

BUSH FIREbulletin

VOLUME 34 No.02 // 2012

THE JOURNAL OF THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

60th ANNIVERSARY • 1952 - 2012



The *Bush Fire Bulletin*
celebrates 60 years
in publication



Contents



06



14



19



36



52

01 FOREWORD

02 IN FOCUS

04 INCIDENTS

- 4 Region North off the mark early in the season
- 6 A week in the life of the NSW RFS...
- 8 First Section 44 for Barwon Darling Zone
- 10 No love for this grass
- 12 Social media out west
- 13 Power up
- 14 Grassland Strategic Break Program

15 FEATURES

- 15-18 State Championships 2012
- 19-21 Meet Oscar, The Koala Detection Dog
- 22-25 Revolutionising Incident Management through analysing fire behaviour
- 26 'Detective' work

27 LIFT OUT

- 27 New National Mapping Symbology for incidents

33 GENERAL NEWS

- 31 Courage Under Fire Project
- 33 Bush fire workshops for the urban setting
- 34 And the winners are... 2012 World Firefighter Games
- 36 Open Day 2012
- 38 Inspiration and connection for community engagers
- 40 MyRFS update
- 41-43 Watching grass grow
- 45 Students of the Carenne School Bathurst make history
- 46 NSW RFS State Training Calendar 2013

60TH ANNIVERSARY

- 48 From the ashes of the 1952 Fires
- 50 Brigade in Profile – Cherrybrook
- 52 Brigade in Profile – Freemans Reach
- 54 *Bush Fire Bulletin* Wordsearch
- 57 Photo Competition

The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) encourages the availability, dissemination and exchange of public information. You may copy, distribute, display, download and otherwise freely deal with this material for personal, in-house or non-commercial use, on the condition that you include the copyright notice © State of New South Wales through the NSW Rural Fire Service [plus year of creation or first publication] on all such uses. In the event that you wish to copy, distribute, display, download, store, or use this material for a purpose other than personal, in-house or non-commercial use, you must obtain permission from the NSW RFS by writing to the following address:

Commissioner
NSW Rural Fire Service
Locked Bag 17
Granville NSW 2142

You must also obtain permission from the NSW RFS if you wish to:

- charge others for access to the work (other than at cost);
- include all or part of the work in advertising or a product for sale;
- modify the material; or
- use any trade mark from this publication, including the NSW Rural Fire Service crest, MyRFS logo, or the Firewise logo.

Disclaimer Statement

While the material within this Bush Fire Bulletin is current at the time of writing changes in circumstances after the time of publication may impact on the accuracy of the material. Individuals are responsible for ensuring they have the most current version of this publication.

The information and material contained herein is general in nature and is intended for your use and information. The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) disclaims, to the extent permitted by law, all warranties, representations or endorsements, express or implied, with regard to the material contained herein. The NSW RFS does not warrant or represent that the material contained herein is free from errors or omissions, or that it is exhaustive. Users should exercise their own skill and care with respect to its uses. You must not assume that this material will be suitable for the particular purpose that you had in mind when using it.

The NSW RFS disclaims any liability (including but not limited to liability by reason of negligence) to the users of the material for any loss, damage, cost or expense whether direct, indirect, consequential or special, incurred by, or arising by reason of, any person using or relying on the material and whether caused by reason of, any error, omission or misrepresentation in the material or otherwise. Users of the Website will be responsible for making their own assessment of the material and should verify all relevant representations, statements and information with their own professional advisers. All photos, unless otherwise stated, taken and owned by the NSW Rural Fire Service, Corporate Communications.

The views expressed in articles in the Bush Fire Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the views or the policies of the NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE.

Foreword



2012 is a significant milestone for the *Bush Fire Bulletin*, as it marks its 60th anniversary.

The *Bulletin* began from a simple idea – to increase communication and knowledge sharing. That same aim remains today.

Over the past six decades, plenty has changed – firefighting techniques, state of the art technology and equipment, and of course the *Bulletin* itself. Today, it's a publication which reflects the diversity and professionalism of our organisation.

It has captured many of the moments of our history right across the State, and has mapped the progress towards today's Service.

The *Bulletin* has always had a very special place in the hearts of volunteers and I expect this will be the case for many more years.

This edition of the *Bulletin* shows some of the diversity of our Service, in terms of the types of incidents we attend, the activities we're involved with, and the areas we cover.

From the north of the State where members have experienced the busiest start to their fire season in years, to the Central Coast where fires threatened multi-million dollar properties, and to the State's south and west, where grass fires remain a significant risk.

It's remarkable to think that one day we're dealing with fires threatening homes, while just a few days later and a few hours drive away, our crews were shovelling snow. This diversity in landscape and seasonal conditions highlights the versatility and professionalism of RFS members.

This *Bulletin* also highlights some of the changes which are helping us every day, ranging from fire behaviour analysis to the increasing use of social media. It also shines the spotlight on some of our biggest events like our recent Open Day, State Championships and the Community Engagement conference.

This is a fitting anniversary edition of the *Bulletin* and I hope you enjoy reading and sharing it with your family and fellow members.

With this the last *Bush Fire Bulletin* for 2012, I would like to thank all of our members for their ongoing commitment and effort this past year.

I wish you and your family a safe and happy Christmas and hope you have the opportunity to spend some time with those close to you.

Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM
NSW RFS Commissioner

60th
ANNIVERSARY

1952 • Bush Fire Bulletin • 2012



facebook.com/rfscommissioner



Copyright: © Brendan Read Photography Pty Ltd 02 9319 0999. All rights reserved.
Photographer: Brendan Read

Bondi, 8 November

There was royal treatment for NSW RFS members when HRH Prince Charles visited Sydney.

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons introduced the group of members to the Prince at the royal official reception saying that they had all made an outstanding contribution to the community through their volunteering work.

“Nine of our most exemplary volunteers had the chance to speak with His Royal Highness at the informal reception today.”

“Every single NSW RFS volunteer has courageous stories to tell and it is wonderful to see the work our volunteers do 24 hours a day 7 days a week, recognised by His Royal Highness,” the Commissioner said.

LEFT: Craig Bardney (Myall Park), Kylee Wade (HQ), James Russo (Dubbo), Kennedy Tourle (Orana), Andrew Young (Napier Lane) and shaking hands with Prince Charles, Megan Young (Napier Lane).

NSW RFS Headquarters, 23 October

The Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre Research Advisory Forum, is held every six months and this time was hosted by the NSW RFS. More than 75 researchers, end users, PhD students, land managers and industry representatives joined NSW RFS members to hear updates on around half the current Bushfire CRC research programs.

Featured projects include the “Awake, Smoky, and Hot” project looking at the effects of heat, sleep disruption and smoke on firefighter performance, and the Extreme Fire Behaviour project, whose lead end user is Dr Simon Heemstra of the NSW RFS.

Special guests included a delegation of French bush fire researchers who attended the forum as part of a week-long tour of Australia.



ABOVE: The research team from the Smoky and Hot project answered questions from participants at the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre Research Advisory Forum held at the NSW RFS Headquarters in Lidcombe. The project is led by Dr Brad Aisbett from Deakin University (with microphone) and Associate Professor Sally Ferguson (in red) from Central Queensland University.

(L-R): PhD student Cara Lord, lead end user, Robyn Pearce (Tasmanian Fire Service), Dr Michelle Short (University of South Australia), Associate Professor Sally Ferguson (Central Queensland University), Dr Fabienne Reisen (CSIRO) and Dr Brad Aisbett (Deakin University).



Merry Christmas from Oak Flats Brigade

Merry Christmas from Oak Flats Brigade

NSW RFS brigades make an enormous contribution to their local communities, especially at Christmas time. This year the Oak Flats Rural Fire Brigade celebrated the 30th anniversary of a community event affectionately known as *Santa Round the Streets*. Every year, the brigade members collect food items, toys and cash donations for the St

Vincent de Paul Society to help struggling families in the local area. Over 700 families directly benefit from the food hampers made up from the donated goods. The event has genuinely touched the lives of so many over the past 30 years and they intend to carry on the tradition for many years to come.

ABOVE: The two Life Members of the Oak Flats Brigade who have never missed a year of *Santa Round the Streets* (kneeling) Barry Brotherson the original Captain of the Brigade and initiator of the project and (standing) Colin Crawford. The NSW RFS Christmas Card also features Secretary Ross Barlow as Santa and his granddaughter Arianna Barlow. Photo by Kim Barlow

NSW RFS Headquarters, 16 October

The new \$2.3 million Prepare. Act. Survive. public awareness campaign was launched by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher MLC at NSW RFS Headquarters in Lidcombe.

The three new television ads were screened in the State Operations Centre for the media with the theme: Planning To Make A Plan Is Not A Plan.

"The message this bush fire season is clear," the Minister said, "to give you and your

property the best chance of survival you need to plan and do it now."

The new campaign began rolling out State-wide from mid-October on television, radio, online, outdoor and in newspapers.

RIGHT: Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher and Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons at the launch of the new Prepare. Act. Survive. campaign. Photo by Jacqueline Murphy



Region North

off the mark early in the season

Heading into the 2012/13 bush fire season, the prediction was for a busy few months, with warmer and drier conditions looking more likely compared to previous years. For members across the State's north, the predictions came true, somewhat earlier than expected.



For many in Region North, it was the busiest start to the bush fire season they had seen in years and a distinct change from what they had experienced over the past few fire seasons, where floods and storms were the main operations.

Between July and October 2012, brigades across Region North attended more than 1,000 bush and grass fires, with seven Section 44 declarations. Fortunately most of the fires burnt through remote areas, however some, such as incidents around Kempsey, Casino and the Clarence Valley, threatened properties and in some, properties such as sheds and weekenders were destroyed.

Big fires and a big effort

Over the weekend 20 and 21 October alone, fires across the northern parts of the State caused more than \$1 million damage and destroyed fences, equipment and more than 200 head of stock.

By far the biggest fire was the Macleay River Fire, west of Kempsey. This was the result of two separate fires, the Freds Creek and Georges Junctions fires, combining under Severe fire danger conditions on that weekend.

Burning over several weeks, the fire burnt through almost 60,000 hectares of bushland and had a perimeter of more than 900 kilometres, or the

equivalent of driving from Sydney to the Gold Coast.

The fire damaged significant portions of the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, which is part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area, and sent large volumes of smoke over towns including Kempsey and Armidale.

The fire prompted a declaration of a natural disaster on 5 November, covering the Local Government Areas of Armidale Dumaresq, Walcha, Guyra and Kempsey.

Other fires caused significant concerns, like the Frazers Gully fire east of Tenterfield on 4 September, burnt out over 1,500 hectares and threatened

a number of dwellings such as caravans and weekenders.

Another near Tabulam, the Cyril Smith Circuit fire, burnt through more than 2,500 hectares of land. Fought by ground crews, aircraft and heavy plant equipment, this fire lasted a week.

The dramatic increase in fire activity across the Region saw a remarkable commitment from local brigades. Due to the long running fires, strike teams were deployed from across the region to assist and relieve local crews, from areas including the Far North Coast, Mid North Coast and Lower North Coast. Help also came from further afield, with a number of strike

teams sent to the area from Region East to crew local fire appliances.

Aviation support

Many of the fires burned in remote location which required a big effort in the air.

One of the primary locations for aviation activity was Grafton Airport, where a now well-established support brigade provided refuelling and coordination for a constant stream of helicopters and fixed wing bombers.

A big thank you

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons praised the work of volunteers and all members.

“It’s been an incredible team effort from our volunteers, Incident Management Teams and other agencies such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Forests NSW, limiting the damage from these fires in what have been, from time to time, difficult weather conditions.”

While some of the fires across the region were the result of natural causes such as lightning in remote areas, many more were the result of escaped private hazard reductions.

“In a lot of cases, the local landholders simply underestimated the dry

conditions,” said Region North Operations Officer, Superintendent Bryan Daly. “Under those conditions, it was easy for fires to get away and escape, despite their best efforts.”

With permits suspended for an extended period and very dry conditions forecast to continue, there were concerns that escaped burns might be a problem.

The fires prompted a NSW Police taskforce to be deployed to areas including the Clarence Valley and Armidale. These officers worked alongside NSW RFS Fire Investigators to investigate escaped fires, resulting in a number of court attendance notices and infringement notices being issued.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons met with some of the local brigades in early November.

“Many of our volunteers have taken time off work to attend these incidents to protect communities and this simply couldn’t be done without the ongoing support of employers,” he said, “In some cases, our volunteers are self-employed, meaning they have made a significant sacrifice to help protect their local community.”

Region North Section 44 Declarations August to October

Clarence Valley	18-30 August 2012
Kempsey	21-26 August 2012
Clarence Valley and Richmond Valley	06-17 September 2012
Gwydir	25-28 September 2012
Kyogle, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley and Tenterfield	07-13 October 2012
Armidale and Walcha	20 October - 14 November 2012
Clarence Valley	20 October - 6 November 2012



OPPOSITE, ABOVE AND RIGHT: Armidale S44 on the weekend of October 20 and 21. Photo by Sean Bremner

ABOVE RIGHT : Firefighters protecting a house and property on the Carrai Plateau in the Macleay River fire. Photo by Sean Bremner

A week in the life of the NSW RFS...

Three incidents and one award ceremony within one week in October 2012 show the breadth and scope of work of NSW RFS members.

5 October 2012: Pretty Beach, Central Coast

It was pure hard physical labour from firefighters that protected homes at Pretty Beach just north of Sydney on 5 October 2012.

The fire started at 0624hrs on Lobster Beach and spread into the heathland of Bouddi National Park eventually burning 138 hectares.

Throughout the morning firefighters were on the ground supported by two fixed waterbombing aircraft. Firefighters got to work implementing a hand tool line on the headland to prevent the fire from reaching houses at Pretty Beach.

But in mid afternoon a south west wind change came through causing spot fires which forced crews to pull out of the fire trails. The fire spotted towards the houses at Pretty Beach, and when the stronger than expected south easterly wind came through, the fire took a run.

All fire units in attendance turned their attention to



Photo by Bernie O'Rourke

property protection at Pretty Beach. An Emergency Alert was issued by the NSW RFS at 1343hrs for homes at Pretty Beach and Hardy's Bay. Some evacuations were made as a precaution.

At the height of the activity there were over 100 firefighters on the ground in the streets of Pretty Beach including crews from NSW RFS Gosford District, Fire & Rescue NSW

and NPWS, with 15 tankers and six pumpers in action. It was hard physical work for the firefighters who even had to move cars and boats in order to protect assets.

Fire activity slowed later in the day and a large back burn was implemented over night. Firefighters patrolling the fires reported significant flame heights in the early hours of the morning. The fire was

declared contained by the early afternoon.

The Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons attended the fireground on the day and took the opportunity to thank firefighters for their efforts and to urge all residents across NSW to become bush fire ready.



Photo by Zak Holgate

5 October 2012: Wyee, Central Coast

On the same day as the Pretty Beach fire, a fire at Wyee further north on the Central Coast, flared up and a S44 bush fire emergency was declared.

Homes came under threat and children had to be relocated from a child care facility from the fire near Lake Macquarie. Employees from a nursery and service station were also evacuated. A total of 649 hectares of bushland was burnt over three days.

The fire started around 1300hrs on Thursday 4 October and houses on 15 streets in the area came under threat. The rail line between Newcastle and Sydney was closed. The fire was patrolled overnight.

The fire entered Stage 2 at 1157hrs on Friday 5 October when crews patrolling the site reported the fire had flared up and a secondary fire had been identified on the eastern side of the Railway line. A Section 44 bush fire emergency was declared at 1450hrs and remained in place until 1800hrs on Sunday 7 October.

5 October 2012: Macquarie St, NSW Parliament House

Community Engagement volunteers from the Wollombi Valley in the Hunter were named state winners at the Resilient Australia Awards at State Parliament House on 5 October, 2012. The Resilient Australia Awards recognise innovative practices and achievements across the nation that are making our communities better prepared to manage any emergency situation.

The Wollombi Team has developed and rolled out an outstanding community engagement program which has increased the knowledge and preparedness of the local community. The Resilient

Australia Awards is just the most recent of many awards and accolades given to this program.

Community Engagement Officer for Wollombi Valley, Glenn O'Rourke said that the team have taken a strategic approach.

"The local Bush Fire Risk Management Plan is the cornerstone of the program and is used to identify and target high bush fire risk communities. Once identified, the team developed an integrated program of initiatives aimed at mitigating the risks and actively engaging with locals. The team also understands that no project can succeed unless the outcomes are measured."

Based on community feedback, the Wollombi Team have continued to evolve their



program introducing facilitated Bush Fire Survival Planning and practical hands-on firefighting skills training, as well as establishing a FireWise café where locals meet with brigade members to review their completed Bush Fire Survival Plans.

"This has been so successful for us," Glenn said, "It is building a network of connected people in our

community who understand what we do and feel comfortable and not intimidated by asking for advice and assistance."

You can find out more about this program in the *Bush Fire Bulletin* Vol 34 No 1 pages 38-41. Back Row: (L-R) Glenn O'Rourke, Glenn Byrnes, Tony Hawkins. Front Row (L-R) Alan Johnston, Jordis Pointu and Leanne Bell.

12 October 2012: Megalong Valley

A matter of seven days after the Central Coast fires, volunteers were called to assist in the Megalong Valley when snow blocked the road. Megalong Valley Brigade firefighter Ian Annetts sent in this story:

The weather bureau had warned us that there could be a snow fall on the way, but none of us expected the amount of snow that came down that Friday.

Megalong Valley is located on the southern side of Blackheath and is reached via a winding road through a sandstone gorge. Snow rarely gets down to the lower reaches of the gorge however, on Friday the snow not only fell in the lower reaches of the gorge but fell for most of the morning, building up on the branches of the forest trees until they snapped.

At about 1030hrs we got the pager call that the Megalong Brigade Captain, David Bosworth was trapped in the glen and needed assistance. We arrived at the lower section of the Glen Rd and saw heavy snow falling and numerous branches across the road. We decided to park the Cat 7 off to the side of the road and walk up. It was then we noticed

the sound of timber creaking and straining under the weight of the snow followed by the sudden crash of trees falling.

The first problem we came across was a civilian in his vehicle who was unable to traverse a large tree blocking his path. A couple of the brigade members tried to get him to leave the vehicle but

he refused to leave. I decided to continue on to locate the Brigade Captain. About 30 minutes later I heard the familiar warble of a chainsaw starting up and realised he was just past another fallen tree. When he finally realised he had support I was greeted by a warm smile from a very exhausted and cold Captain.

On the way back we managed to persuade the civilian to leave his vehicle and return with us. Just a few hours later the sun broke through the cloud, the Council sent a work crew with a backhoe to assist us, and we finally managed to open the road at 1900hrs that night. Everyone was pretty well exhausted by then!

