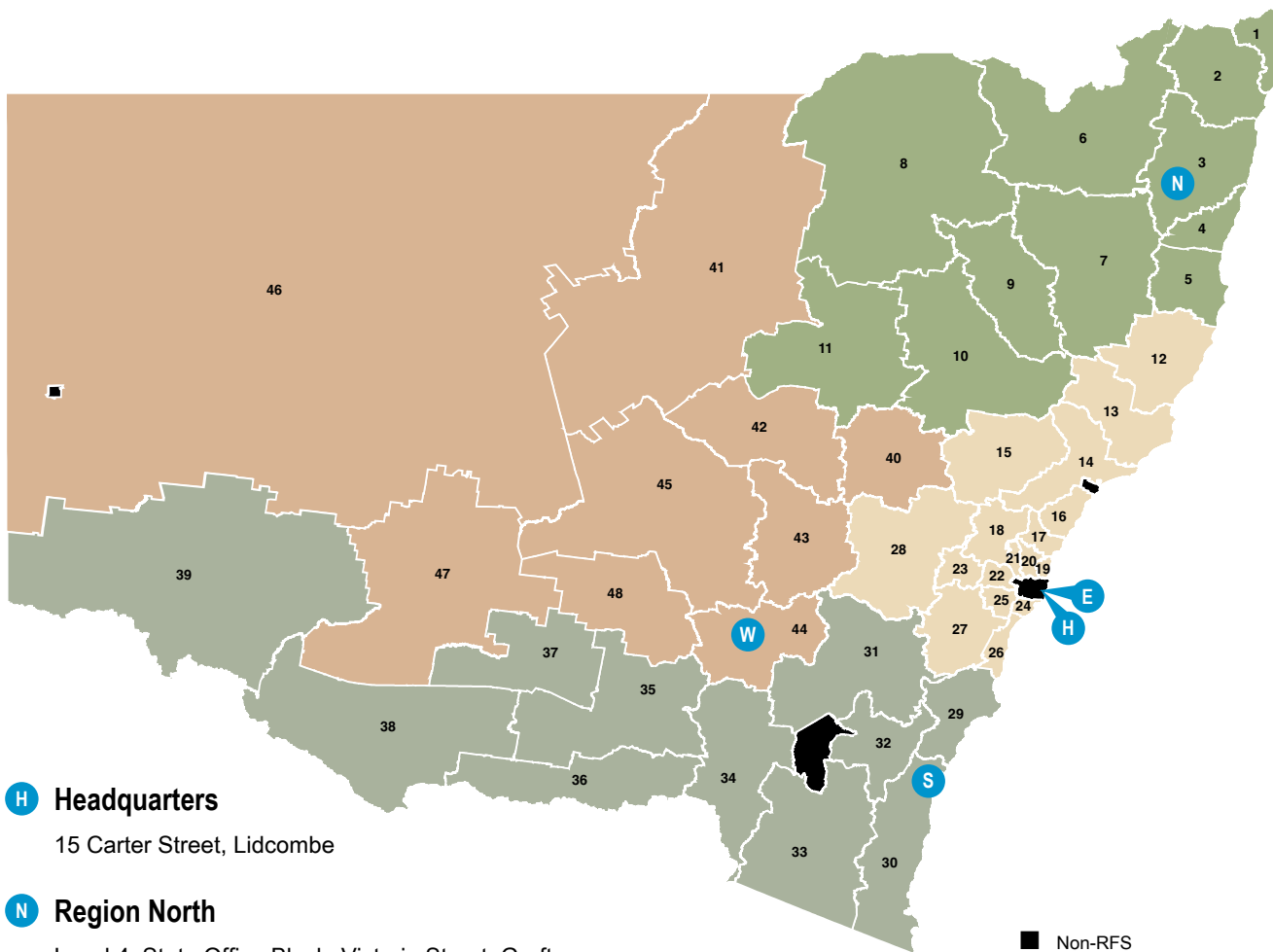
- The people of New South Wales
- Our members

our stakeholders

- The people of New South Wales
- The Minister for Police and Emergency Services
- The Government of New South Wales
- The insurance industry
- Local Government
- Other emergency services
- Other government agencies



nsw rfs districts 2011/12



H Headquarters

15 Carter Street, Lidcombe

N Region North

Level 4, State Office Block, Victoria Street, Grafton

S Region South

7-9 Kylie Crescent, Batemans Bay

E Region East

Level 2, Quad 1, 8 Parkview Drive, Sydney Olympic Park

W Region West

3/21 Lovell Street, Young

Office hours at all locations: 0845am-1700hrs, Monday to Friday

	11/12	10/11	09/10
District Offices (including Teams and Zones)	48*	49	50
Brigades	2,036	2,039	2,051