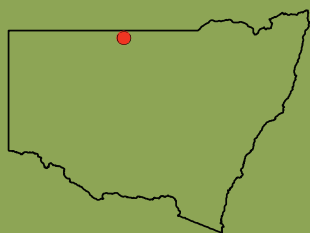


Megalong Valley Brigade on Glen Rd, Megalong Valley. Photo by Ian Annetts



First Section 44

for Barwon Darling Zone



The very first Section 44 Bush Fire Emergency was declared for the Barwon Darling Zone on Saturday 20 October. After a dry lightning storm came through, 38 fires were reported, burning around 150,000ha and killing large numbers of sheep in the area.

On the evening of Friday 19 October 2012 lightning activity was observed in the Enngonia area north of Bourke. Following this lightning event a large cluster of fires was reported. The fire originating on the property *Allawah* took a significant run through grazing country and across a number of neighbouring properties.

Local brigades, along with Bourke Shire Council resources, got to work and managed to hold that fire on the western side of the Mitchell Highway. Unfortunately by the following morning more than 13,000ha had been burnt with significant stock losses and damage to approximately 50kms of rural fencing.

Due to the severity of this event and the ongoing requirement to resource this and other fires in the Bourke

and Brewarrina districts a Section 44 was requested and subsequently declared by the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service at 1100hrs on Saturday 20 October 2012.

Crews from Cobar HQ and Goodooga made their way to the area to assist and relieve the local crews on Saturday afternoon.

Sunday 21 October started with a series of storms crossing the NSW/SA border in the area between Tibooburra in the north and Broken Hill, by 0900hrs seven new fires had been reported in the area with members of the Barrier Range and Milparinka Brigades responding with private plant and NSW RFS equipment.

Later in the morning reports were received that another significant storm was moving from west to east in a line

between Broken Hill and Wilcannia. Numerous reports of new ignitions were received with members from the Little Topar and Wilcannia Rural Brigades responding. Luckily most of these firegrounds received some rainfall allowing the brigades to quickly control the majority of these fires. Several fires north of Wilcannia started as a result of this band of lightning and continued to burn over the next few days.

Late in the morning an extension of the S44 declaration was requested to include the Cobar, Central Darling and the Unincorporated Area districts. Storm activity continued throughout the day and by the end of the day 25 fires were included in the S44 event including a fast moving fire on *Waratah* south east of Brewarrina. During the next few days a number of additional

fires were started through the use of machinery such as slashers and other equipment such as welders.

Over the remainder of the week weather conditions improved and firefighters contained all fires within the S44 declaration area, this was subsequently revoked at 1200hrs on Saturday 27 October 2012 with the responsibility for fire management handed back to the local districts.

OPPOSITE TOP: Heavy plant at work to create a containment line near the NSW/SA border. Photo by Tony Mayo

OPPOSITE BELOW: After the Enngonia fire came through. Photo by Craig Warwick.

No love for this grass

The area south west of Bega is Lovegrass country and even before the official fire season began, fire managers in the area were on high alert. This year they were especially anxious as fuel loads were at record levels.



Lovegrass is an introduced weed that grows vigorously and dries quickly in the perennial frosts common in the State's Alpine areas. This year, due to record rainfalls in late summer, Lovegrass south of the Snowy Mountains Highway grew abundantly. By the end of the winter, heavy frosts had left the thick grass 70-80 percent cured.

Bega Valley Fire Mitigation Officer Garry Cooper said fuel loads like that have deadly potential.

"Our biggest worry is that in the windy months of August and September a spark in that country can get away from us," he said.

Thinking ahead

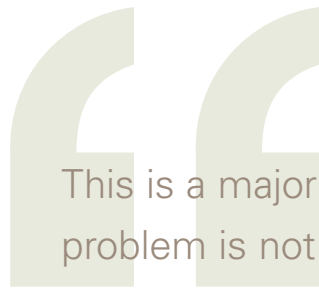
In September 2011, firefighters in the Bega area had a glimpse of just how quickly Lovegrass fires can take off, when 90 hectares near South Wolumla were burned within a single afternoon.

Heeding the warning of last year's fire, in July 2012

senior volunteers from Bega Valley Group Central brigades gathered for a 'pre-incident' planning meeting. The meeting identified resources and set priorities if such a Lovegrass fire were to ignite. Part of the pre-incident planning included locating an extra Cat 7 tanker on the property of John Wilson, captain of Wolumla Brigade. It turned out to be best planning possible.

On 28 September 2012, a day of very high fire danger, hot and windy conditions caused power





This is a major concern to firefighters in the area...as this problem is not going away any time soon.

lines to come down and start a blaze in Lovegrass on the Warren property on Towridgee Lane, Wolumla.

Local Group Captain Richard Cochrane spotted the smoke from his property at South Wolumla and called the duty officer to respond units immediately.

A farmhouse was in the direct path of the quickly moving fire and Group Captain Cochran estimated the house would be under impact within five minutes. Wolumla, Candelo, Bega, Jellat and Bemboka Brigades were responded to fight the blaze.

Significantly, the extra Cat 7 Tanker at Wolumla was only 5kms from the fire and it proved to be a key factor in saving the dwelling. The Cat 7 arrived within minutes but the fire had already run across mown grass and was within a metre of the farmhouse. The Wolumla Brigade crew used direct attack, saving the

structure and diverting the fire away from assets. New crews arrived and within three and a half hours the fire had been contained. A total of six hectares had been burned but the property was safe.

Prevention better than the cure

Between July and October, brigades from Candelo, Wolumla, Bemboka, Numbugga, Bega and Jellat carried out around two hazard reduction burns per week assisting land owners with burns and ensuring they remain in control. These burns have provided valuable protection to the townships of Wolumla and Candelo.

State Mitigation Support Service crews have also been providing mechanical mowing and brush cutting support on unmanaged Council and Crown land reserve roads in and around the township of Candelo. These areas had previously not been treated

due to difficulties of access but the SMSS crews have the right equipment and are able to significantly reduce the fuel load around the township and provide a huge support to the local community.

Hazard reduction burns play a big role in reducing the build-up of fuel but burning alone will not remove the problem this weed has become. If not managed after burning by spraying, ploughing or pasture improvement then the weed grows very vigorously and becomes a bigger issue the following season with even greater fuel loads.

"This is a major concern to firefighters in the area," said Garry Cooper, "The more we can learn and educate members on how to deal with this, the better prepared they will be in the future. This problem is not going away any time soon."

Volunteers in the local brigades have been conducting fuel load

sampling and fuel moisture readings in plots heavily infested with Lovegrass in order to learn more about the weed. Additionally the Far South Coast Team is developing a short DVD to teach brigades how best to deal with Lovegrass both before it cures and also when it is a running fire.

Community engagement has played a big role in making the landowners aware of the dangers of Lovegrass fires. In conjunction with the NSW RFS State-wide media campaign on grassfire threats, local initiatives such as signage, letterbox drops and local radio interviews have been employed to sell the message.



LEFT: Lovegrass agricultural burn in Candelo in October 2012 at 1900hrs. Despite mild conditions, the flames are burning at a high temperature, showing just how hot and dangerous Lovegrass fires can be. Photo by Ian Heffernan, Candelo Brigade

RIGHT: Towridgee Lane Lovegrass fire 28 September 2012. A total of six hectares was burned. The house saved by firefighters quick work can be seen at the top of the burnt area. Photo by Gavin Mills

OPPOSITE: This photo shows Fire Mitigation Officer Garry Cooper standing in the Lovegrass about 10 kilometres out of Bega. Garry is 1.8 metres tall – and the grass is around 1.2 metres. Photo courtesy of Garry Cooper

Social media comes into its own **Out west**

By Inspector Robyn Favelle, Far West Team

Although in 2012 the far west has a significantly higher fire threat than it has faced for a number of years, the use of new technology is assisting the local NSW RFS in the early detection of fires, especially following an electrical storm.

The Australian Federal Government website Sentinel (www.sentinel.ga.gov.au) has been the 'eye in the sky' over the past few summers, sometimes alerting staff to the fire even before any smoke has been reported. Sentinel is a public website which can be accessed by anyone with internet access, with regular satellite images of fires or hotspots. The site is very accurate, with the ability to provide firefighters with exact coordinates and size of fire. Other lightning tracking websites are also used to monitor lightning activity and allow staff to alert brigades if their area is affected.

The NSW RFS Far West Team, the Barwon Darling Zone and a number of local brigades are also using social media sites such as Facebook which allow instant communication between staff and brigade members. These new technologies complement other advances in communications, such as new radio repeater sites, use of pagers, mobile phones, spot trackers and satellite phones. The very remote Barrier Range Brigade is one brigade that has embraced the use of social media to communicate with each other and with NSW RFS staff in the Far West Team.

Barrier Range leads the change

Barrier Range Brigade covers an enormous area from Broken Hill north to Milparinka along the South Australian border. Despite decades without any significant fire activity, the brigade structure remained firmly in place, holding regular meetings, election of officers and social functions. When they realised that they were facing a real threat from fires in 2011, they started to develop strategies and plans

to deal with the issue. One of these strategies was to start a closed Facebook group with membership restricted to brigade members, family and a small number of staff from Far West Team. This has proven to be an invaluable tool in an area where the main communication is landline or satellite phones and UHF radio. There is no NSW RFS PMR radio system north of Broken Hill.

The system works like this:

- At first sign of fire, one of the administrators will post info to Facebook and ask for assistance. As information comes into the brigade, the Communications Officers will provide further updates and list members and resources which are responding
- Lightning is the primary cause of fire and there are often multiple ignitions. Many property owners in the area also own aircraft so if possible, someone will fly the fire to obtain accurate information for the Captain and senior officers. The Captain will then prioritise the fires and coordinate the response accordingly. This information is all placed on the Facebook page for everyone's benefit
- As the members move around the various firegrounds, they report back to the closest homestead via UHF radio and their movements are tracked on the Facebook page. This allows NSW RFS staff to update ICON with either intel or Sitreps as situation and resources change
- The Facebook page allows for great information flow between the brigade and staff. The Far West Team Operations Officer will post weather updates, Sentinel maps, logistic details and aerial reconnaissance details while the brigade provide staff with constant Sitreps on all fires, fireground weather, logistic requests and photos from fireground
- Members of adjoining brigades also joined the group as the fires spread and these brigades are now looking at starting their own closed group Facebook sites using similar guidelines as Barrier Range Brigade.

Another of the challenges faced by this resourceful brigade is that many of their fires originate in South Australia. This amazing border country landscape is very sparsely populated with the closest SA Country

Fire Service unit hundreds of kilometres away. In the past 12 months, the Barrier Range Brigade has successfully stopped up to six fires from crossing into NSW, with two of these fires burning a massive 160,000 hectares. One fantastic asset for the brigade is the assistance provided by the staff and resources from the Wild Dog Destruction Board who manages the maintenance of the dingo fence along the South Australian and Queensland borders. A glimpse into the world of these remote area firefighters was provided by one of the Barrier Range members who remarked that "the only thing more common than fires across the SA border is wild dogs".

During a recent Section 44 bush fire emergency, the brigades in the Unincorporated Area successfully contained 19 fires, using social media and other cutting edge technology to overcome the tyrannies of distance and isolation. Far West staff remained in constant contact with the brigade and had a clear overview of the fires and conditions, despite the fact that the staff were working in an IMT more than 700 kilometres from most of the fires.



ABOVE: A grader working along the dog fence, building containment lines on the NSW/SA border. Photo by Mark Lacy.

Power up

By Leah Ross, Senior Deputy Captain, Mullumbimby Brigade

At approximately 0846hrs on Tuesday 14 August 2012, Mullumbimby Brigade was responded to a fire at the old Mullumbimby Hydro Power Station on Wilsons Creek Road Mullumbimby.



The power station is nestled in the hill at Lavertys Gap below the weir. It once supplied the power for the township but in 1990 the Mullumbimby hydro-electric power station was decommissioned. Since this time it has become the HVDC (high voltage direct current) interconnector converter station between NSW and Queensland. The lines on site carry 132,000 and 66,000 volts and convert from AC to DC or vice versa.

Mullumbimby Brigade responded two Cat 1s and a Cat 7 and arrived on scene at the same time as Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW). On

arrival one building was fully involved. The high voltage power that was still running through the site was the main concern. Preventing the spread of fire to other buildings was also high on the agenda.

Mullumbimby Captain Mark Ross worked closely with Pumper 388 from FRNSW to develop a safe plan to extinguish the fire. Fortunately Captain Ross had worked at the site and was familiar with the internal layout and contents of each building.

Despite that advantage, it was not until 1130hrs that the high voltage power was completely

isolated from the site. In order to maintain a power supply to some areas, the electricity had to be re-routed through Ewingsdale substation and this took some time.

Mullumbimby Brigade set up two tankers supplying water and foam directly to the CABA crews from both services. Initially, the priority of the CABA crews was to keep the oil-filled cooling units from catching fire and spreading to all other buildings.

The installed hydrants did not provide enough water, so the NSW RFS crews sourced a creek on the site.

By approximately 1230hrs the fire was contained and CABA crews could enter the building and extinguish remaining hotspots. At this time the conductors and reactors were alight.

NSW RFS crews worked closely with FRNSW and Hazmat throughout the incident and should be commended for their ability to work closely and effectively together.

ABOVE: Mullumbimby Brigade crew on site at the power station. Photo by Leah Ross

Grassland Strategic Break Program

With predictions that the 2012/13 fire season will be fierce, and that grass fires in the western parts of the State may be a concern, the NSW RFS has undertaken a State-wide initiative called the Grassland Strategic Break Program.

The joint Program is coordinated by the Infrastructure and Regional Services Directorate and implemented through the Regions and Districts in liaison with local councils.

The focus is on clearing the vegetation around roadsides of key strategic roads into and around isolated villages. Local councils and districts identify the areas of focus for the project. Clearing vegetation along major strategic roads like this creates an Asset Protection Zone and Strategic Fire Advantage Zone around the villages improving, protecting them in the case of a fire.

Up to July 2012, 36 councils have been involved in the program and nearly ten thousand hectares and 6,429 kilometres of roadside have been treated.

More than half of this work has been done in Region West, with Region South also quite busy. The burning, mechanical clearing and spraying along major strategic roads was completed with the assistance of the State Mitigation Support Services as well as out-of-area volunteers.

The Grassland Strategic Break Program was one of a number

of additional measures taken by the Service to prepare for the 2012/13 bush fire danger period and was made possible by an extra allocation of funding for this purpose.

BELOW: This roadside burn was on the Barrier Highway, about 170km west of Cobar. Steve Skinner is one of the volunteers from Region East (Valley Heights Brigade) who came out to assist the local brigades. Photo by Robyn Favelle





State Championships 2012

Over the weekend of 14-16 September 2012, 25 teams of firefighters from across NSW gathered for the biennial NSW RFS State Championships, hosted by Lower Hunter Zone at the Tomaree Sports Complex in Port Stephens.

Our defending champions, Mulloon from Lake George Zone, took on the challengers in a valiant attempt to retain their title for another two years. The teams competed in a range of demanding, real-life scenarios across the two-day event, showcasing their firefighting, team work, leadership and problem solving skills.

And the winners are...

Congratulations to Dubbo Headquarters who were named the NSW RFS State Champions for 2012 after completing a gruelling two days of competition facing almost every dangerous situation imaginable. Jindera took out second place, while Castlereagh Alpha won third.

The Dubbo HQ team has won the brand new State

Championships Trophy and the major prize – a fully marked Isuzu D-MAX community support vehicle, thanks to our long standing Principal Partners, Gilbert & Roach Huntingwood and Isuzu Utes. This fabulous prize is provided to the team for their use during the period that they remain the State Champions.

A huge congratulations also goes to Oakville Alpha Team, who was named the Junior Champions while Gundagai were second with Tumut taking out third.

Regional Trophy

For teams to attend the State Champs, they must qualify through a Regional selection process. This year, along with the individual team winners, a new trophy was awarded to the

best performing Region based on the combined scores of all their teams.

Congratulations to Region South on winning the inaugural Regional Trophy. They will hold the trophy for the next two years until the other Regions have the opportunity to challenge them at the 2014 State Championships.

“Region South is very proud to be the inaugural winners of the best performing Region,” Regional Manager Ken Hall said. “The award showcases the great work that our volunteers and staff are doing with training when you consider the events rely on the reactive initiative of the crews. We look forward to defending the title in 2014.”



PREVIOUS PAGE: (L-R): Brendan Gazzard, Lochinvar Team, Ken Hepplewhite and Bert Pipan from Lower Hunter Zone Office and Jeff Jackson, Lochinvar Team. Photo by Di Bennett. TOP: The Aquatic Inferno event took full advantage of the beautiful Port Stephens location. Photo by Paul Fowler. ABOVE: Superintendent Nick Turner accepts the Regional Trophy for Region South – with Chairman of the Organising Committee, Russell Taylor AFSM and Member for Port Stephens, Craig Baumann MP. Photo by Anthony Clark. NEAR RIGHT: Ahh...so that's why they called this event Transfer Torment. Photo by Di Bennett. MIDDLE: The Alpha Protocol Challenge won the Competitors Choice Award as the favourite junior event. Photo by Jake Macklin. BELOW RIGHT: Members of the Dubbo HQ team celebrating their State Championships win while collecting the trophy and major prize, an Izuzu D-Max community support vehicle. Photo by Cate McDowall. RIGHT: The marshals made sure the 2012 events were on fire, especially the MVA Combination Experience. Photo by Anthony Clark. FAR RIGHT: Proof that rank isn't everything in the novelty event. (L-R) Superintendent Jayson McKellar, Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers, Chief Superintendent John Parnaby Photo by Anthony Clark.





The teams competed in a range of demanding, real-life scenarios across the two-day event, showcasing their firefighting, team work, leadership and problem solving skills.

The competing teams

Senior Teams		
TEAM	DTZ	REGION
Castlereagh Alpha	Cumberland	East
Castlereagh Bravo	Cumberland	East
Ku-ring-gai	Hornsby-Ku-ring-gai	East
Lochinvar	Lower Hunter	East
Gilgandra	Castlereagh	North
Nana Glen	Mid North Coast	North
Scotts Head	Lower North Coast	North
Jerrabomberra Creek	Lake George	South
Jindera	Southern Border	South
Mulloon	Lake George	South
Surf Beach	Far South Coast	South
Cooks Gap	Cudgegong	West
Dubbo HQ	Orana	West
Parkes HQ	Mid Lachlan Valley	West

Junior Teams		
TEAM	DTZ	REGION
Blue Mountains	Blue Mountains	East
Illawarra	Illawarra	East
Lake Macquarie	The Lakes	East
Oakville Alpha	Hawkesbury	East
Oakville Bravo	Hawkesbury	East
Gundagai	Riverina Highlands	South
McAuley	Riverina Highlands	South
Tumut	Riverina Highlands	South
Orana Alpha	Orana	West
Parkes HQ	Mid Lachlan Valley	West
South West Slopes	South West Slopes	West



The State Championships Trophy



To mark the 40th anniversary of the Champs the NSW RFS commissioned an enduring NSW RFS State Championships Trophy.

Paul Garry, a sculptor and model maker, was chosen to design the trophy. Mr Garry put a great deal of time into the concept and design of the trophy, which was sculpted by hand and then cast in bronze.

"The design is based on the profile of a flame," Mr Garry said, "Like individual flames within a fire, the firefighters also gain strength through the efforts of the team. The curves of the ribbons are designed to reflect the precision and confidence needed by the teams to win the Championships."

"The State Championships Trophy is a reflection of the dedication and determination exhibited by the team who triumphs in this fiercely competitive and exacting event."



Stories behind the State Championships

The State Championships are more than a weekend full of challenging events. An enormous amount of preparation goes into the competition so we have taken the opportunity to highlight some of the stories behind the Champs including an insight into the volunteers and marshals.

The volunteers

The State Championships are an opportunity for volunteers to meet other members from around the State, share experiences and learn from one another. They also play an invaluable role in making the Champs happen.

This year between 70-80 volunteers headed to Port Stephens to assist with the event. They included members of the Support, Catering and Communication brigades plus plenty of others from right across the Lower Hunter Zone – Dungog, Port Stephens, Cessnock and Maitland Districts.

The volunteers performed a variety of roles at the Champs. Crews were assigned to assist with each event and there were safety officers, people assisting with communications and fork lift operations, catering for all the crews and much more.

Some of the fun aspects of being a volunteer at the Champs are "getting together with members from other areas that we don't see all that often, telling 'war stories' and getting to see and cheer on the competing teams," said Di

Bennett OAM, the 2012 Host District Volunteer Coordinator.

The marshals

The marshals play a key role at the State Championships by creating scenario-based events as close to real life as possible, testing the core skills of a NSW RFS firefighter while throwing in a mix of specialist skills and devious twists.

For the 2012 State Champs there were 16 marshals from all over the State with each Region represented, and they all brought along support members to assist in judging or as part of the event.

Becoming a marshal is no easy feat explained one marshal Corey Philip. "You need the dedication and creativity to develop an interesting event," he said, "This year in particular the marshals had their own autonomy to create something special and this was definitely showcased at the 2012 State Champs."

Nils Waite, from Region West said it is a wonderful experience to be a part of the State Championships as a marshal.

"To see this genuine commitment by NSW RFS members in providing the best experiences for their fellow members is just amazing."

Competitor's Choice Award

Also introduced in 2012 was an award for the marshal who delivered the best event based on the votes of competing teams. The winners were Simon May for the Emergency Response Event in the Senior category, and Brett Loughlin for the ALPHA Protocol Challenge in the Junior category.

Simon May, winner of the inaugural Competitor's Choice Award was thrilled to be a part of the Championships.

"Thank you for giving us the challenge to come up with and deliver the best event line up in State Championships history," he said in his acceptance speech, "I reckon we delivered! Without doubt this was the best Championships I've been involved in, over the last 10 years!"

Their outstanding efforts have set the bar for 2014. Planning for the next Championships has already started and a call for

interest in becoming a marshal will be released soon.

More stories!

You can find lots more photos, video and stories from the 2012 NSW RFS State Championships at the dedicated State Champs page on MyRFS or by visiting the Championships Facebook page at www.facebook.com/NSWRFSStateChampionships.

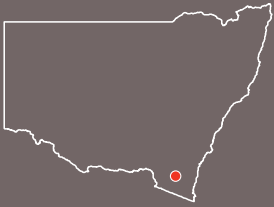
Looking forward to 2014

At the closing ceremony the venue for the next State Championships was revealed. Pambula in Far South Coast Zone will host the 2014 Championships, where teams will once again gather to put themselves to the test and take on Dubbo HQ for the honour of becoming NSW RFS State Champions.

PHOTO: Cooks Gap Team members Phil Slater and Bill Robinson competing in the MVA Combination Experience event. Photo by Anthony Clark.

Meet Oscar, The Koala Detection Dog

Story and photos by Brydie O'Connor, Media Services



Traditionally sniffer dogs are used to track down criminals, find drugs or locate rabbits...until now. In the Cooma/Monaro area a clever detection dog named Oscar is helping to ensure hazard reductions get done by locating and saving koalas.

When a hazard reduction burn was required in one of the koalas' favourite stomping grounds in the Cooma/Monaro area, a little bit of lateral thinking was required on how to track them down.

Enter Oscar – the koala detection dog. When Oscar reported for duty he had two key tasks: to identify all koalas living on the land scheduled to be burned and any trees the koalas had been feeding off.





If Oscar detected any koalas in these areas, then burning would be postponed until the koalas had left the area.

Tracking down the koalas

Koalas don't want to be found. This has created an interesting challenge for NSW RFS and National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff who need to carry out hazard reduction burns in an area where numerous koalas have been seen. It was decided that a 'precautionary approach' should be adopted to protect the local koala population.

The answer was to divide the burn area into manageable sections for Oscar to systematically search on the day the burn was scheduled to go ahead. When he came across a live koala he'd do a 'tree stand', which means standing on his hind legs with his front legs on the tree trunk.

The scent of a koala for Oscar is like a red rag to a bull. On hearing the words "go find the Katies" (Oscar's code word for koala) he transforms from your average friendly black labrador into a frenzied streak of black hurtling through the forest at break neck speed, determined to locate any koalas within the area and make their presence known to his handlers.

It's quite something to watch the world's first koala sniffing dog in action. As an onlooker it's obvious when he's picked up their scent as he'll do a 'bend' or sharp change of direction to show his trainer he's in hot pursuit of a 'Katie'.

Star of the show

Without doubt Oscar is the glamorous face of the current

koala management strategy in the Monaro area. Before he arrives in to find live koalas a great deal of work is done behind the scenes by NPWS, NSW RFS and volunteers from the community, to identify the local koala strongholds.

They have focused their efforts on areas that had been prioritised for hazard reduction burns in the Snowy Monaro Bush Fire Management Plan, specifically areas west of Numeralla village.

Under the direction of Chris Allen from the NPWS, koalas' scat (droppings) was found and plotted on a map to indicate koala occupancy rates. The results of these surveys were astounding – with occupancy rates as high as 80 percent

recorded in some areas. This means that if you look up a tree in the area you have an eight out of ten chance of seeing a koala sunning itself at the top.

It was assumed the koala population in the area would have dwindled after the recent drought, but following this ground-breaking research of the local koala population, it seems the koalas have in fact flourished.

Numerous trees were found in the area with koala teeth marks which indicate they were keeping themselves alive by eating tree bark, a great example of a native animal adapting to the environment. This behaviour has only been recorded once before in history.



Koalas and fire

Environmental impacts are taken into consideration for all hazard reduction burns, mitigating the risk that fire presents to koalas is just one part of the equation. Controlled fire has been identified as a useful tool to manage koala populations because they have a limited chance of surviving an unplanned, high intensity fire.

If a bush fire burns through an area where a hazard reduction burn has been carried out it will reduce the intensity of the fire and make it easier for firefighters to control and reduce the impact on the forest.

The Numeralla Rural Fire Brigade and NPWS burning crews further reduce the risk to koalas by controlling the flame and scorch height of the hazard reduction burns.

This also serves to protect the koala's food source. However it can be challenging for crews to keep flames low, with some trees only standing as high as 10 metres.

The long-term plan for the Snowy Monaro Bush Fire Management Committee is to gather enough data about the koala populations in the Monaro to support sound risk management planning decisions. Their aim is to enhance the network of 'strategic fire advantage zones' to protect both the community and the koala populations.

So now we know... thanks to the innovative thinking of people in the Monaro, koala detection dogs can help preserve one of Australia's most loved and vulnerable species.

This extract appeared in the Bush Fire Bulletin Volume 1 No 1 published on 1 September 1952.



Fires Kill Koalas.

IN A BUSH FIRE AT NEWPORT ONE HUNDRED KOALAS WERE INCINERATED.

The Chief Guardian of Fauna, Mr F.J. Griffiths, commenting on this report, said that the bush fire is the most deadly enemy of Australia's native fauna. He considers all bush fires dangerous even when homes and property are not threatened. The fire that is said to be "burning harmlessly in the bush" is destroying the food supply, the breeding places and the lives of birds and animals that live there.

"Unless we can prevent bush fires", said Mr Griffiths, "we cannot hope to save our unique fauna from extinction."



Revolutionising incident management through analysing fire behaviour

By Laurence McCoy, Senior Project Officer, Fire Behaviour Analysis

Predicting how fast a fire is travelling, where embers may land and how hot a fire might get, are all part of a project at the NSW RFS entitled Fire Behaviour Analysis and Smoke Plume Modelling.

Fire Behaviour Analysis (FBA) itself is not new to the NSW RFS or fire management in NSW, but findings from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission have led to the establishment of the project which aims to expand the use of FBA and to integrate it into Incident Management Teams (IMT) across the State.

The Royal Commission made recommendations on the importance of warnings and notifications for communities during bush fires.

Providing timely and informative advice about the predicted passage of a fire and the actions to be taken by people in areas potentially in its path, was a key recommendation.

The Royal Commission recommended that Incident Management Teams (IMTs) should have access to FBA predictions made by trained staff. It also recommended that fire service staff should undertake further training in prediction methods.

The Fire Behaviour Analysis and Smoke Plume Modelling project is funded by the National Disaster Reliance Grants Scheme. It was initially a one-year program but quiet fire seasons in 2010/11 and 2011/12 resulted in the project being extended.

The aim is to establish a FBA capability, support operations with FBA products, improve the Phoenix fire spread model (see product feature below) for use in NSW and to automate a smoke plume modelling process for hazard reduction planning.

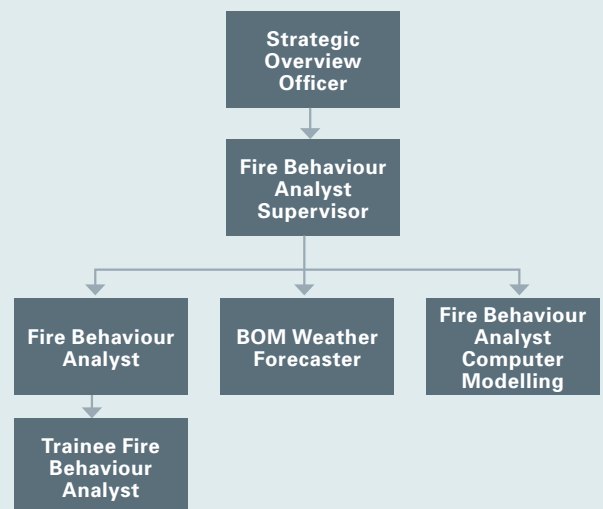
Two Portable Automatic Weather Stations (PAWS) have also been purchased to support FBA and Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) forecasts.

How will Fire Behaviour Analysts fit into the existing setup?

A new role of Fire Behaviour Analyst has been created and may be incorporated into an IMT. Operationally the role fits into both the State structure (State Operations Centre or SOC) and within an IMT. Both positions have slightly different roles.

The SOC Fire Behaviour Analyst will play a coordination and support role. An IMT Fire Behaviour Analyst may be appointed when an IMT is formed and is purely focused on the specific incident. The flow chart to the right shows how the roles are linked.

Fire Behaviour Analysts in the State Operations Centre



Fire Behaviour Analysts in the Incident Management Team



How does it work?

When an incident starts and State Operations Centre is activated, a State Fire Behaviour Analyst supports districts by generating first run Fire Spread Prediction Maps using all the available data for that location.

Due to the length of time taken to produce a prediction, not all fires will be able to have a prediction completed by an analyst. The State FBA Supervisor will prioritise fires for predictions until an IMT is formed and able to support itself with predictions. Once the local IMT has been established, where possible a Fire Behaviour Analyst will be included. There are currently 40 NSW RFS volunteer and staff Fire Behaviour Analysts trained across the State and further training is planned for June 2013.

Roles performed by local IMT Fire Behaviour Analysts

- Local weather interpretation and fireground weather safety warnings
- Individual fire spread, impact analysis
- Suppression options.

How will incident managers access the predictions?

Fire behaviour predictions made by the NSW RFS State Operations Centre will be uploaded to ICON and accompanied by a fire spread prediction report. Requests for FBA can be found on the intranet (or MyRFS) under Incident Management Procedures.

Operational Fire Behaviour Analysis – current thinking

Fire Behaviour Analysis complements local knowledge,

experience and other forms of incident intelligence and can assist an Incident Management Team, however it is early days for the NSW RFS.

The current aim is to introduce new FBA tools into the incident management process and to back these up with training to create a solid FBA capability for IMTs.

Individuals can progress to FBA training after qualification in Incident Management Planning.

The training module is presented by some of Australia's foremost fire behaviour scientists headed up by Dr Kevin Tolhurst from the University of Melbourne. Victoria's Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) have been training Fire Behaviour Analysts since 2007 using this training program.

For more information about training contact your District Office.

The key challenges for the Fire Behaviour Analyst

Determining the fire's point of origin is one of the keys to accurate fire behaviour analysis

Often there isn't time to accurately report a fire's point of origin. Particularly on bad fire days, small differences in the location of a fire's point of origin can mean large differences in the size, shape or direction of a fire. If you are first on the scene, it is crucial to get the fire's point of origin as accurate as possible without compromising other operational responsibilities.

Accuracy of predicted weather

Weather forecasts are used to create a prediction of fire behaviour. Forecast accuracy can vary considerably at a local

level and some factors can make a significant difference to a prediction including:

- Timing of wind changes – difficult for forecasters to predict as an early or late change can result in a vastly different size or shape and impact of a fire
- Wind direction – local winds can vary for forecast winds due to topography and other local effects
- The impact of suppression (or putting a fire out) – fire behaviour models do not take into account the impact of suppression
- Model limitations – generally fire behaviour models are created using experimental fires in low-moderate or in some cases high fire danger ratings. This data is then expanded to take into account higher fire danger conditions. In the case of the Macarthur meter (a standard fire prediction tool), on bad weather days, small changes in weather variables can result in significantly different outcomes
- Accurate fuel (load and or curing) information – fuel load is not uniform across the landscape and our fire history information is not perfect. Variations to fuel load can result in differences in fire behaviour.

How FBA is best understood

FBA models can improve incident management but will not be a replacement for other methods of experience and knowledge on the ground.

There are some key messages that need to be considered when understanding the introduction of fire behaviour analysis. It is not a silver bullet to solve all problems nor does it replace the ingrained

experience and knowledge on the ground. Consider:

- the FBA capability will improve with experience as it is used and feedback is received
- The Service will not be able to resource all fires
- improved science and methods will further improve the FBA capability
- you should not solely rely on FBA and should be used along with other intelligence, knowledge and experience
- FBA is not new to the Service and is already functioning in various ways
- It is vitally important to get ICON points of origin as accurate as possible to assist in the use of fire behaviour analysis as misleading readings may lead to poor decision making
- fire behaviour models use an average of fire behaviour for a time period (generally over an hour) but may vary considerably in that time period.

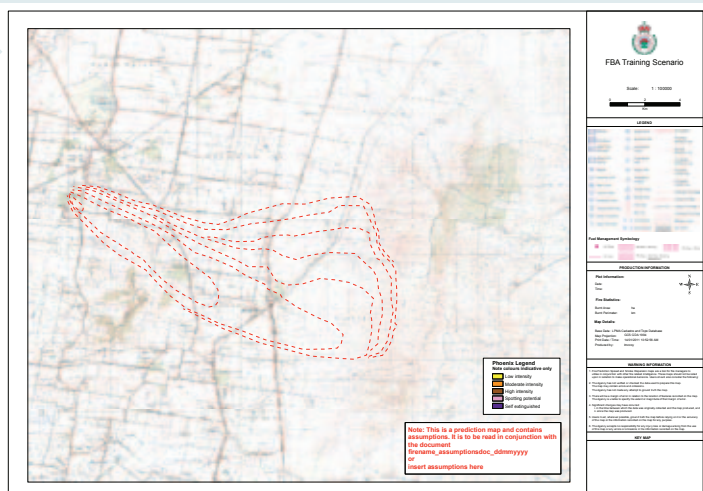
Further information

If you have further questions about this important project please contact the team: Laurence McCoy (Senior Project Officer, Fire Behaviour Analyst) 8741 5357.

New technologies in fire

New technologies in fire behaviour analysis are growing rapidly. As part of the Fire Behaviour Analysis and Smoke Plume Modelling Project, the Service is currently conducting research into leading edge and existing products and procedures.

Manual Fire Spread Prediction Map



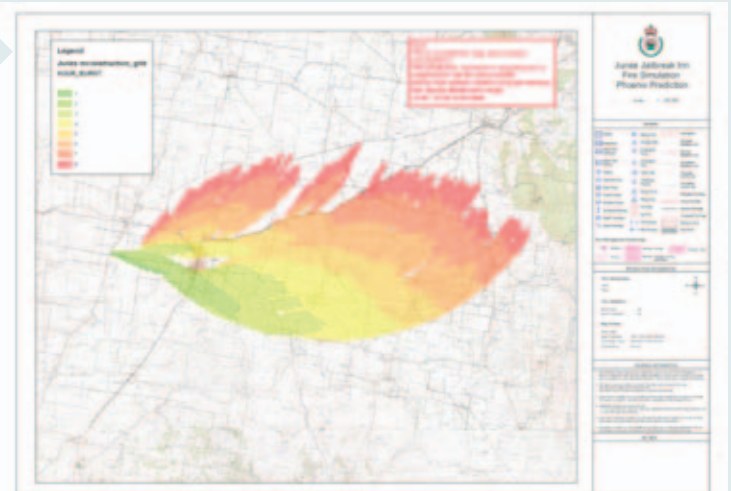
Manual Fire Spread Prediction Map

This map is a reconstruction of the 2009 Gerogery Tip fire using the CSIRO grassland fire behaviour model. The model uses predicted weather (in this case actual observations), slope and fuel load to provide estimates of rates of spread.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this map including towns/streets potentially impacted and when this might occur, speed of the fire, direction of the fire and potential impact of a wind change in addition to potential suppression opportunities.

Incident Controllers can use these maps as a tool to inform decisions about warning communities or firefighting tactics. As they are predictions, this should be done in conjunction with other incident intelligence such as situation reports, local knowledge and experience.

Phoenix Fire Spread Prediction Map (reconstruction)



Phoenix Fire Spread Prediction Map as it could look on a computer screen

The Phoenix Fire Spread model is a computer-based prediction model developed as part of a Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre program by Dr Kevin Tolhurst, Derek Chong, Alastair Pitts and Martin Strandgard of the School of Forest and Ecosystem Science, University of Melbourne.

This model is dependent on a number of inputs such as weather, fuel load (including fire history), topography and interruptions (e.g. roads, rivers or urban areas).