Region North

<p>KEY</p> <p>1. Far North Coast Ballina Byron Tweed</p> <p>2. Northern Rivers Kyogle Lismore Richmond Valley</p> <p>3. Clarence Valley</p>	<p>4. Mid North Coast Bellingen Coffs Harbour</p> <p>5. Lower North Coast Kempsey Nambucca</p> <p>6. Northern Tablelands Glen Innes Severn Inverell Tenterfield</p>	<p>7. New England Armidale Dumaresq Guyra Uralla Walcha</p> <p>8. Namoi / Gwydir Gwydir Moree Plains Narrabri</p>	<p>9. Tamworth</p> <p>10. Liverpool Range Gunnedah Liverpool Plains Upper Hunter</p> <p>11. Castlereagh Gilgandra Warrumbungle</p>
---	--	---	---

Region East

<p>KEY</p> <p>12. Mid Coast Greater Taree Hastings</p> <p>13. Gloucester / Great Lakes Gloucester Great Lakes</p> <p>14. Lower Hunter Cessnock Dungog Maitland Port Stephens</p> <p>15. Hunter Valley Muswellbrook Singleton</p>	<p>16. The Lakes Lake Macquarie Wyong</p> <p>17. Gosford</p> <p>18. Hawkesbury</p> <p>19. Warringah / Pittwater Pittwater Warringah</p> <p>20. Hornsby / Ku-ring-gai Hornsby Ku-ring-gai</p> <p>21. The Hills</p>	<p>22. Cumberland Blacktown Fairfield Penrith</p> <p>23. Blue Mountains</p> <p>24. Sutherland</p> <p>25. Macarthur Camden Campbelltown Liverpool</p> <p>26. Illawarra Kiama Shellharbour Wollongong</p>	<p>27. Southern Highlands Wingecarribee Wollondilly</p> <p>28. Chifley / Lithgow Bathurst Regional Lithgow Oberon</p>
---	---	--	---

Region South

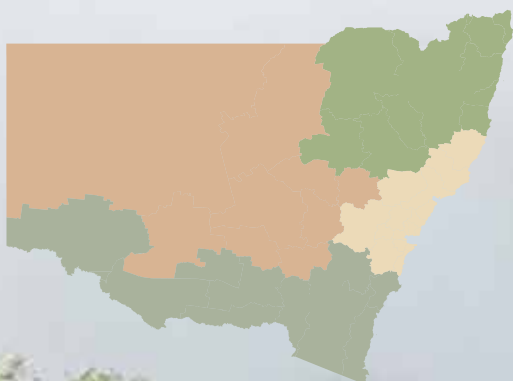
<p>KEY</p> <p>29. Shoalhaven</p> <p>30. Far South Coast Bega Valley Eurobodalla</p> <p>31. Southern Tablelands Goulburn Mulwaree Upper Lachlan Yass Valley</p> <p>32. Lake George Palerang Queanbeyan City</p>	<p>33. Monaro Bombala Cooma-Monaro Snowy River</p> <p>34. Riverina Highlands Gundagai Tumbarumba Tumut</p> <p>35. Riverina Coolamon Junee Lockhart Urana Wagga Wagga</p>	<p>36. Southern Border Albury Berrigan Corowa Greater Hume</p> <p>37. MIA Griffith Leeton Murrumbidgee Narrandera</p>	<p>38. Mid Murray Conargo Deniliquin Jerilderie Murray Wakool</p> <p>39. Lower Western Balranald Wentworth</p>
---	---	---	--