Although a number of improvements to this data have been made, the results of these improvements are yet to be fully evaluated. Interim results have been mixed; while there were excellent results in this example (reconstruction of the 2006 Junee Jailbreak Inn fire), some forest-based examples have been less accurate. This is likely to be a result of variations in fuel. One aspect of the NSW RFS Fire Behaviour Analysis and Smoke Plume Modelling project is to improve these inputs.

At this stage the model is not yet operational. The current intent is for Phoenix to be used as a 'triage' tool, that is as a way to gain a quick understanding of the potential for a fire to develop before developing a manual fire prediction report. The development of a number of four to seven-day outlook products simulating ignitions within 100km grids are currently being developed.

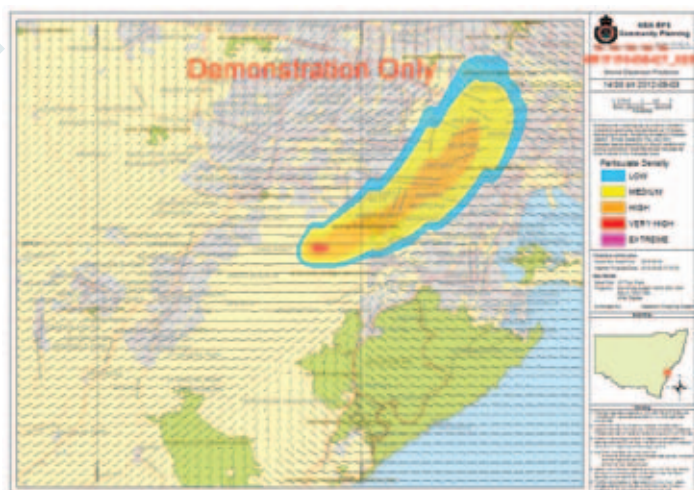
behaviour analysis

Portable Automatic Weather Stations (PAWS)



Due to the size of NSW there are often gaps in the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) weather observation network. Portable Automatic Weather Stations (PAWS) can be rapidly deployed to the fireground to provide more accurate weather information relevant to a fire or hazard reductions location. Currently two PAWS units have been purchased by the Service. Data is hosted on the BOM website.

Smoke Plume Modelling Maps



Smoke Plume Modelling Map as it could look on a computer screen

Smoke Plume Modelling software is currently being automated which will be useful for prescribed burn planners to consider the impact of individual prescribed burns on towns or special protection facilities such as schools or nursing homes. Capability is also being developed to model the impact of multiple burns on a much larger extent, for example, in the Sydney basin. This product is still in development and may change.

This software is being developed by the NSW RFS and combines mapping, weather and CSIRO software to produce predictions.

'Detective' work

By Jason Taylor, Volunteer Fire Investigator, Galston Brigade Rural Fire Brigade

While the drama of TV shows such as NCIS and CSI have brought the world of forensic crime detection into our everyday lives, fire investigation is using forensic photography and other investigative techniques to catch arsonists and find the causes of fire.

The NSW Rural Fire Service Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) has a team of nearly 170 volunteer and salaried authorised wildfire investigators.

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said that their job is to investigate the origin and cause of a fire whether it is through natural means or deliberately lit.

"The FIU use forensic investigation techniques to establish the origin and cause of a fire and if suspicious, work with the NSW Police Force to investigate and assist in convictions and court evidence," the Commissioner said.

In 2011/12 the FIU formally investigated 483 fires consisting of 110 structure fires, 10 vehicle fires and 363 vegetation fires. Of the 483 formal investigations, 75 percent had the cause of the fire determined.

"The NSW RFS also placed an Intelligence Analyst with the NSW Police Arson Team further enabling our combined ability to address arson-related issues across the State," the Commissioner continued.

The majority of the investigations were conducted in collaboration with the NSW Police Force Arson Team Detectives, Local Area Command Detectives and Forensic Services Group Officers which resulted in several charges being laid leading to convictions.

Getting the complete picture

Documenting the investigation is crucial to the success of prosecutions. One of the main tools in the fire investigator's kit is forensic photography. This process involves collecting evidence to prosecute arsonists, to assist in coronial

investigations and to determine the cause of a fire.

Forensic photographers combine their technical skills with methodical and meticulous working practices to capture a permanent visual record of scenes for use in court.

The aim is to produce accurate and detailed photographs that methodically record the location and the evidence as clearly and as objectively as possible. Using advanced photographic technology and equipment, investigators can readily capture, store and transfer files immediately to view and analyse evidence.

Forensic photographers need to understand the legalities surrounding the use of digital photographs in court; the procedures for handling and storage of data; the finer points of day and night photography; and the superior technical skills required in the use of SLR cameras.

The photographs taken must be clear and usually are required to have a scale, for example the use of photo documentation

rulers, or objects of known size such as a coin recorded within the image to give the image a size context.

Forensic photographs remind investigators of a scene, and provide tangible images for the court to better understand the sequence of events.

Operations Officer, Fire Investigation, Superintendent Bob Mathieson said that forensic photography is increasingly vital in prosecuting arsonists and invaluable in better understanding the cause of a fire.

"The rapid advance in photographic technology is allowing our fire investigators to complete investigations in a more timely manner," he said, "and we believe this to be a vital part of the work of the Service."

In 2011, Region East Operations conducted a forensic photography course at Cumberland Fire Control Centre to improve the skills of 22 salaried and volunteer fire investigators.

Under the expert guidance of Detective Sergeant Shawn Harkins from the NSW Police Forensic Services Group, the course included a number of field exercises and insight into the workings of the NSW Police Forensic Photography Unit.

Participants studied methodologies used by both Services, and gained first-hand experience on how the NSW RFS and NSW Police work effectively together.

A short course on how to protect and preserve the scene is also available to members. This course focuses on awareness in detecting deliberate fire lighting, how to ensure that valuable evidence is not disturbed, and how to assist the Service and Police to bring to justice those responsible.

For more information about the workings of the NSW RFS Fire Investigation Unit contact your Regional Operations Officer Fire Investigation or Operations Officer, Fire Investigation, Superintendent Bob Mathieson.



Fire Investigators in action in the Greater Taree area. Photo by Anthony Clark

New national Mapping Symbology for incidents



The NSW Rural Fire Service has adopted the new National All Hazards mapping symbology.

Exercise at Duffys Forest 2012. Photo by Bernie O'Rourke

The experience of a number of major emergency events, including the 2009 Black Saturday bush fires in Victoria, highlighted the need for standard mapping symbology across the Australian emergency sector. In April 2011, the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) board endorsed a new set of symbology. The Bush Fire Coordinating Committee resolved to adopt the new symbology in May 2012.

The most noticeable changes for NSW are:

- Operational points (base camps, water points etc) are now marked in circles instead of a mixture of circles or rectangles
- Operational points are now drawn in black rather than blue
- Proposed or Unconfirmed operational points can be indicated by using a dashed rather than a solid circle
- All asset locations (threatened asset,

endangered flora etc) are marked using squares rather than diamonds

- Asset points are drawn in blue

While some symbols have changed, the new symbols are intuitive and easy to recognise and a number of new symbols (such as road closure and hotspot) are also available. The new symbology has been designed for computerised mapping and both ICON and MapDesk have been updated to accommodate the changes.

There is also a hand drawn version of all symbols.

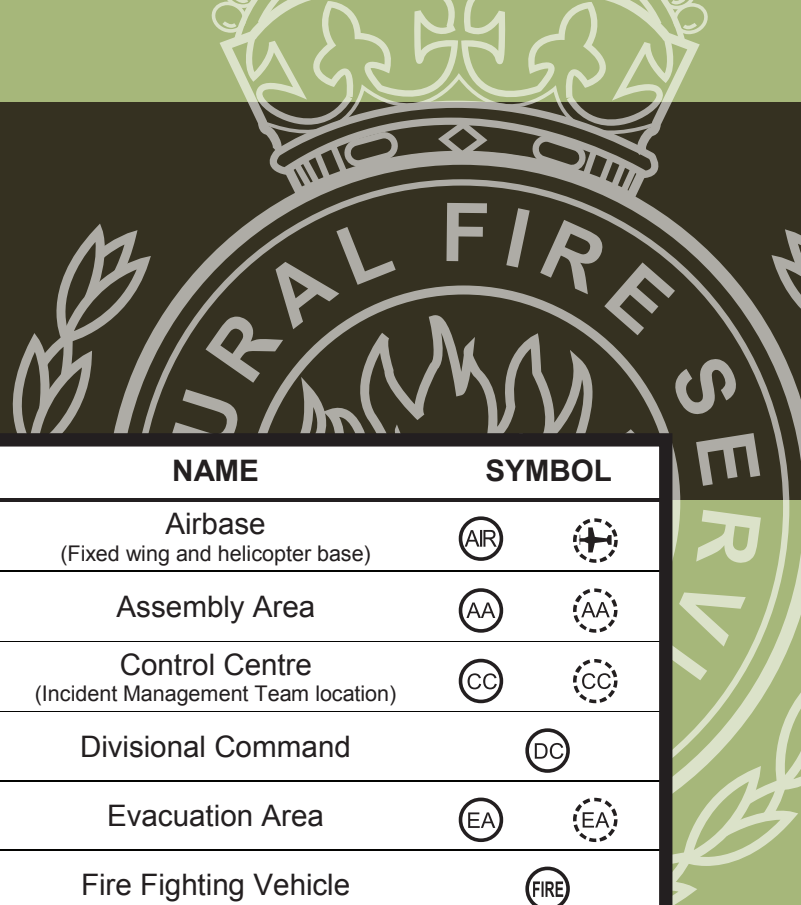
The updated Incident Management Procedure for Bush Fire Mapping Symbols and a sample incident map using the new symbology are included in the following pages and can be posted on the wall of your local brigade station. If you have any questions or would like further information, please email the NSW RFS GIS Support team at gis@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

Incident Management Procedures

6.08.01 Bush Fire Mapping Symbols

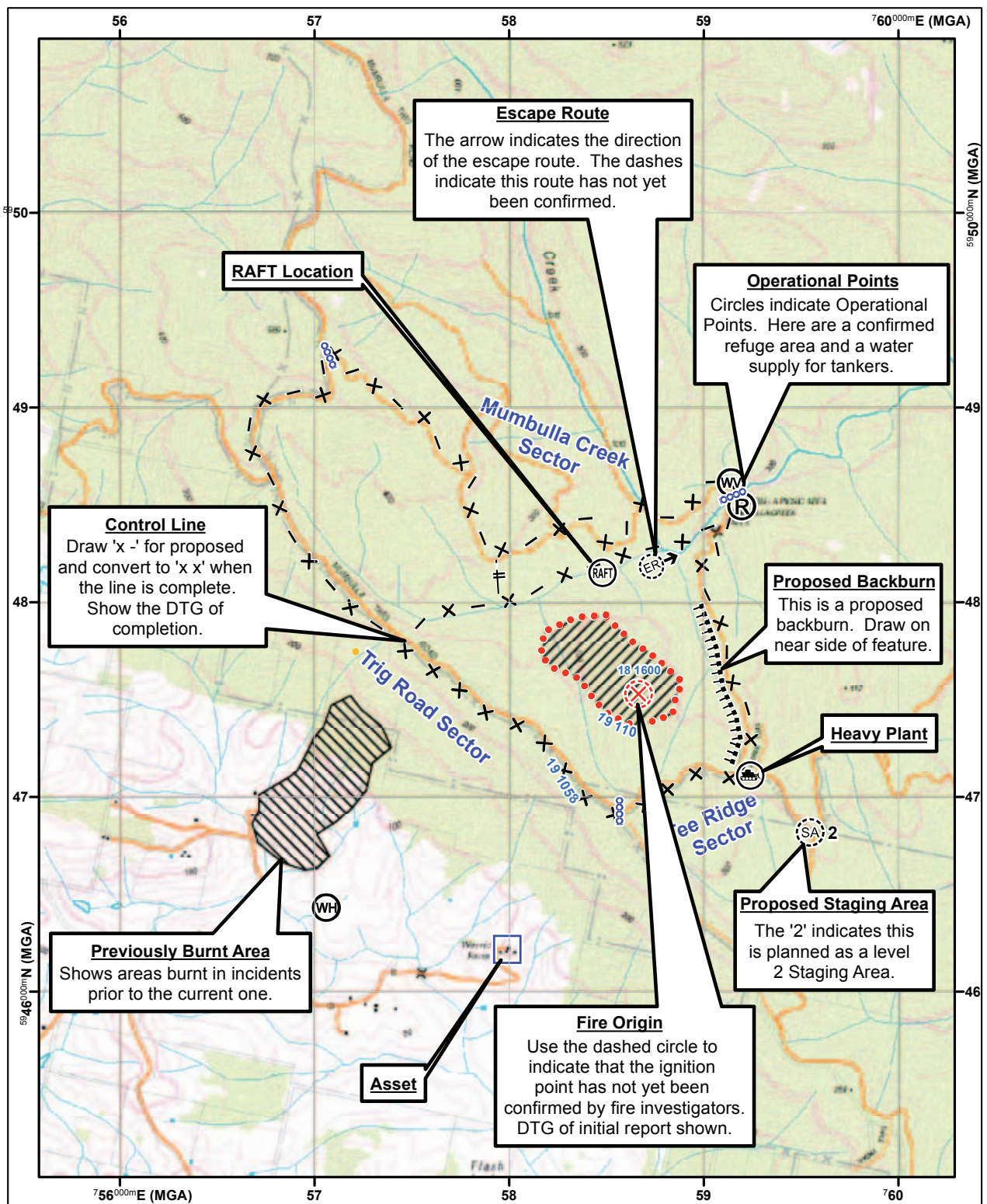
DTG refers to Date Time Group which uses the two digits for the date and 24 hour time, eg 10:51hrs on 4 November would be: 04 1051

NAME	SYMBOL	NOTES	
PREDICTED (fire edge)		Show DTG	
GOING (fire edge)		Show DTG	
CONTAINED (fire edge)		Show DTG	
INACTIVE (fire edge)		Show DTG	
EMERGENCY ALERT AREA		Show DTG	
PROPOSED CONTROL LINE	X—X—X—X—X—X—	Draw on far side of feature	
COMPLETED CONTROL LINE	X X X X X X X X X X	Show DTG	
PROPOSED BACKBURN		Draw on near side of feature	
COMPLETED BACKBURN		Show DTG	
BACKBURN BURNING IN		Use Burnt Area polygon to show progress at DTG	
TRACK		A pre-existing track not otherwise marked (ie farm tracks).	
MACHINE CUT TRACK		A track cut in by plant for the current incident.	
RED – FIRE	BLACK – OPERATIONS	BLUE – WRITING and ASSETS	
Operational	Proposed/ Unconfirmed	Assets	
NAME	COLOUR	SYMBOL	NOTES
Fire Origin (Unconfirmed)	Red		Show DTG
Fire Direction	Red		Show DTG
Wind Direction	Blue		Show DTG
Spot Fire	Red		Isolated fire ahead of main fire
Hot Spot	Red		Particularly active fire or smoldering fuels
Burnt Area	Black		Burnt area of current incident
Previously Burnt Area	Black		Show month and year
Aerial Ignition	Red		Proposed path to be treated. Complete circle when done.
Divisional Boundary	Blue		Use geographical names
Sector Boundary	Blue		Use alphabetical names



NAME	SYMBOL	NAME	SYMBOL
Access Point		Airbase (Fixed wing and helicopter base)	
Ambulance Location		Assembly Area	
Base Camp		Control Centre (Incident Management Team location)	
Control Point		Divisional Command	
Escape Route (Add arrow to show safe exit)		Evacuation Area	
Evacuation Centre		Fire Fighting Vehicle	
Helibase (Helicopter only base)		Helipad	
Hydrant Point		Livestock	
Medical		Mobile Weather Station	
Plant		Police Vehicle	
Portable Communications		Property Damage	
RAFT Crew		Refuge Area	
Road Closure		Sector Command	
SES Vehicle		Smoker On Ground	
Smoker Standing		Staging Area (Annotate with class of Staging Area)	
Tree Down		Water Point	
Water Point Helicopter (Helicopter water supply)		Water Point Vehicle (Firefighting water supply)	
Asset		Asset – Defendable	
Asset – Not Defendable		Asset – Potentially Defendable	
Threatened Asset		Asset – Flora	
Asset – Historic Site (Building or Structures)		Asset – Fauna	
Indigenous Site		Asset – Hazmat	

The use of colours is recommended but optional.



PRODUCTION INFORMATION		LEGEND		WARNING INFORMATION		KEY MAP	
<p>BEGA VALLEY</p> <p>Bush Fire Bulletin</p>	<p>Plot Information:</p> <p>Date: 19/11/2012</p> <p>Time: 11:49:53</p> <p>Fire Statistics:</p> <p>Burnt Area: 24 Ha</p> <p>Burnt Perimeter: 2 Km</p> <p>Map Details:</p> <p>Base Data: © LPI, SPOT, AAM, SKM, OEH, Sensis, Kattron</p> <p>Map Projection: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55</p> <p>Print Date / Time: 19/11/2012 11:26:05 AM</p> <p>Produced by: Darren Marks</p>	<p>◆ Fire Incident</p> <p>□ Asset</p> <p>FA Asset - Fauna</p> <p>FL Asset - Flora</p> <p>HS Asset - Historic</p> <p>IS Asset - Indigenous Site</p> <p>TA Asset - Threatened</p> <p>Divisional Boundary</p> <p>Fire Direction</p> <p>Suspected Fire Origin</p> <p>Hotspot</p>	<p>● Hydrant Point</p> <p>Ⓡ Refuge Area</p> <p>Ⓧ Sector Boundary</p> <p>Ⓢ Spot Fire</p> <p>Ⓜ Staging Area</p> <p>Ⓜ Water Point</p> <p>Ⓜ Helicopter Water Point</p> <p>Ⓜ Vehicle Water Point</p> <p>Ⓜ Aerial Ignition</p> <p>Ⓜ Backburn Line Completed</p> <p>Ⓜ Backburn Line Proposed</p> <p>Ⓜ Backburn Line</p>	<p>XX Control Line</p> <p>-X- Proposed Control Line</p> <p>● Fire Edge Contained</p> <p>● Fire Edge Going</p> <p>● Fire Edge Indirect</p> <p>● Fire Edge Predicted</p> <p>● Fire Edge Machine Cut</p> <p>Ⓜ Track</p> <p>Ⓜ Burnt Area</p> <p>Ⓜ Burning Backburn Line</p> <p>Ⓜ Previously Burnt Area</p> <p>Ⓜ Proposed Burnt Area</p>	<p>1. This map has been prepared by a NSW Government Agency ("the Agency") using data supplied to it by other agencies and entities.</p> <p>2. The Agency has not verified or checked the data used to prepare this map. The map may contain errors and omissions. The Agency has not made any attempt to ground truth the map.</p> <p>3. There will be a margin of error in relation to the location of features recorded on the map. The Agency is unable to quantify the extent or magnitude of that margin of error.</p> <p>4. Significant changes may have occurred:</p> <p>(i) in the time between which the data was originally collected and the map produced; and</p> <p>(ii) since the map was produced.</p> <p>5. Users must, wherever possible, ground truth the map before relying on it or the accuracy of the map or the information recorded on the map for any purpose.</p> <p>6. The Agency accepts no responsibility for any injury loss or damage arising from the use of this map or any errors or omissions in the information recorded on the map.</p>	<p>SCALE</p> <p>Scale: 1 : 25,000</p> <p>0 125 250 500</p> <p>Meters</p>	



Courage Under Fire Project

The initiative focussed on supporting the descendants of fallen firefighters was launched in May 2012 with a ceremony and morning tea held at the Kokoda Track Memorial in Rhodes.