Region West

<p>KEY</p> <p>40. Cudgegong Mid Western</p> <p>41. North West Bogan Coonamble Walgett Warren</p> <p>42. Orana Dubbo Narromine Wellington</p>	<p>43. Canobolas Blayney Cabonne Cowra Orange</p> <p>44. South West Slopes Boorowa Cootamundra Harden Young</p>	<p>45. Mid Lachlan Valley Forbes Lachlan Parkes Weddin</p> <p>46. Far West Bourke Brewarrina Central Darling Cobar Unincorporated NSW</p>	<p>47. Mid West Carrathool Hay</p> <p>48. Bland Temora Bland Temora</p>
--	---	---	---

* Where a District is a team or zone the LGAs are listed beneath.

total of volunteers 70,246



region north 13,850 volunteers

region south 20,476 volunteers

region east 20,397 volunteers

region west 15,523 volunteers

A roadside hazard reduction burn on the Barrier Highway 170km west of Cobar. This burn was part of the Roadside Vegetation Program, read more about this in the Year in Brief chapter.

funding

Rural Firefighting Fund

11/12

\$271M

tankers

Numbers of new and refurbished tankers to be allocated to brigades

177

vehicles

Tankers	3,803*
Pumpers	68
Personnel Transport and Command Vehicles	726
Bulk water carriers	57
Tanker trailers	1,464
Cargo, top trucks, various trailers	426
Communications vehicles and trailers	41
Catering vehicles and trailers	77
Marine craft	28
Slip on trailers and miscellaneous vehicles	402
Total Units	7,092

* Non-Service owned vehicles are not included in the 2011/12 figure for tankers.

communications

Radios

21,940



incidents – four year view

	11/12	10/11	09/10	08/09
Bush fires	2,602	1,897	3,446	2,522
Grass fires	1,552	2,316	2,549	2,689
Building fires	849	846	927	939
Vehicle fires	1,500	1,462	1,475	1,532
Motor vehicle accidents	4,211	4,016	3,544	3,684
False alarms	2,020	2,201	2,028	2,227
Controlled burns	964	1,095		
Smoke scare	685	864		
Refuse fires	592	788		
Oil spills	252	461		
Assist other agencies (except floods)	318	265		
Flood	58	120		
Other*	3,310	2,499	6,177	5,881
Total Number of Incidents	18,913	18,830	20,146	19,474

* In 2010/11 and 2011/12 the 'Other' Category has been expanded to include more details about incidents attended.



Christmas never arrived for some people across Australia when a mail truck carrying presents was completely destroyed by fire in December 2011. Seventeen NSW RFS firefighters from the Tweed District attended the scene near Chinderah on the Pacific Highway. Photo by Dirk Klynsmith

incidents in 2011/12

	North	South	East	West
Bush fires	751	544	641	666
Grass fires	306	388	659	199
Building fires	200	194	348	107
Vehicle fires	246	223	859	172
Motor vehicle accidents	839	813	2,143	416
False alarms	268	349	1,218	185
Other *	1,024	991	3,579	585
Total	3,634	3,502	9,447	2,330

*(includes other, controlled burns, smoke scares, refuse fires, oil spills, assist other agencies and flood)



planning for the future: *NSW 2021*

NSW 2021: A Plan to Make NSW Number One was launched in September 2011. It is the NSW Government's plan to rebuild the economy, return quality services, renovate infrastructure, strengthen our local environment and communities, and restore accountability to Government over the next ten years.

NSW 2021 has five strategies and 32 goals. The NSW Rural Fire Service has responsibilities under Goal 28 of the Plan and we report on those responsibilities through the annual NSW 2021 Performance Report to Parliament.

The NSW RFS Corporate Plan 2011-2015 has been aligned with Goal 28. Reports on the performance of the NSW RFS in 2011/12 appear in the Key Focus Area chapter.

NSW 2021 Goal 28 is to ensure NSW is ready to deal with major emergencies and natural disasters and includes the following.