A team of volunteers and staff initiated the Courage Under Fire project to honour those NSW RFS members who had given their lives while on duty. It also provides an opportunity for a small group of adult children or grandchildren of fallen or seriously injured NSW RFS firefighters to participate in walking the Kokoda Track - a site of significance for Australians.

The inaugural NSW RFS Courage Under Fire - RFS Kokoda Trek was held in April 2012. The RFS is the major partner along with ARA Group and Drager.

A total of 12 people took the Trek in April including three young people who are descendents of fallen firefighters. The three young members who participated in the inaugural Trek were: Kristian White, Sutherland District; Ben Nolan, Illawarra Zone and Ivan Moses, Far North Coast. A total of four staff and eight volunteers participated in the 2012 trek.

Ben Nolan

Age 17

Where do you live?
Oak Flats

What do you currently do?
I am in Year 12 at Oak Flats High School.

Interests Basketball, soccer, rugby league, NSW RFS and computers

Your link to this program

My grandfather is a former Captain of Oak Flats Brigade and is also a life member and has received the AFSM. He passed away at a fire call in 2003 when he had a heart attack.

Kristian White

Age 21

Where do you live?
Heathcote

What do you currently do?
I am a NSW Police Constable

Interests NSW RFS, skiing, recreational shooting, bushwalking and trekking

Your link to this program

I have been in the NSW RFS since the age of 14. My father is currently Captain of Heathcote Brigade. This brigade has seen two tragic accidents, in particular Grays Point in 1983 where Captain Keith Campbell and two crew were killed and six others were seriously injured. Keith's daughter, Sharon (who was one of those injured) is our closest family friend, I am walking in memory of her father.

Ivan Moses

Age 19

Where do you live?
Park Ridge, Queensland

What do you currently do?

I am a full time student studying Veterinary Science at the University of Queensland Gatton Campus.

Interests Camping and hiking, rugby, water sports (skiing and wakeboarding in particular) and surfing.

Your link to this program

My grandfather was fighting a fire with the NSW RFS on a property near Coolamon in the Central South West of NSW. The truck he was on was engulfed by flames and he was very badly burnt. His strength enabled him to survive for several weeks but he eventually succumbed to his injuries and died in Calvary Hospital in Wagga Wagga on 19 January 1965. He was 26 and left his pregnant wife, Mary, with two young children. He is greatly missed by his family and we are all proud of his sacrifice.

David Patton

Note: David is a self-funded participant due to age restrictions of the initiative.

Age 36

Where do you live?
Singleton

What do you currently do?

I am a Shot Firer, a farmer and a father of four.

Interests I enjoy taking the family camping, fishing and

going to Forster. I especially enjoy having a coffee with my wife Karen on the verandah overlooking the farm.

Your link to this program

I have been actively involved in the Service since I was born but attending fires since I was 15. My dad was the Captain of Scotts Flat Brigade and died while fighting a house fire in October 2004. I served in the Australian Army and it has always been a dream of mine to trek Kokoda, so for me trekking for fallen soldiers and my dad is something I was very proud to do.

Chief Superintendent John Parnaby initiated the project and also participated in the first Trek this year.

"The 2012 NSW RFS Courage Under Fire - RFS Kokoda Trek was a life-marking experience for the young participants," he said.

"The physical and emotional achievement of completing one of the world's toughest treks will remain with the young participants for many years, and it is through their actions that acknowledge and honour the sacrifice of our fallen firefighters in defence of our communities, that the link between the Kokoda Track and Courage Under Fire is strengthened."

"Courage, Endurance, Mateship and Sacrifice are the words that are inscribed on the Memorial at Isurava on the Kokoda Track, they typify what our volunteers stand for every time they answer the call. Sadly sometimes, some of our own don't come home.

"It's a true honour to be part of something so special as to remember our fallen."

Plans are in place to repeat the journey in 2013. To find out more about the 2013 journey please visit the Facebook page: 2012 NSW RFS Courage Under Fire Kokoda Trek.

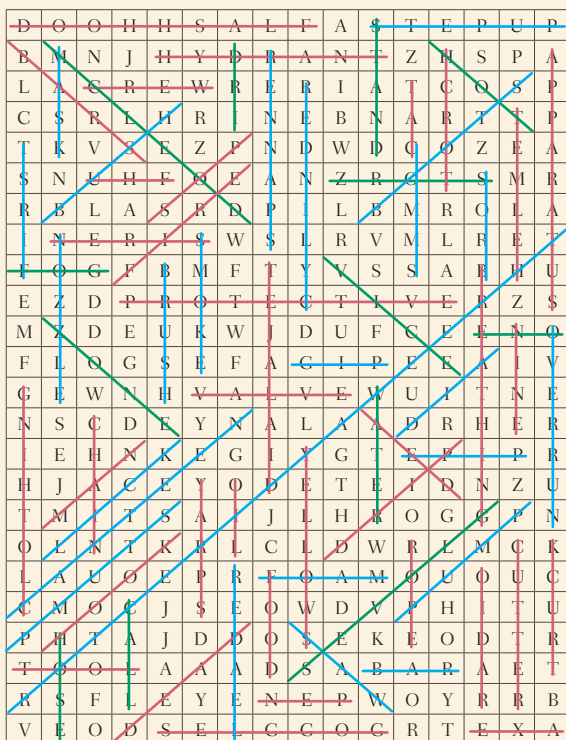
ABOVE: Kokoda trek participants David Patton, Ivan Moses, Kristian White and Ben Nolan. Photo by Paul Sweeney/Jason Heffernan

Subscribe to the new ebulletin



Get the latest news for all members

To subscribe visit MyRFS www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au



Now, where is that equipment?

Page 54 Wordsearch results



Bush fire workshops for the urban setting

Preparing for Fire is a new series of workshops being held in conjunction with the Nature Conservation Council of NSW where residents on the urban fringe learn more about protecting themselves, their environment and their suburb from bush fire.

Similar to the Hotspots workshops, but held in an urban setting, the Preparing for Fire workshops bring the local fire and land management agency representatives together with residents in the one setting.

Four workshops were held in the first half of 2012. These were at Killingworth in the Lake Macquarie region, Cowan and Westleigh in the Hornsby area, and Waterfall in the Sutherland Shire. Each workshop was held on a Saturday morning, followed by a barbecue prepared by local NSW RFS brigade members. So far, 112 community members have attended the four workshops.

The workshops are organised and facilitated by Dr Anne Miehs and Greg Banks from the NCC's Bushfire Management Program in partnership with the local NSW RFS and local land managers.

The workshop begins at the local brigade station. Officers from the local RFS Fire Control Centre and senior brigade members use maps from the local Bush Fire Risk Management Plan to describe the area and articulate the bush fire risk of the area. Adjacent bushland areas are discussed including how they are managed for fire and their fire history.

Workshop participants head out to field sites to further explore their own area and learn about the risk of fire in the area, fire history, likely fire behaviour including the influence of weather and topography, fuel loads, and the prescribed burn program for the area. The field sites are chosen to enable as many aspects of fire behaviour and impacts on properties to be investigated. Vegetation, slope and separation distances are assessed in relation to specific houses. Led by NSW

RFS officers, consideration is given to the likely impact from flames, radiant heat and ember attack. Aspects of properties that affect fire ignition, such as dwelling construction, entry points, decking, property maintenance, and vegetation and available fuel are identified and discussed. Emphasis is placed on the value of maintaining Asset Protection Zones immediately around houses. Basic fire ecology is also explored, looking at the vegetation type, main plant species and the impacts of fire on plants and animals.

The planning behind prescribed burns often surprises workshop participants.

"There's a myriad of different things you've got to look at," said one Westleigh resident. The technology or the science that went with it was quite impressive."

The cooperative interaction between officers from the NSW RFS, NCC and other agency representatives is also an eye-opener for participants. Many are unaware that these officers meet on a regular basis at Bush Fire Management Committees and are in close contact about fire management in their areas.

"It was interesting that the fires and everyone agreed with each other," said one Killingworth resident, "Usually you get your conservationist people that don't agree with the fires but all the people from the agencies more or less agreed with each other."

While community safety is paramount, managing risk to life and property need not be exclusive to good biodiversity outcomes, especially since householders living in peri-urban areas are often attracted

to these places because of the natural lifestyle and amenity on offer.

Tying it all together is the strong social research component of the workshops. Post workshop interviews provide further information on participant attitudes. The Institute of Sustainable Futures and NCC is currently evaluating the effectiveness of engagement processes on how community behaviour and attitudes about bush fire preparation and biodiversity conservation are influenced.

If you think a community in your area would benefit from a 'Preparing for Fire' workshop, contact Anne Miehs via email at amiehs@nccnsw.org.au or ring (02) 9516 1488 to discuss.



Maps are used to identify the risk allocated to the workshop area. Photo by Anne Miehs

And the winners are ...

The 2012 World Firefighters Games were held in Sydney from 19-28 October 2012. While more than 55 countries were represented in the friendly Games, Australia topped the medal tally. Team NSW RFS won an impressive 69 medals for Australia after competing in 40 events, including 35 Gold, 17 Silver and 17 Bronze.

The 2012 World Firefighters Games (WFG), similar to the Olympics, showcased over 70 individual and team events, including World's Toughest Firefighter, dodgeball, disaster challenge, surf lifesaving, poker, golf, fire truck challenge, tug-of-war and paintball.

The biennial Games have been hosted in countries across the globe and this year, with the Games so close to home, we were able to build a large representation from the NSW RFS.

Registrations were open to staff, volunteers and direct family members and over 80 members were part of Team NSW RFS. Many members also participated in a volunteer capacity helping with registrations, information, and photography.

The Service members do us proud

Sally Hatcher (Yarramundi) won a whopping 14 Gold medals in the Swimming events and Annie Gleason (Kenthurst) cleaned up at the Golf winning Gold, Silver and Bronze as well as a Silver medal in the Squash. Laurence McCoy (HQ) won Gold in the Open Water Swimming and Jim Loveridge (Horsley Park) won Bronze for the Disaster Challenge. Hans Rothe (Llandilo) won Silver and Craig O'Neill (Kariang) won two Gold medals for Judo.

Jody Preston (Wallacia) took out the Gold medal in the Fire Truck Challenge and Paula Neill (Chifley) won Bronze in the Firehouse Cook Off. Rudy Sicha (Limeburners Creek) won Gold in the Archery and Jeremy Clegg (Kenthurst) took out the



TOP: Team NSW RFS representing Australia in the WFG Participants Parade. Photo by Philippa Baume

ABOVE: Brodie Rafferty, Stewart Stephens (CFA Victoria), Luke Catorall and Susannah Bilous won the Silver medal in the Amazing Race team competition. Photo provided by Susannah Bilous

LEFT: Members of the Davidson Brigade who competed in the World's Toughest Firefighter. (L-R): Darryl Pearson, Trent Dowling, Tony Abbott, Tim Eliot. Photo by Dan Meijer



ABOVE: Competitors Jonathon Tan, Tony Longa and Simon Heemstra at the WFG Opening Ceremony. Photo by Phillippa Baume

LEFT: The Dragon Boat team, featuring NSW RFS members from Cobbity, Camden West and Valley Heights won Gold. Photo provided by Sue Hackett

RIGHT: Stewart Temesvary won Silver and Jody Preston won Gold in the Fire Truck Challenge. Photo provided by Cassandra Semken.

Winning for a mate

Jody Preston, Captain of Wallacia Brigade, found out about the WFG on MyRFS. He drives B Doubles for a living so he thought he'd give the Fire Truck Challenge a go.

"It was a timed event," he said, "involving driving and reversing through a tight course marked out by witches' hats."

His strategy was to go relatively fast through the course and risk a couple of time penalties for hitting the hats. It obviously paid off because he ended up winning Gold using the FRNSW truck and Stewart Temesvary (Valley Heights) won Silver!

When Jody found out he'd won he said, "You're joking". Incredibly, the night of the truck challenge, Jody responded to a Duffys Forest fire until 3am and a couple of hours later he competed in the gruelling Stair Climb event in full PPE. A major test of stamina!

Jody has dedicated his Gold medal to Phil Fisher, who was the Captain at Wallacia Brigade when he joined, and who passed away earlier this year. Phil encouraged Jody to get a truck licence and showed him how to drive. Truck driving ended up becoming his career and now he's the WFG Gold medalist.

Bronze in the Indoor Volleyball in a combined NSW RFS / FRNSW team. Jonathon Tan (HQ) won Gold for the Power Lifting where he lifted a total of 345kg in his weight range and Ezra Zuydam (Austral) won Gold for the Arm Wrestling.

The Service cleaned up at the Trap Shooting with Glen Castellaro (MIA) winning three Golds and a Silver in his age division plus the World Firefighters Games Title (High Gun) for the best overall score for the day. Charles Anderson (MIA) also won four Golds in the Trap Shooting in his age division and Peter Lynes (Illawarra) won one Gold, two Silver and a Bronze. Peter also won four Bronze medals in the Skeet Shooting.

Susannah Bilous (HQ), Brodie Rafferty (HQ) and Luke Catorall (HQ), along with Stewart Stephens (CFA Victoria) won the Silver medal in a close finish in the Amazing Race team event. Sue Hackett (Cobbity) won Gold in the Rolle Bolle, an

event that replaced day one of the Horseshoe Throwing. Chris Bowser, Sue and Ben Hackett and Owen McCague also won Bronze for the Bucket Brigade in their Team Cobbity.

Valley Heights Brigade members, in their flame t-shirts, won an impressive 16 medals. These included Gold in the Dragon Boat with Cobbity and Camden West Brigades, Silver in the Fire Truck Challenge for Stewart Temesvary, and six medals for Bert Clarke and two Silver medals for Bec Price in the Swimming. In the Team Orienteering Andrew Galea and Matt White took out Gold and Stephen Price took out Bronze in Individual Orienteering.

In the Track and Field, Brent King (Tamworth) won Silver for the Triple Jump and Bronze for the Javelin and Simon Herring (Loftus) won Silver in the Triathlon. Julia Sercombe (Blaxland Ridge) won Silver and Mark Williams (Shoalhaven Heads) won Bronze in the Cycling Road Race. Julia also

won Silver in the 8km Cross Country Run. Tony Longa (HQ) won Silver and Brodie Rafferty (HQ) won Gold in the Stair Climb event for running up an impressive 84 levels of Centrepoint Tower!

A full results listing is available on the WFG website: <http://www.worldfirefightersgames.com.au/results/>.

Some great WFG photos capturing the events can be found on the NSW RFS Flickr page: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/nswrfs/sets/72157631854216245/> and the WFG Flickr page: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/88730361@N06/sets/>.

Kyle Parker from Davidson Brigade also competed in a couple of events and was a volunteer photographer for the Games. His photos can be viewed at: <http://photos.liveitseeit.com/FireEvents>

Open Day 2012

By Melissa Baker, Fire Awareness & Promotions Officer

Another successful NSW RFS Open Day was held around NSW on Saturday 22 September with over 300 brigades participating. Another 50 brigades will hold their Open Day event on an alternate date.

We'd like to thank all of our dedicated members for their contribution to this important NSW RFS event. Community events such as Open Day take a lot of planning and hard work and your efforts are greatly appreciated.

Open Day is a great opportunity to showcase what the Service does and the important role our brigades and volunteers play in NSW communities. It's also an excellent opportunity for members to meet their community and help people understand how they can prepare themselves, their families and their homes for the very real threat of bush fire.

Open Day is also about having some fun, and with the fantastic weather attracting crowds to stations right across the State, brigades hosted an array of activities including interactive fire awareness displays, Bush Fire Survival Plan advice to individuals and groups and equipment demonstrations. Of course there was plenty of really fun activities for the kids with face painters, jumping castles and hose and truck activities taking over many station forecourts!

Many brigades like to use Open Day as an opportunity to invite new people to consider becoming members, which is a good way to plan for the future and help expand the knowledge and capability of the Service.

The Community Engagement Team ran an Open Day photograph competition again this year, for all members participating in Open Day, to capture photographs of their brigade engaging with the community.

We received some fabulous submissions for this year's competition from across the

State, with a difficult choice in choosing the winning photographs.

Congratulations to the winners

1st	Danielle Edwards	Kurnell Brigade, Sutherland District
2nd	Mark Compton	Penrose Brigade, Southern Highlands Team
3rd	Jenny Baker	Parkes Headquarters, Mid Lachlan Valley Team

The winning photos are shown on the opposite page.

Murrumbateman Rural Fire Brigade - Southern Tablelands Zone, Region South

Murrumbateman Rural Fire Brigade held an extremely

successful Open Day this year with over 500 people coming through the station doors – and that was 10 times the number welcomed in previous years.

So what did they do differently this year?

The brigade is sure that the success of their Open Day was a combination of factors including simplifying the promotion to "Fire Station Open Day", as well as undertaking a letterbox drop one month prior to Open Day, utilising variable messaging boards in the two weeks leading up to Open Day, advertising on local radio stations and in local petrol stations (above the petrol bowzers), as well as using the brigade's Facebook page — which proved to be very powerful advertising tool.

Murrumbateman, held various demonstration events throughout the day, including tanker overrun with the activation of the sprinkler system, the dangers of using water with an oil fire and fire extinguisher and portable

pump demonstrations. The brigade also used a PA system throughout the day to announce when demonstrations were taking place, which encouraged attendance and participation.

Various lucky door prizes (donated by local businesses) were given out throughout the day. The prizes were all fire related items — such as chainsaws and skip bin hire — reminding the prize winners to prepare their homes for the upcoming fire season.

Clarence Town - Lower Hunter Team, Region East

Open Day at Clarence Town Brigade was a big success, with close to 200 people attending. They had a static display offering safety advice and information and held various interactive demonstrations throughout the day such as, what happens when water is thrown on a fat fire, how to smother fire with water and how to correctly use a fire blanket. As always, the interactive demonstrations went down very well with the crowd.



Pheasants Nest Brigade preparing for Open Day.

Open Day Photo Competition winners

Clarence Town Brigade decided to focus on holiday fire safety this year, with many of the visitors coming from nearby camping grounds. The fact sheets given out on the day were very well received and the brigade received some really positive feedback

The Brigade also had a surprise in store, when it presented a children's bike to one lucky winner!

Bourke Headquarters - Barwon Darling Zone, Region West

Bourke Headquarters Brigade was joined by Enngonia and Yantabulla Brigades who pooled resources and hosted a very successful joint emergency services Open Day event with NSW Police Force, NSW State Emergency Service, Fire & Rescue NSW and NSW Ambulance as part of the Enngonia Field Day.

Over 1,500 people came along for the Field Day including a number of farmers from as far away as North West Queensland. The brigades engaged well with the crowd handing out fact sheets and Bush Fire Survival Plans. The day was a resounding success with a lot of interactive involvement from the farmers, a static information display, bookings for property protection inspections and the ever-popular sausage sizzle.



The Winner: Kurnell Brigade, Sutherland District. Photo by Danielle Edwards
Brigade Captain David Hinshelwood shows local Lucas Edwards how to hold the hose. The look on Lucas' face says it all.



Second: Penrose Brigade, Southern Highlands Team. Photo by Mark Compton
Captain Dale Chalmers, Senior Deputy Captain Col Pyne and Heather Pyne are seen here enjoying a cuppa with local residents while discussing Bush Fire Survival Plans for the coming season



Third: Parkes Headquarters, Mid Lachlan Valley. Photo by Jenny Baker
Captain Scott Baker allowing young Caitlin to use the hose at the Open Day



Inspiration and connection for community engagers

By Tanyia Tuckey, Manager Community Engagement.
Photos by Melissa Baker, Fire Awareness & Promotions Officer

June 2012 saw the 16th annual Australian Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Conference. Nearly 450 people, including more than 200 volunteers from across the State, attended the conference hosted at the Novotel in Wollongong.

We were lucky enough to have inspirational speakers such as Celeste Geer, the Director and Producer of *Then the Wind Changed*, a documentary about the 2009 Black Saturday bush fires in Victoria. Celeste is a resident of Strathewan, one of the communities devastated by the 2009 fires. Celeste's insight into how she was prompted to leave early on the day of the fires was thought provoking and heartfelt. Based on the written feedback, Celeste's interview with Lew Short was regarded as the best presentation of the conference.

Frances Crown and Carolyn Chaplin from the Southern Highlands talked about their award winning Canyonleigh Women's Fire Awareness Program. Focus on the development of programs targeting women is growing, and Fiona Dunstan from the South Australian Country Fire Service also spoke on this topic. Her talk 'Why engage women in bush fire safety' focussed on another award winning initiative.

The conference's final keynote speaker was very well received and a brilliant way to close the conference. Dr Bob Murray talked about 'Getting anybody to listen to you and persuading them to do what you say'. There were a lot of nodding heads in the audience and also lots of laughter!

The workshop sessions also proved popular with participants contributing to research on whether communities could reduce house loss, suggesting how volunteers could be involved in the development of Community Protection Plans, and getting their heads around the Community Engagement Spectrum.

It was also interesting to see the various methods currently being used to engage communities and the variety of groups we are targeting. Aside from women, the NSW RFS is addressing how to reach other communities such as those already established, children, Aboriginal communities, online communities and groups 'at risk'.

We also examined some initiatives from overseas to see what they're doing.

A few sessions looked into the science of fires, and addressed how we could use science to engage the community and help them understand their risk. There were a number of sessions that addressed getting all brigade members involved in community engagement.

It was very rewarding to see a number of contributors from universities and other agencies, including NSW Police Force, the NSW State Emergency Service, Fire & Rescue NSW, Australian Red Cross and fire services in the ACT, Tasmania and South Australia.

After all the hard work, delegates relaxed and enjoyed a few drinks and nibbles at the welcome reception, where conference sponsors were thanked for their contribution and support. The Fright Night dinner led to an impressive array of costumes, with the parade of contenders for prizes being a highlight of the evening.



OPPOSITE: Collecting the awards for the inaugural Community Engagement Program Awards (L-R) Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers, Phil Rook for the Otford Brigade, Bill Duncan, Kenthurst Brigade, Glenn O'Rourke and Tony Hawkins, Wollombi Brigade and David Stimson for Canyonleigh Brigade

ABOVE: Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers opened the 16th Community Engagement Conference in Wollongong

ABOVE RIGHT: Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers and Srisutha Suntharesan from Ausgrid, with winners of the Ausgrid cooler bag competition

The presentations from the conference are available on MyRFS and the NSW RFS online library catalogue (find this at http://publiclibrary.rfs.nsw.gov.au/public_home.htm)

Award winners

This year the Service introduced the Community Engagement Program Awards, which were presented at the Conference. In particular the following brigades should be acknowledged and congratulated for the outstanding work they are doing in their communities:

- Kenthurst Brigade
- Canyonleigh Brigade
- Wollombi Brigade
- Otford Brigade

Kenthurst Brigade's Community Inclusion Program encourages the community to take responsibility for their own preparedness. A letterbox drop is used to promote their workshop that covers fire behaviour, preparing your property and the Bush Fire Survival Plan. It also includes

a site visit to look at a well-prepared home and a hands-on session of how to use pumps and hoses. The program features live demonstrations so that participants can experience radiant heat and practice techniques to put out fires. The brigade has produced a DVD and shares their program with other brigades.

Canyonleigh Brigade's Women's Bush Fire Awareness Program encourages all brigade members to contribute to the program which has been running successfully for a number of years. Workshops address fire behaviour, preparing yourself and your property as well as hands on training – followed by property assessments in the months after the program. The workshops are effective due to their hands-on nature with participants taking part in activities under stress such as loud noises, time pressure, heat and darkness. These are designed to simulate making a decision when there is a fire. This multi-award winning

program transfers skills to the community, with an emphasis on warmth, welcome and follow-up with participants.

Wollombi Brigade's Community Preparedness Program consists of workshops (including one for women only) followed up by a Firewise Cafe, where participants are introduced to the risks of bush fire, the importance of preparing a Bush Fire Survival Plan and what they need to consider when deciding whether to Leave Early or Stay and Defend. Follow-up surveys demonstrated that 94 percent of attendees completed a Bush Fire Survival Plan or felt they had sufficient knowledge to complete one following the workshop.

A core feature of the program is robust planning and adaptation to local needs. The brigade strongly supports shared learnings and the program contains a strong element of evaluation. The Wollombi Brigade won a Resilient Australia Award and you can read more about this on page 7.

Otford Brigade's Urban Interface Program is cleverly marketed as pre-incident planning. The whole brigade is involved in the program which includes bowling hoses, intelligence gathering and community engagement. This program helps improve the brigade's knowledge of property access and defendability. This is an ongoing program for the Otford Brigade who plan to visit the majority of properties in the area. Residents are encouraged to take responsibility for their own property, complete a Bush Fire Survival Plan and ensure their property has suitable access for fire crews. This program has been shared with other brigades and improves brigade familiarisation with the area.

PostScript: We were thrilled to hear that in late November, Celeste Geer won the 2012 Walkley Documentary Award for Then the Wind Changed.

myrfs

A new way to share and connect

Update

It's been a big job building the new MyRFS for volunteers and the site is improving every day.

The new MyRFS has been built from the ground-up, following extensive consultation with volunteers about the tools needed to perform their roles, manage brigades and stay up to date.

New brigade management tools

One of the biggest features of the new MyRFS is also one of the most requested by volunteers – tools which can help manage brigades.

Captains, Secretaries and other brigade management roles have the ability to view and update a range of information about their members including their contact details, brigade roles and voting rights within the brigade.

Brigades can also post news and documents for their brigade members on MyRFS, as well as upload their brigade constitution and any brigade rules.

The new MyRFS also provides tools to help brigades keep track of activities members have participated in. This allows members to easily see what they have done throughout the year, from attending training and maintenance, to community events and allows brigades to keep a record of this information in one spot.

Another new feature frequently requested by brigades is the ability for brigade members to be able to indicate their availability to attend an incident or activity. This module can be used in a variety of ways depending on the needs of the

brigade. For example some brigades may choose to use it for day-to-day availability, while others may only use it during severe fire weather or during holiday periods.

New ways to stay connected

As well as providing a range of tools for brigades the new MyRFS also includes a range of useful communication tools. Districts are now able to post news and documents to their members, and are also able to post news to only a particular subgroup of members, such as Captains or Group Officers.

The new MyRFS also includes a range of social tools including a members' forum and the ability for members to post comments on news articles.

Improving MyRFS for all members

Building the new MyRFS has been a big job. Like any major new release like this, a number of issues and enhancement requests have been identified by MyRFS users. The MyRFS team has been actively working to resolve these issues and work on improvements to MyRFS based on feedback from our users. This includes the following changes made over the past few months.

Password expiry period extended: Based on user feedback password expiry has now been extended to six months, which means you will only need to change your password twice a year.

We have also updated the information on the password expiry page to provide simpler reset instructions.

Search function enhancements: Significant enhancements have been made to the search function to make it more user-friendly and easy to use.

eLearning portal: The eLearning portal is now available within MyRFS in the training centre and members are able to complete the Safety Induction and Volunteer Induction online.

Brigade management roles being able to view the callouts of their members: Brigade Captains, Secretaries and any member with a Brigade Management Team role are now able to view the callouts attended by members of their brigade by using the 'member callouts' tool in the My Tools menu.

Calendar enhancements: Enhancements have been made to the Calendar feature so that users can click on the title of an event to get more detailed information about it and can also download the event into their Outlook calendar.

Site speed: Major enhancements have been made to increase the speed of MyRFS, which has significantly decreased the page load time for users.

Brigade news and documents: All Captains, Secretaries and brigade MyRFS

administrators can now add news and documents for their brigade to MyRFS.

Service Standards being difficult to navigate: The Service Standards have been categorised to make them easier to find and use.

Group Captain and Brigade reports: Based on feedback from members the first set of reports for Group Captains and brigades has been released, allowing Group Captains and brigade management roles to run a range of reports on their members.

Attendance and availability updates: A number of fixes and enhancements have been made to the brigade attendance and brigade availability modules to make them easy to use for members.

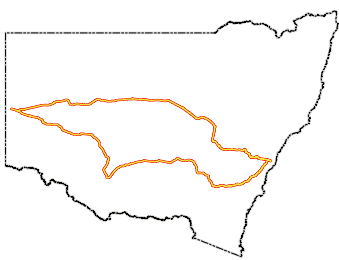
We are also currently focussed on resolving an issue which prevents access to MyRFS for some Group Captains or people who are members of several brigades and have a particularly large number of roles against their name. While we work to permanently resolve this issue, users who are impacted by this can gain access to the site by contacting MyRFS support.

Jump online and try the new MyRFS today. If you need a login, contact your local District office or email the MyRFS team at myrfs@rfs.nsw.gov.au.



Watching grass grow

When the volunteers in Broken Hill were asked what they needed for the upcoming grassfire season, it set off a whole chain of events....



ABOVE: The route taken by the 13 members from Region East on the Region West Familiarisation Tour in August

Consulting with volunteers in face-to-face meetings known as Regional Forums has been a focus for the NSW RFS Executive in 2012. It is a project initiated by the Commissioner where members of the Executive travel around NSW to meet with volunteers ensuring they are updated about current changes in the Service as well as the opportunity to provide feedback and input.

Since March 2012, Assistant Commissioner Dominic Lane travelled the State attending 38 Regional Forums from Glenn Innes to Coonabarabran to Bourke and south to Deniliquin meeting with around 1,200 volunteers. When Assistant Commissioner Lane met with the volunteers in Broken Hill he asked them what they needed for the upcoming fire season.

The idea of a Region West Familiarisation Tour was raised. Volunteers in Broken Hill said that a visit from volunteers from the east of the State before the fire season would allow them to get familiar with the landscape, learn more about grassfire behavior in the area, meet the locals, hear about the history of the areas and to see how brigades in the region go about their work.

With the support of the Commissioner, the Region West office set to work to organise the Region West Familiarisation Tour. An Expression of Interest was issued and around 13 volunteers from the Region East set out on the first tour in early August.

Brigades in Region West also took up the idea quickly arranging meetings, presentations and tours of the local area not to mention the afternoon tea and cakes. Region West Manager Paul Smith was very pleased with the results.

"I was very impressed with the response from the locals," he said, "The discussions between the two groups were terrific. Once the ice was broken the discussions were very productive."

The bus of Region East volunteers set out from NSW RFS Headquarters on Monday 13 August and returned four days later. The crew had 13 stops over the four days spending time with local volunteers and staff and getting hands-on knowledge of the potential fire threat posed by the massive grass and bush fuel loads across Region West.

Due to the success of this first Tour eight volunteers and three staff set out on a second tour this time to the north west of the State.

The focus of this trip was to again allow members to gain an appreciation of the heavy grass fuel loads in the mid north western parts of the State. A feature of this second tour was to also assist some flood-affected property owners with removing debris from fences, re-setting fences and removing old ones.

Crews from both tours returned home with a different perspective on how the NSW RFS operates and saw with their own eyes the condition likely to be experienced in the western part of the State in the coming fire season.

"One of the other great results of the Tours was a plan for volunteers in Region West to return the favour," Paul Smith said, "The terrain is much more mountainous in the east of the State and there is lot for our western volunteers to learn about fighting fires in that environment as well."

A diary of the Western Tour

Group Captain Grahame Fothergill, AFSM from the Illawarra Zone was on the first Region West Familiarisation Tour. He kept road notes and excerpts of these are included here.

Monday 13 August 2012



YOUNG: We set off from NSW RFS Headquarters and arrive in Young in time for lunch and discussion with locals. Discussed the importance of getting our heads around local issues and practices.

Departed for West Wyalong and I am already noticing roadside growth is probably an issue. There hasn't been a significant fire season here since 1970s.

WEST WYALONG: We had an excellent discussion with Group Captain Lindsay Hendley. He said the local timber country has grassed up this year. Timbered areas usually help to slow fires when bare ground is underneath, but this year there is thick grass below the trees. He warned

about Umbrella Grass. It tends to blow around easily and can be difficult to deal with in fire conditions.

Fire events are typically six to eight hours in duration with high intensity and a total duration of two to three days. Fire weather days mean high temperatures and high winds. This year with high fuel loads, expect 10 metre flame height and a rate of travel around 35-40kph.

"We need to work as one team when working with farmer based brigades," he said, "Accept that the culture may not be the same as what you are used to, but you will need them on your side just as much as they need you."

Tuesday 14 August

HAY: Over breakfast at Hay Fire Control Centre we learn about what it's like for Mid West Zone brigades.

Brigades might not visit Fire Control Centre for extended periods of time we are told, but when fires start, brigades pull together really well. Contact with brigades is predominately by newsletter or email. Staff make road trips to visit brigades personally.

Classroom type training has always been difficult but online training is being taken up more and more. There is more interest in training now than in the past.

Coordination at fires is an issue as is familiarisation with the newCat 1's for members in outlying areas.

Communications: Some captains have PMR in their personal vehicles. District is looking to get more Command Vehicles. Headquarters Brigade has pagers but other brigades are activated by phone, mobile phone, and or SMS messaging. "Works well for us."



IVANHOE: Great communication with locals over a pie and cake! I could have talked all day.

The region is mostly Crown Land leased by farmers on 99-year lease arrangements. Ivanhoe Group Captain



said he had one truck and one Cat 9. He covers 50 leases and leases are probably 50 kilometres square! There used to be families on each lease, now they would be lucky to have 25 occupied.

Brigades have hardware trucks etc, but generally gear such as graders, tractors and slip-ons is supplied by members off the farm. The main fire control is by heavy plant.

Training: Little or no formal training happens this far out in the main.

Set off from Ivanhoe with many handshakes and gestures of goodwill. I think this tour is really showing its worth.

We head out for Menindee with around 200 kilometres of dirt road ahead of us. We check out the grass growth on the side of the road.

MENINDEE: Arrived at Menindee and have a good constructive discussion with all locals. Another spectacular layout of sandwiches and cakes.

One Groupie, Terry Smith tells us he looks after five million hectares. He has one slip on and a few other machines plus 15 active people to call on.

Fire season starts October: Dry Lightning storms are the biggest concern. The north west wind behind fires will often turn to southerly. This is the pattern.



Wednesday 15 August

BROKEN HILL AND SILVERTON:

Sobering fact: The Far West has one firefighter per 206 square kilometres.

This is Mad Max Country.

The town of Silverton has a population of 45 and the brigade has 42 members.

The town invited the NSW RFS out to Silverton to reinvigorate the brigade – it has been strong ever since. Remote as they are, they look after the township as well as some big country. They have two Cat 1s and a Cat 9. Workload is whatever comes along – they just deal with it.

One Cat 1 is located over the border in South Australia at a little town called Cockburn – borders don't mean anything out here.

Am impressed with level of training at this station. Members give a big rap for Learning and Development Officer, Bill Britt.

As we head for Wilcannia I notice the vegetation changes as we have travel. Interesting variations in different areas, grasses are now sharing with low to medium scrub trees. The scrub has a



high oil content. When fire in grass gets this type of scrub heated, the fire will run across the tops creating rapid spread.

WILCANNIA: Quick tour around Wilcannia, particularly around the aboriginal housing areas. Looked at fire trails put in to the west of town as APZ. The local captain is John Pineo who is also an Aboriginal Elder. Brigade have two Cat 1s and around 10 members. 800 residents in total.

EMMDALE ROADHOUSE: Great coffee, soup and sandwiches. Spoke with locals extensively. Far West Team covers 200,000 square kms.

Group Captain Rick Howard looks after around 35,000 square kms – north to the Queensland border and west to the South

Australian border. Has 11 zone captains – everything is relative here.

In 1976 there was a fire on Narraport Property which was mainly prime spear grass at the time. 80,000 acres (32,300ha) turned black in 40 minutes!

Rick talked about many grasses and trees in the area. White grass on roadside is Fairy Grass (common name). Currently 90 percent cured. Buffle Grass was just one that I managed to write down. This was introduced from South Africa. Thought it might be good feed. Turns out it has little nutritional value for stock, but it burns really well!!



Thursday 16 August

COBAR: Country here has more vegetation above ground level. An older local, Ken Evans has a lot of local knowledge to share with us. Ken's first fire was in 1947. "Back then you just grabbed a Box Sucker and got into it."

He said that problem is new people coming onto properties that don't have the historical local knowledge. "Lessons will be learned the hard way," he said, "Their first major fire will do that."

Mines are in NSW RFS footprint so they work closely with Service and other services.

The pattern remains the same: protection from the west-north west is the key for town and village protection. Cobar is ringed with a series of fire trail networks extending outwards from town. Vehicles are placed all around area.



NYNGAN: The Nyngan FCC covers 60,000 square kms of area. This year many successful hazard reductions have been completed. Strategically located appliances, strategically placed bulk water and radio checks are happening.

They have also brought in Cluster Training Days. This is where three or four brigades meet up to attend training together such as familiarisation with tankers.