28.2 Defend against suburban and bushland fires

Increase community resilience to the impact of fires through prevention and preparedness activities

28.2.2 Enhance volunteer training programs with a particular focus on cadet training schemes

28.2.3 Increase the number of identified Neighbourhood Safer Places

Increase hazard reduction across NSW

28.2.4 Increase the number of properties protected by hazard reduction works across all bush fire prone land tenures by 20,000 per year by 2016

28.2.5 Increase the annual average level of area treated by hazard reduction activities by 45% by 2016

State Government

NSW 2021: A Plan to Make NSW Number One

NSW 2021 Goal 28

Ensure NSW is ready to deal with major emergencies and natural disasters

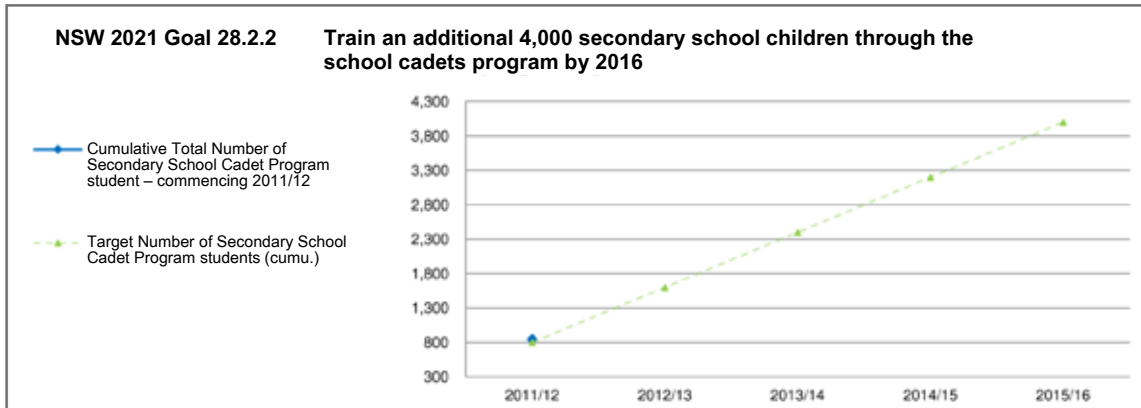
NSW RFS Corporate Plan 2011-2015

- Key Focus Areas
- Targets and Milestones

Directorate, Regional and Business Unit Business plans

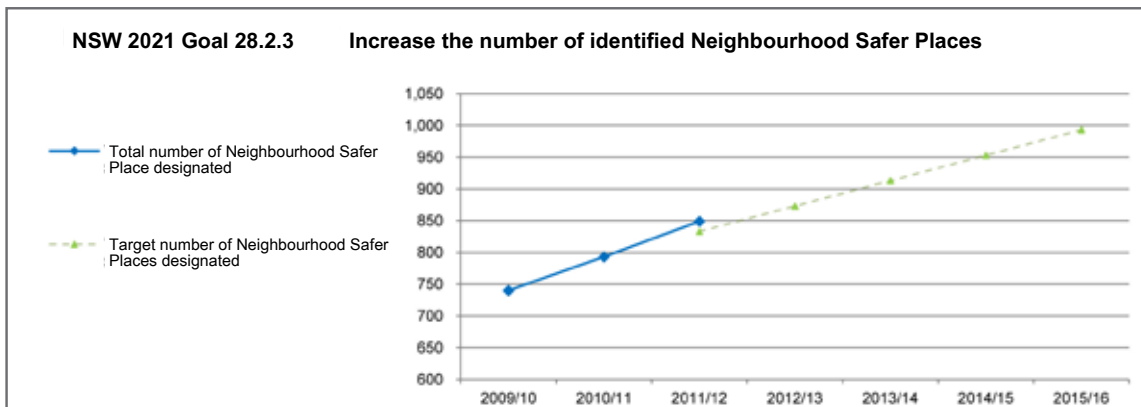
NSW 2021, Goal 28

NSW RFS Performance 2011/12



	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Cumulative total number of Secondary School Cadet Program students – commencing 2011/12	849				
Cumulative Target number of Secondary School Cadet Program students	800	1,600	2,400	3,200	4,000