NARROMINE: When we arrived in hazard reduction was in progress. Laurie Douglas (Operations Officer at Orana Team), spoke to the group in some depth.

He showed that one side of the rail line that was burnt two months ago and looked at the regrowth that has already shot up. This burn today was on the other side of the line. Burn moved at brisk walking pace and self-extinguished within about two minutes. Minimal mop up required.



Friday 17 August

DUBBO: Good chat and presentation of all things Canobolas. Dubbo and surrounds have a variety of flat grasslands, undulating topography, pine forests, scrub areas and range country somewhat more heavily timbered. The Zone covers 13,500 square kms – give or take. There are 80 brigades.

I was impressed with the explanation of the Canobolas Bush Fire Risk Management Plan presentation.

Noticed quite a few differences in this area to the Far West. One is the 'quick kill' policy in this zone. Holdings are smaller and population is greater. Water is used more directly whereas in the Far West most firefighting is done with graders, drip torch and other heavy plant.

On reflection

I would like to think that we have pushed over a few barriers with this visit. The members are very passionate about the west and far west. The volunteers and farmers we met seemed really happy for us to come into the west to give them a hand.

It was a big area to cover and I would have loved to have more time in each area to talk to locals in more depth. It was definitely a worthwhile trip, I learned heaps and only scratched the surface.

PLANNING TO MAKE A PLAN IS NOT A PLAN.

COMPLETE YOUR **BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLAN** NOW.



PREPARE.

ACT.

SURVIVE.

RFS.NSW.GOV.AU



1800 679 737

New ground for the Cadet Program

By Rebecca Phillips, Chifley/Lithgow Team

Volunteers in the Bathurst area made history this year by holding the first Secondary School Cadet Program at a Special School.

Carenne School offered the Cadet Program to 10 students from Years 11 and 12. The students have been enthusiastically learning hose rolling and bowling, pumping, how to use hand tools, hydrant and extinguisher use and tanker familiarisation. The group also visited the local Fire & Rescue NSW station and NSW SES unit to explore the relationship between the services and learn a little bit about some of the different equipment they use.

This program has previously only been offered to the student's mainstream school counterparts and while the program has been adapted to suit the school and its students, (extending the program to 16 weeks instead of 10) it has been a great success.

The response of the students has been very positive.

"The course has been great fun and good to be able to work together as a team with my classmates," said Connor from Year 11, "I really like the program and I am learning new skills each time I go to it."

Luke from Year 11 said he really liked the practical parts of the course.

"I like learning how to use the extinguishers, the hoses and the pump and learning about all the different types of fires," he said.

Three teachers from the school, who are also volunteer members of the NSW RFS are involved in the delivery of the program – Terry Neal (O'Connell Brigade), Michael Auld (Peel Brigade) and Ellen Sutton (Raglan Brigade). Greg Ingersole (Eglinton Brigade)



and Pat Linnane (Raglan Brigade) are also instrumental in providing instruction to the students.

The Carenne School Cadet team also participated against other local schools in the annual Chifley/Lithgow Team Cadet Championship and

Graduation Day which were held on 17 October 2012. Eight schools and 72 students from across the Chifley/Lithgow team participated in the event. The winning school of the Aps/Kearney 2012 Trophy for a second year in a row was St Josephs School, Oberon.

ABOVE: Pat Linnane (Retired Group Captain, Raglan Brigade) and Conner at training. Photo by Terry Neal



NSW RFS State Training

Month	Date	Program	Training Location
February	23 23-24 24 26-28	Rural Fire Driver Instructor Workshop, Hawkesbury Community Safety Facilitator (CSF), Illawarra Rural Fire Driver Instructor Workshop, Region East Prescribed Burn Planning (PBP), Armidale	L&D Community Engagement L&D Community Planning
March	12-14 13-14 16-17 18-22 20-22 21-24 23 24 26-28	Prescribed Burn Planning (PBP), Moruya Media Liaison Officer (MLO), TBA DIY Community Engagement, Mittagong CCC for ICMI participants, Sutherland Public Liaison Officer (PLO), TBA Monitor Brigade Safety (SAF), Katoomba Rural Fire Driver Instructor Workshop, Queanbeyan Rural Fire Driver Instructor Workshop, Wagga Prescribed Burn Planning (PBP), Eastwood	Community Planning Media Community Engagement L&D Media L&D L&D L&D Community Planning
April	2-3 5 6 12-14 12-14 13 14 15-19 16-18 27-28 30-1	Media Liaison Officer (MLO), TBA Intro to Intelligence (INT), Region North Reconnaissance(RCN), Region North Aviation Radio Operator (ARO), Mudgee Air Base Operator(ABO), Mudgee Rural Fire Driver Instructor Workshop, Dubbo Rural Fire Driver Instructor Workshop, Orange IMW for ICMI participants, Sutherland Public Liaison Officer (PLO), TBA Community Safety Facilitator (CSF), Orange ICMI Workshop 1, Homebush	Media Operational Doctrine Operational Doctrine Aviation Aviation L&D L&D L&D Media Community Engagement L&D
May	3 3-5 4 4-5 7-9 13-17 18 20-21 21-23 25 26 27-31 31	Intro to Intelligence (INT), Region West Leadership and Team Skills (LDR), Katoomba Reconnaissance(RCN), Region West Live Fire Instructor Workshop, Dubbo Prescribed Burn Planning (PBP), Dubbo Command, Control & Communications (CCC), Coffs Harbour Advanced Firefighter Update Workshop, Coffs Harbour Community Safety Facilitator (CSF), Port Stephens ICMI Workshop 2, Homebush Rural Fire Driver Instructor Workshop, Armidale Rural Fire Driver Instructor Workshop, Coffs Harbour Command, Control & Communications (CCC), Orange Intro to Intelligence (INT), Region East	Operational Doctrine L&D Operational Doctrine L&D Community Planning L&D L&D Community Engagement L&D L&D L&D L&D Operational Doctrine
June	1 1 14-16 14-16 15-16 15-16 17-21 24-28 24-28 30	Advanced Firefighter Update Workshop, Orange Reconnaissance(RCN), Region East Aviation Radio Operator (ARO), Kempsey Air Base Operator(ABO), Kempsey Safety Advisor (SA), Wagga DIY Community Engagement, Taree ICMI Workshop 3, Homebush Incident Management Workshop(IMW), Coffs Harbour Fire Behaviour Analyst (FBA), Eastwood Air Base Operator Recert, Gunnedah	L&D Operational Doctrine Aviation Aviation L&D Community Engagement L&D L&D Community Planning Aviation

Calendar 2013

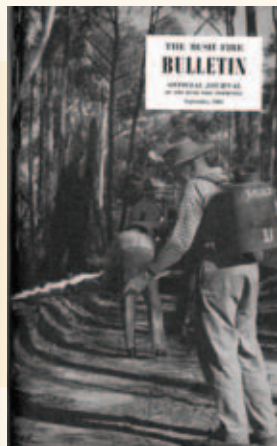
Month	Date	Program	Training Location
July	5 5-7 5-7 6 6-7 8-12 16-17 22-26 26-28 26-28 27 27-28	Intro to Intelligence (INT), Region South Aviation Radio Operator (ARO), Moree Air Base Operator(ABO), Moree Reconnaissance(RCN), Region South Community Safety Facilitator (CSF), Ulmarra Incident Management Workshop(IMW), Orange ICMI workshop 4, Homebush Command, Control & Communications (CCC), Griffith Aviation Radio Operator (ARO), Albion Park Air Base Operator(ABO), Albion Park Advanced Firefighter Update Workshop, Griffith Safety Advisor (SA), Hawkesbury	Operational Doctrine Aviation Aviation Operational Doctrine Community Engagement L&D L&D L&D Aviation Aviation L&D L&D
August	1-4 2-4 4 4 4-5 12-16 13 16-18 16-18 17-18 17-18 24-25 26-30 31	Air Base Manager (ABM), Albion Park Air Systems Operator (ASO), Albion Park Aviation Radio Operator Recert, Albion Park Air Base Operator Recert, Albion Park Air Attack Supervisor Recert, Albion Park Incident Management Workshop(IMW), Griffith ICMI Workshop 5, Homebush Aviation Radio Operator (ARO), Narromine Air Base Operator(ABO), Narromine Unit from Cert IV in Youth Work, HQ Community Liaison Officer (CLO), Illawarra DIY Community Engagement, Tamworth Command, Control & Communications (CCC), Sutherland Advanced Firefighter Update Workshop, Sutherland	Aviation Aviation Aviation Aviation Aviation L&D L&D Aviation Aviation Volunteer Relations Community Engagement Community Engagement L&D L&D
September	1 1 2-6 7-8 10-12 13-15 13-15 14-15 16-20 22	Aviation Radio Operator Recert, Cootamundra Air Base Operator Recert, Cootamundra Logistic Supervisor(LGS), Hawkesbury Community Liaison Officer (CLO), Forbes ICMI Theory Assessment, Homebush Aviation Radio Operator (ARO), Mourya Air Base Operator(ABO), Mourya Unit from Cert IV in Youth Work, HQ Incident Management Workshop(IMW), Sutherland Air Base Operator Recert, Cooma	Aviation Aviation L&D Community Engagement L&D Aviation Aviation Volunteer Relations L&D Aviation
October	12-13 19-20	DIY Community Engagement, Katoomba Unit from Cert IV in Youth Work, HQ	Community Engagement Volunteer Relations

Note:

1. Dates and details for local level training programs are available from your training officer and/or L&D Officer.
2. Nominations for training programs close four weeks prior to the nominated start date of the program.
3. State course nominations to be approved by your local L&D Officer and then sent to Regional L&D Officers for forwarding to L&D



1952



1961



1970

From the ashes of the 1952 fires...

Since the time when firefighters used beaters and hessian sacks, *The Bush Fire Bulletin* has been reporting on the activities of the bush firefighting community in NSW.

As we celebrate 60 years of publication, Brydie O'Connor looks at the circumstances that led to the launch of the very first *Bush Fire Bulletin* in September 1952.

It was the summer of 1951-52 and NSW was experiencing an intense heat wave, but before temperatures cooled bush fires had claimed the lives of 11 people and four million hectares in the north-west of NSW.

The devastating fires, centered about Pilliga and Wagga Wagga, not only scarred the people of NSW, they shocked the nation — prompting calls for increased communication and knowledge sharing. The Bush Fire Committee were spurred into action and focused their efforts on finding new ways to educate people on how they could better prepare for bush fires. It was decided that a quarterly publication entitled the *Bush Fire Bulletin* would provide a forum for people experienced in bush fire prevention and control to share their learnings. The Bush Fire Committee regarded the Bulletin as “one of the most important weapons in its educational armoury.”

Bush Fire Committee Chairman H.E Messer outlined the environment at the time in the

very first Bulletin published in September 1952.

“The experience of early 1939 and the past summer provide tragic evidence of the ever present fire forces which are ready to be unleashed when high temperatures, low humidities and drying winds combine to establish blow up conditions.” He went on to say that frequent devastating floods laid the foundation for fires.

If we fast-forward to today, it is evident that conditions in NSW 60 years ago mirror the situation the State is faced with in 2012; with many parts of the State still bouncing back from devastating flooding.

Those drought-breaking rains have prompted grass and vegetation growth to reach levels not seen for more than 30-40 years.

H.E. Messer went on to explain the situation facing firefighters in 1952.

“The ever welcome good season leaves vast areas of crops and grass lands vulnerable to the ‘Red Terror’,”

he explained. “Our prosperity can create the very elements which would result in its own destruction. We are forced therefore to pool all our resources to secure a fire-free countryside.”

It was decided that an informative and educational Bulletin was a necessity if the Bush Fire Management Committee were serious about cultivating a ‘fire free countryside’.

H.E Messer and his colleagues sought a place for the collective wisdom of those most experienced and educated in fire prevention to be recorded and broadly distributed. Following the bush fire tragedy of 1952 a suite of changes to firefighting tactics as well as public awareness were sought and the publication of the Bulletin was a crucial part of the response. “This publication is designed to assist in securing our common objective. Articles will be contributed by those versed in fire administration and firefighting so that all interested may be kept informed of



1985



1993



2003



2010

developments in the field of fire prevention and control," he explained.

The Chief Secretary of the Bush Fire Committee Hon. C.A Kelly, M.I.A backed up the Chairman's vision. "I am sure that the issue of regular *Bush Fire Bulletins* by the Bush Fire Committee will provide a very useful service to Shire Councils and the Bush Fire Brigade movement, and will be greatly appreciated by all concerned."

In 1952 Australia was growing at a rapid rate, leading to a drive for increased food

production. With vast tracts of food-producing land decimated in the fires of 1952, protecting the State's crops from fire became a priority and further fuelled the drive to make it as hard as possible for 'The Red Terror' to strike again.

"Local governing bodies and their firefighting organisations perform a very important community service," C.A Kelly asserts. "Bush firefighting also has National significance, particularly at a time when Australia stands in need of increased production,

especially foodstuffs. I wish the Bulletin every success."

Bush Fire Committee Chairman H.E Messer used his column inches in the very first edition of the Bulletin to send a direct message to the concerned residents of rural NSW. "We assure rural NSW that we are alive to its problems and in consonance with the policy of the Chief Secretary we request the fullest co-operation of the man on the land in our fire prevention programmes; in doing so, we offer all within our power towards reducing

our losses from fire to an insignificant, minimum," H.E Messer promised.

The Bush Fire Committee finally had a mouthpiece and they used it to speak plainly to their audience. They understood the plight of the 'man on the land' and they would do everything in their power to help the people of NSW deal with the 'national scourge of fire', aided by their new quarterly publication of the *Bush Fire Bulletin*.

Bush Fire Bulletin 1952

Editorial

THE FIRE OF 1951-1952 DEEPLY SHOCKED THE NATION AND AS WAS EXPECTED SET UP A DEMAND FOR IMPROVED FIREFIGHTING MEASURES AND A DEEPER PUBLIC REALISATION OF THE TRAGEDY OF FIRE.

The three Eastern States of Australia came through the season bearing heavy scars from the battle. In the opinion of many the fight was an unequal one because the 'Red Terror' enjoyed the advantage of extraordinary weather conditions not met for many years.... With the possibility of another tough

contest on their hands this year Councils and Bush Fire Brigades must get busy now and call into service local knowledge, planning and co-operation in the shortest time possible.

It is to assist (the brigades) that *Bush Fire Bulletin* No.1 appears today, and the Committee hopes that it will

prove a practical contribution in dealing with the national scourge of fire.

"We invite you to treat it as your journal- criticise it, kick it, or praise it according to whatever estimate you form of its value. But above all act on any of its suggestions if you think them practical or useful."

The first *Bush Fire Bulletin* was edited by the Bush Fire Committee





BRIGADE IN PROFILE



Name of Brigade: Cherrybrook
Year brigade formed: 1952
Current Captain: Gavin Pringle
Current President: Stacey Fishwick
District: Hawkesbury



Cherrybrook Rural Fire Brigade celebrated its 60th anniversary of service to the community on 29 July 2012, a significant landmark for the brigade that was formerly known as the 'West Pennant Hills Bush Fire Brigade'.

Over 80 people attended a special anniversary dinner at Pennant Hills Bowling Club on 28 July to mark the event, including the State Member for Hornsby, Mr Matt Kean MP, NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, Hornsby Shire Council's Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mick Smart, Brigade Captains and Presidents – past and present, Life Members, honorary members, and current members and their families.

"Over half a century ago the residents of West Pennant Hills and Cherrybrook banded together to respond to bush and grass fires and it's heartening to see that dedication still going strong 60 years later," said Commissioner Fitzsimmons.

The Commissioner said Cherrybrook Brigade members are relied upon, both in their local Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai district and further afield, for their experience and firefighting skills and are the first to put their hand up to assist with

emergencies in other parts of the State and throughout Australia.

Can you provide a brief history of the brigade?

Cherrybrook Rural Fire Brigade has a long and proud history of aiding the community in times of need. The brigade has been actively combating all kinds of emergencies including bush fires, structure fires, storm damage, floods and search and rescue since being founded in 1952.

The brigade consists of a group of dynamic individuals from across our community. Each person brings unique qualities and skills to form a team of highly motivated and professional individuals capable of addressing any emergency our community may face.

Since being founded in 1952 a lot has changed, particularly

our equipment, our training, how we react to emergencies and means of communication. While we continue to evolve and embrace the 'new world' our core values of support and help remain and we foster the spirit of volunteering.

Some of the milestones dates in our brigade's history are as follows:

The brigade was officially started on 29 July 1952 and was known as the Hornsby Shire Bush Volunteer Fire Brigade West Pennant Hills and District – a rather long name for a small brigade!

It would take 16 years, until late 1968, before the brigade acquired its first firefighting appliance – a trailer tanker, to be pulled by a privately owned tractor, with a capacity of 80 gallons (364 litres). The brigade fitted it with a petrol-driven pump.

The Brigade's first fire station was opened in October 1971. It was an old corrugated iron fruit packing shed off Gumnut Road (now Yanderra Grove). The following month the brigade received its first fire truck (tanker) – a Second World War vintage Chevrolet 'Blitz'. The Blitz carried around 600 gallons of water (2,700 litres).

During 1976, a mobile catering trailer (named 'Sally', after the Salvation Army who first saw the need for a trailer of this type) was designed and built by the brigade. This became the basic design for many catering trailers used by welfare organisations around the world.

In 1980 the brigade changed its name to 'Cherrybrook Bush Fire Brigade' due to Council changes and the growth of population in the area. In December 1981 the brigade moved to its current station





located on Shepherds Drive, Cherrybrook.

In December 2011 renovations to the station commenced, including meeting room and vehicle bay improvements.

What are some unique parts of your brigade's history?

The busiest period in the brigade's history was in January 1994. Our members were heavily involved in the campaign against the major fires threatening many Sydney suburbs. The brigade members also attended major fires for 11 straight days during 'Black Christmas' in NSW in 2001-2. The brigade then marched in a ticker tape 'thank you' parade in Sydney in March 2002. The brigade was dispatched to Victoria to assist with the 2009 Black Saturday bush fires. A team of four personnel was sent to stand by in the tanker at Gundagai.

The brigade was quick to venture into the world of the internet. As early as July 2000 the brigade established its first website to handle records, photographs and the calendar, including automatic reminders of upcoming brigade events.

Another innovation was in the area of support vehicles. In 2007 a new concept vehicle for operational support was commissioned for the Brigade: Cherrybrook 17. This small truck contains two breathing apparatus sets, 23 air cylinders, specialty scene lighting, asbestos management and spill kits and other equipment for structure fires and motor vehicle accidents.

What are some recent milestones the brigade has achieved?

Cherrybrook Brigade

celebrated 50 years since its formation in July 2002, with a number of events including a major dinner at the Dural Country Club and public display at the Cherrybrook Village shopping centre. As part of the 50th Anniversary celebrations, the brigade published a book of its history: "50 Flamin' Years".

Of course in 2012 the brigade once again got together at the dinner in July to celebrate 60 years of service to the community.

What type of area do you cover?

Cherrybrook Rural Fire Brigade provides primary fire protection along a 25 kilometre urban interface bordering in the suburbs of Cherrybrook, Dural, Pennant Hills and North Epping.

In excess of 800 residential properties and a number of retirement facilities have direct frontage to bushland. Additional properties are exposed to risk of ember attack due to the proximity of the urban interface.

The brigade has 64 members, all volunteers, with 48 being active in the brigade's duties. The membership base is diverse and while most members live in the vicinity of the Cherrybrook Fire Station there are also members coming from Pennant Hills, Hornsby, Thornleigh, Epping, North Ryde, Glenwood, Putney and even Cabarita.

What types of incidents does your brigade attend?

As a brigade, their roles are diverse, undertaking hazard reductions, bush firefighting, support to structural fires, search and rescue, vehicle and aircraft crashes, storm and

flood emergencies, member training, fundraising and community engagement.

At the 60th anniversary dinner, Captain Gavin Pringle explained how, with the introduction of the Cherrybrook 17, the brigade took a significant shift forward in their role in district support.

"The Cat 17 has presented our brigade with the rare opportunity to morph from what had become predominantly a bush fire brigade in an urban interface to a brigade that supports the entire district, involved in the width and breadth of incidents that occur."

They used their Cat 17 to assist with storm damage in Gosford in 2007, a boat shed fire on Danger Island in May 2007, the helicopter crash in Arcadia in March 2008, a significant structure fire at the Dural Business Centre Fire in April 2012, the Arcadia shed fire in June 2012 and a major structure fire at Bobbin Head Marina in July 2012.

What vehicles do you have?

The brigade currently operates three vehicles: a Cat 1 – Category 1 tanker as the primary firefighting appliance (the big red fire truck or BRT), a Cat 17 – Category 17 support vehicle (Cherrybrook 17), and a PC that supports both Cat 1 and Cat 17 and transports up to nine members.

What are some unique features of your community?

Captain Pringle said, "The district is also evolving with incident demands and is calling upon the brigade to not only support with the Cat 17 but seeking our Cat 1 for water and water supply. The Dural and Arcadia structure fires are

recent examples where we provided water support for structural incidents."

Captain Pringle also talked about the importance of community engagement for the Cherrybrook brigade. "The broader community expect us to continue to turn up and put the wet stuff on the red stuff but they also want information on how to help themselves. We now dedicate time to specifically planning and delivering the Firewise message to our local community."

What community events do you attend?

We attend Primary Schools, Pre-Schools, Church and Community Groups sharing the FireWise Messages. Recent examples include Epping North Lutheran Church, Hornsby Shire Tree Giveaway and John Purchase Outdoor Movie Night.

Fundraising is via the annual wheelbarrow raffle undertaken at the Cherrybrook Village Shopping Centre and our fundraising requires the support of local business, many of which have supported the brigade for many, many years.

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: The old fire shed served the brigade well, from 1971 to 1979 when we moved to a new purpose built fire station. The steel roof trusses of the old shed moved, too, and are a vital part of the 'new' station.

ABOVE LEFT: The brigade's Bedford tanker and (at that time) quite new Toyota personnel carrier in 1986, with crew members including three current Life Members: Alan Barnwell (third from left), Rick Ward (fifth from left) and Peter Thorby (third from right).

ABOVE RIGHT: Customised for the Cherrybrook Brigade in 2008 this operational support vehicle has changed the focus of the brigade. Note the telescopic light tower, breathing apparatus sets and spare air cylinders.

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM: November 1971 – The brigade received its first fire truck (tanker) – a Second World War vintage Chevrolet "Blitz". The Blitz carried around 600 gallons of water (2700 litres).

60th ANNIVERSARY

1952 • Bush Fire Bulletin • 2012

BRIGADE IN PROFILE



Name of Brigade: Freemans Reach
Year brigade formed: 1951
Current Captain: Bruce Earle
Current President: Dave Tandy
District: Hawkesbury



The Freemans Reach Rural Fire Brigade celebrated its 60th anniversary with a dinner and reunion at the Freemans Reach Hall in April 2012 – the very place the brigade was formed in 1951. Over 70 former and current members attended spanning every decade of the brigade's history.

The dinner also marked the launch of the brigade memoirs, *Rain, Hail or Shine...fire, flood or storm...Freemans Reach Rural Fire Brigade – 60 years serving the community*. This 72-page full-colour book features the timeline of events, stories and tales from days gone by, the major fires and incidents attended by the brigade, a tribute to the Life Members and Captains of the brigade, the complete honour roll of every position held in the brigade since 1951 plus over 50 colour photos.

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons congratulated the brigade on their anniversary and the publication. "I sincerely

enjoyed the myriad of stories and photographs of the brigade's history," he said, "and reflecting on the extraordinary changes in fleet, PPE and equipment that have occurred over the years."

Adding to the 60th anniversary celebrations, Freemans Reach recently won the Hawkesbury District NSW RFS Championships held in August 2012. This followed on from being Joint Winners in 2010 of the Championships.

Two of Freemans Reach members also recently marked significant milestones with the brigade. In 2011, Jan Earle, who has held numerous positions including Deputy Captain and for the past 31 years Secretary, celebrated 50 years of membership with the brigade. Former President and current Treasurer, Bob Hair, also achieved 40 years of membership in 2011.

Can you provide a brief history of the brigade?

The brigade was formed in late 1951 when a group of locals (essentially the local flood boat crew) were concerned at the lack of organisation and equipment available during fires in the area. Athol 'Snowy' Smith was elected the brigade captain, with former NSW cricketer Charlie Nicholls being the senior deputy. Snowy's brother, Lloyd Smith was elected president and would hold this position for 30 years. Snowy and Lloyd's father, Alexander Smith Jnr, was the locally appointed ranger before

the brigade was formed and he unofficially undertook the control of fires and floods in the Freemans Reach area.

Initially the brigade used a TEA20 tractor and a trailer with knapsacks and beaters to attend fires. In the mid 1950s the brigade was able to use water on the fires when a local stone fruit orchard loaned them a spray cart.

The brigade's first vehicle, a second hand ex-army Land Rover, arrived in 1965 and was soon followed by its first truck, a new Leyland in 1971. In 1968 the brigade built a single bay station, which after six extensions and additions, remains the brigades station until this day.

Snowy Smith's son-in-law Owen Earle became Captain in 1972 and would hold this position for 20 years. Graeme Withers was Captain for one year, while Bluey Flaherty would be Captain for eleven years. Malcolm Boyle followed in 2004 to be Captain for two years before the family history continued with Bruce Earle becoming Captain in 2006. Bruce is the son and grandson of former Captains Owen Earle and Snowy Smith.

What are some unique parts of your brigade's history?

The Freemans Reach Brigade has tended to generally be small in numbers throughout its history. While there has been a steady turnover of members throughout the years, there is one very strong factor which

keeps the brigade on solid ground. We have been, and are, very fortunate to have a band of long term and very loyal and dedicated members who keep the strong traditions of the brigade current to this day. The brigade was built on hard work, discipline and unity with the attitude of getting the job done thoroughly. This was highlighted during the 1970s when the brigade earned the light-hearted nickname 'the mop up brigade'. This is the standard that our members strive for and in turn pass on to new members.

What are some recent milestones the brigade has achieved?

The brigade celebrated its 60th anniversary with a dinner and re-union in April 2012. The dinner was held at the Freemans Reach Hall – the very place the brigade was formed in 1951. Over 70 former and current members attended.

What type of area do you cover?

The Freemans Reach area is a mix of rural farms, hobby farms and a village area of around 500 houses. While there are pockets of bushland it is predominantly a grass land area. Turf farms and horse studs dominate the rural properties in the area and along with a few small businesses there is also the Hawkesbury High School and the Freemans Reach Primary School.



OPPOSITE: First brigade female deputy captains (Joy O'Connor and Jan Earle) alongside the brigade built Bedford tanker in 1979. Jan Earle is still the Honorary Secretary of the brigade and mother of current captain, Bruce Earle.

LEFT: Freemans Reach Brigade float at the Macquarie Towns Street Parade in Richmond 1983

ABOVE: Athol 'Snowy' Smith – the inaugural Captain of the brigade

What types of incidents does your brigade attend?

Grass and bush fires still account for the majority of calls, however pile burns and motor vehicle accidents are becoming a more common along with the occasional structure fire. Floods are also a factor in the Freemans Reach area with approximately one third of the brigade's area under the flood plain.

What vehicles do you have?

The brigade currently has a Cat 1 Isuzu tanker plus a Toyota Hilux Personnel Carrier.

What type training do you conduct and how do you go about doing this?

In the spring and summer months training is focused on grass and bush firefighting. This includes grass and bush firefighting techniques and strategies, drafting and mapping. There is a strong focus on scenario-based

training which gives our members a chance to practice their skills, including crew leading. Autumn and winter training sessions are focussed on Village Firefighter which includes structural training, vehicle accidents and car fires. A lot of our time is spent on getting the basics right such as hose lays and hose rolls.

Training is held monthly. On top of other brigade activities, we recognise that we must keep our small band of members fresh and keen. The brigade should not take over their lives and become a wedge within their own private family lives. Retention of members is as important as recruitment.

What are some unique skills and features of your brigade?

We place a high importance on the basics – hose lays, hose rolls, mopping up and knowing when to use offensive, defensive and conservative firefighting. Sticking to the

basics and keeping it simple makes life a bit easier.

What are some unique features of your community?

We have a real blend of a rural community and an urban-type community. There are genuine bushies, farmers and people who love the land as well as the folk who live in the village who have a more urbanised style of life. There are still the remnants of the local farming families in the area with lifelong friendships among many of our residents.

What community events does your brigade participate in?

School events including escorting Santa at Christmas, church fetes, cooking the BBQ for the regular Freemans Reach Hall car boot sales, Hawkesbury High Cadets and the occasional pre-school visits are some of the community events we participate in.

Any final thoughts or comments you would like to add?

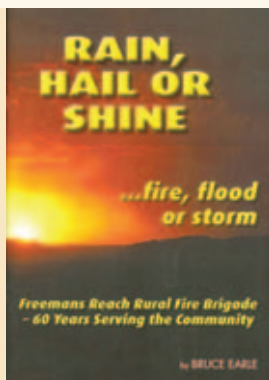
It is important to recognise a couple of things. Firstly, as members of the NSW RFS we all come from different walks of life, yet we come together to achieve something for our community. Within our brigade we make a point of keeping focussed on our core objectives, not taking ourselves too seriously and trying to make our time at the station enjoyable, while being very disciplined on the fireground.

Secondly, all our members are volunteers and while it can be frustrating and difficult at times to get a crew for an activity or hazard reduction, we must never forget that our members give up their own time to make our community a safer place.

Written by Bruce Earle, Captain, Freemans Reach Rural Fire Brigade

RIGHT: *Rail, Hail or Shine – Freemans Reach Rural Fire Brigade – 60 Years Serving the Community*. The book, a tribute to the Freemans Reach Brigade, was written by current Captain Bruce Earle and dedicated to his own father: "This book is in honour of Owen Earle's desire to record the brigade's memoirs."

FAR RIGHT: Freemans Reach 1 at Kenthurst, moments before a burn over in 2003





Now, where is that equipment?

From the very first edition of the *Bush Fire Bulletin* crosswords and puzzles have been a feature. In honour of that tradition this issue we have included a wordsearch puzzle with a firefighting edge.

Cimi Ross, a volunteer from Bay Brigade in the Lakes Team, created the puzzle especially for this 60th Anniversary issue of the *Bush Fire Bulletin*.

This wordsearch features equipment found around the brigade station, so any devious NSW RFS member should find it easy.

The words can read forward, backward, up, down and diagonally, but never skipping letters and always in a straight line.

Make a ring around each word you find in the grid, and mark it

off the list. A letter in the grid may be used more than once, as some words may overlap each other. Some letters won't be used at all. Words separated by a / may not be together in the grid.

To make it more interesting, one of the words below is not in the grid. Can you find it? Enjoy!

Solution on page 32

AED	FLASH HOOD	ROPE
AXE	FOAM	SIREN
BAR / OIL	FOG / NOZZLE	SMOKE
BOOTS	FOOD	SOP
BREATHING APPARATUS	GLOVES	SPANNER
BRUSH / HOOK / CUTTER	GOGGLES	SPRAY / BARS
BUSH	HELMET	STAND / PIPE
CANTEEN	HOSE	STEP UP
CAT / NINE	HOT	STORZ
CHAIN / SAW	HYDRANT	STUMP / VICE
COMMS	LADDER	THREE WAY DIRECTOR
CREW / LEADER	MASK	TRUCK
CYLINDER	MCLEOD / TOOL	VALVE
DEAD / MAN / ZONE	ONE LICK	WATER
DIAL A JET	OVER RUN	YELLOW
DRIP / TORCH	PIG / PEN	
DRI / SORB	PROTECTIVE / CLOTHING	
FIRE / CALL	PUMP	
FIRST / AID	RADIO	

D	O	O	H	H	S	A	L	F	A	S	T	E	P	U	P
B	M	N	J	H	Y	D	R	A	N	T	Z	H	S	P	A
L	A	C	R	E	W	R	E	R	I	A	T	C	O	S	P
C	S	R	L	H	R	I	N	E	B	N	A	R	T	T	P
T	K	V	S	E	Z	P	N	D	W	D	C	O	Z	E	A
S	N	U	H	F	O	E	A	N	Z	R	O	T	S	M	R
R	B	L	A	S	R	D	P	I	L	B	M	R	O	L	A
I	N	E	R	I	S	W	S	L	R	V	M	L	R	E	T
F	O	G	F	B	M	F	T	Y	V	S	S	A	B	H	U
E	Z	D	P	R	O	T	E	C	T	I	V	E	R	Z	S
M	Z	D	E	U	K	W	J	D	U	F	C	E	E	N	O
F	L	O	G	S	E	F	A	G	I	P	E	E	A	I	V
G	E	W	N	H	V	A	L	V	E	W	U	I	T	N	E
N	S	C	D	E	Y	N	A	L	A	A	D	R	H	E	R
I	E	H	N	K	E	G	I	Y	G	T	E	P	I	P	R
H	J	A	C	E	Y	O	D	E	T	E	I	D	N	Z	U
T	M	I	T	S	A	I	J	L	H	R	O	G	G	P	N
O	L	N	T	K	R	L	C	L	D	W	R	L	M	C	K
L	A	U	O	E	P	R	F	O	A	M	O	U	O	U	C
C	M	O	C	J	S	E	O	W	D	V	P	H	I	T	U
P	H	T	A	J	D	D	O	S	E	K	E	O	D	T	R
T	O	O	L	A	A	A	D	S	A	B	A	R	A	E	T
R	S	F	L	E	Y	E	N	E	P	W	O	Y	R	R	B
V	E	O	D	S	E	L	G	G	O	G	R	T	E	X	A



Congratulations from the RFSA on 60 years of informative stories

We should never underestimate the value of the Bush Fire Bulletin in our lives as RFS people. The Bulletin has always been proof of our independence, despite administrative structural changes that have taken place over 60 years. Although the organisation has evolved from a small administrative unit within the then Chief Secretary's department, the Department of Services, State Emergency Service and the Office of the Police and Emergency Services, its publication has continued.

Its future was threatened in the late 1970s when the Bush Fire Branch as it was then called, became part of the State Emergency Service. The Bush Fire Bulletin was incorporated into 'SITREP', the official publication of State Emergency Service, resulting in public outrage by our volunteers. Needless to say the decision was reversed shortly thereafter, by the then State Premier Neville Wran.

Apart from circular letters issued over many years by the Bush Fire Council of New South Wales to local Government Councils, the Bulletin was the only source of continual information to the membership, particularly in rural New South Wales. While we can say without doubt that information technology has significantly improved communications at all levels, the value of the Bush Fire Bulletin as a standalone publication has stood the test of time.

Congratulations to those who had the foresight to commence the publication and those who despite pressure from external sources had the courage to continue its publication.

All volumes of the Bush Fire Bulletin are held in the RFS library and I encourage everyone to take the time to glance through them and gain a greater understanding of the heritage of our Service and how it has evolved into the organisation it is today.

As the current Deputy General Manager of the RFSA and a former employee of the RFS for nearly 30 years, I am proud to be part of this celebration.

Trevor Anderson, PSM AFSM
RFSA Deputy General Manager



ABOVE: RFSA President Brian McKinlay playfully reads from the current issue of the Bush Fire Bulletin to his attentive 'classroom' – The NSW RFSA State Council.



Where is the Bulletin?

This competition has been extended to 31 January 2013

Enter your best snaps in our Bush Fire Bulletin 60th Anniversary competition

We're looking for photos taken at your brigade or FCC, but there's a catch...Each photo should feature a copy of the *Bush Fire Bulletin!*

So get creative and impress our judges for the chance to win a grand's worth of photographic gear.

How to enter

Send your digital image to:
Email: bush.fire.bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Please be sure to label your photos with your name and contact information.

Conditions of entry

- The competition is open to all members of the NSW RFS and the general public.
- There is no age restriction.
- To be eligible, photos submitted must be digital
- Proof of consent may be required
- Photo must be fully released by the owner (in writing) for reproduction by the NSW RFS

- Photos of children under the age of 16 years of age require a written consent from parent or guardian
- Winners will be selected at the discretion of the RFS and all decisions are final
- Winners will be announced in early February 2013.

Overall Winner Prize

- \$1,000 Photographic Equipment Gift Voucher

2nd Overall Winner Prize

- \$500 Photographic Equipment Gift Voucher

3rd Overall Winner Prize

- \$300 Photographic Equipment Gift Voucher

Prizes kindly donated by Ausgrid.



BUSH FIRE BULLETIN

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE BUSH FIRE BULLETIN DIRECT TO YOUR HOME OR UPDATE YOUR DETAILS



Cut out and mail to:

**Bush Fire Bulletin
NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE**
Reply Paid 67059 Locked Bag 17
Granville NSW 2142
(No stamp required)

or email your details to:

Bush.Fire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Name:.....

(Please include any post-nominals)

Address:.....

Postcode:..... **Phone:** Home and/or mobile:.....

Email address:.....

Update

eBulletin (email required)

New Subscription

NSW RFS Member



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

15 Carter Street
Lidcombe NSW 2141

Locked Bag 17
Granville NSW 2142

Tel: 02 8741 5555

Fax: 02 8741 5550

Email: Bush.Fire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

ISSN: 1033-7598

Publisher NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE Produced Corporate Communications Editor Jacqueline Murphy

Graphic Design & Art/Production Coordinator Letra Printed on Monza Gloss; FSC (CoC), ISO 14001, IPPC, ECF environmental accreditation