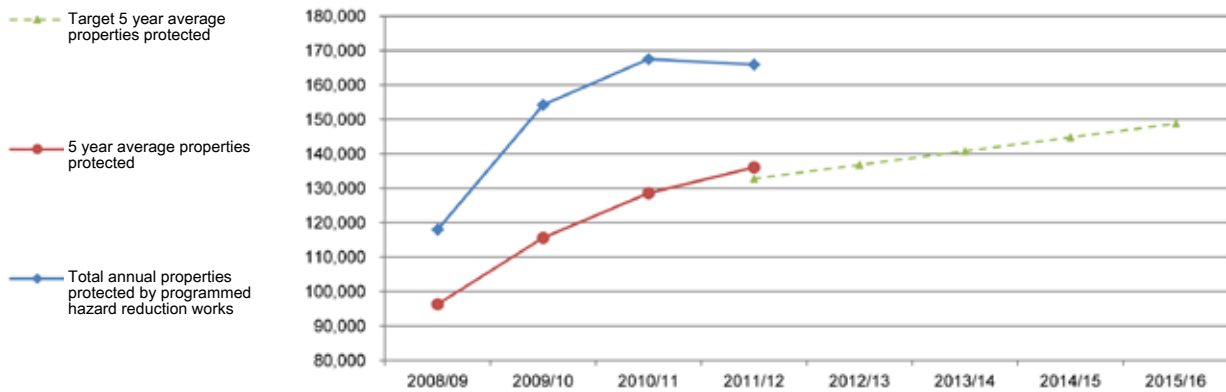
Please note that the Secondary School Cadet Program has been conducted since 2004 with around 3,500 school students participating between 2004 and the current reporting period.



	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Cumulative total number of Neighbourhood Safer Places designated	740	793	849				
Target number of Neighbourhood Safer Places designated			833	873	913	953	993

NSW 2021 Goal 28.2.4

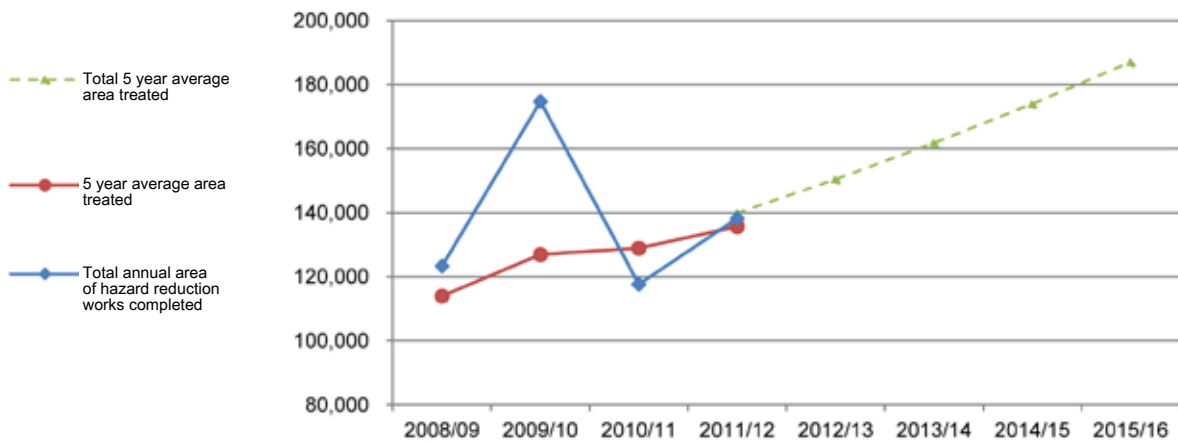
Increase the number of properties protected by hazard reduction works across all bush fire prone land tenures by 20,000 per year by 2016.



	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Total annual properties protected by programmed hazard reduction works	118,021	154,211	167,533	165,945				
5 year average properties protected by total programmed hazard reduction works	96,313	115,612	128,593	136,063				
Target 5 year average properties protected by total programmed hazard reduction works				132,793	136,793	140,793	144,793	148,793

NSW 2021 Goal 28.2.5

Increase the annual average level of the area treated by hazard reduction activities by 45% by 2016.



	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Total annual hazard reduction works completed (ha)	123,334.51	174,705.85	117,633.25	138,211.48				
5 year average total area of hazard reduction works completed (ha)	113,946	126,915	128,894	135,688				
Target 5 year average total area of hazard reduction works completed (ha)				139,900	150,435	161,762	173,943	187,041