



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

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FRONT PAGE: Todd Gibson (Heathcote Brigade) and Steve Franks (Heathcote) in the background) at a Hazard Reduction burn in Engadine, May 2013. Photo by Sharon Quandt

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Letter to the Minister

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

Dear Minister

I have pleasure in submitting to you for presentation to Parliament the Annual Report of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) for the year ended 30 June 2013.

In the reporting period, the NSW RFS responded to more than 23,000 incidents. The fires in January 2013 drew much attention. For the first time Catastrophic fire dangers ratings were declared in highly populated areas – the Illawarra/Shoalhaven and Southern Ranges. Over a two week period 512 fires were attended by 10,500 firefighters. Sadly 57 homes were lost in that two week period alone. While conditions were very difficult, it is a credit to the firefighters across NSW that there was no loss of life.

A feature of the 2012/13 fire season was an unprecedented demand for information from the public. The Service met the challenge hosting considerable volumes of traffic through the NSW RFS website, social media, the Bush Fire Information Line and the smart phone applications.

Over the entire reporting period there were 26 days of State-wide total Fire Bans and 32 Section 44 bush fire emergencies declared.

The Service has performed well against the NSW 2021 Goal 28 targets including increased hazard reduction works, Neighborhood Safer Places and the successful continuation of the Secondary Schools Cadet Program.

Once again, it has been an honour to lead the NSW RFS throughout 2012/13 over such a busy period.

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

Yours sincerely



Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM
NSW RFS Commissioner

Commissioner's Report

NSW Rural Fire Service members are recognised across the world for their professionalism, commitment and versatility – all qualities which were on display in the reporting period.

The 2012/13 bush fire season will be remembered as one of the most challenging in recent times, in terms of the scale of threat, the conditions experienced and the impact on communities.

The season began early for many communities in northern NSW, with 1,000 fires across Region North from July to November alone. At the same time, there was the significant threat of grass fires to communities across much of western and southern NSW.

In October, properties on the NSW Central Coast were threatened due to fast moving bush fires. In the same month crews in the Blue Mountains were helping to clear snow.

In December 2012, fire weather conditions continued to deteriorate across much of south-eastern Australia. In NSW, the bush fire season peaked in early January 2013, with hot, dry and windy conditions setting in.

On 8 January, Catastrophic fire danger ratings were declared for the Illawarra/Shoalhaven and Southern Ranges. It was the first time that the rating had been used for large population centres in forested areas. Temperature records were broken in many areas. That day, and in the following weeks, a number of large and destructive fires developed in areas including Coonabarabran, Yass, Shoalhaven and Cooma.

During the January fire emergency, there were 512 bush and grass fires attended, with 10,500 firefighters deployed across the firegrounds. There were 99 activations of the Emergency Alert telephone warning system, 8.5 million views of the NSW RFS website, 80,000 fire searches per hour through the Fires Near Me smart phone app and 27 million views of the Service's Facebook page.



ABOVE: NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons

Despite some of the worst conditions imaginable, thankfully, there was no loss of life. Fifty-seven homes were destroyed and there were considerable agricultural losses.

While there was significant focus on the January period the hard work for our members stretched right across the year. As is always the case, the preparatory work put in before these large emergency events is just as important.

For example, the successful *Prepare. Act. Survive.* public awareness campaign continued in 2012/13, focusing on encouraging people to complete a Bush Fire Survival Plan. In the reporting period the campaign was recognised by the advertising industry for its creative approach in driving people to make a Bush Fire Survival Plan. The Service's campaign has won numerous awards and received widespread praise.

The Service continued to invest in new equipment releasing two new models of appliances - the Category 6 Firefighting Appliance and Category 13 Bulk Water Support Unit. The Cat 6 and Cat 13 have improved capability and can be operated with small or even one-person crews.

Behind many of our dedicated firefighters there are supportive employers who allow them time off work to fight fires and protect the community. In the reporting period the NSW RFS has sought to acknowledge them. The Supportive Employer

Program was officially launched on 6 March 2013 and so far twelve businesses, ranging from self-employed volunteers, through small and medium enterprises, to large corporations, have received Special Commendations for their support of volunteers.

Ensuring that remote and Aboriginal communities are protected from bush fire has been a focus for the Service in recent years. In the reporting period Stage Two of the Bush Fire Resilience for Aboriginal Communities Project was launched. Innovative use of social media among members particularly in the Far West has also been well received.

The Service has focused on creating more opportunities for community members to participate in the NSW RFS through the Flexible Membership model. This initiative recognises the competing demands on people's time to volunteer and provides greater degrees of flexibility in order for them to make a contribution to the Service.

2012 was a significant milestone for the *Bush Fire Bulletin*, the official journal of the NSW RFS which marked its 60th anniversary. It is a credit to all involved that the *Bulletin* has continued to be read and enjoyed over such a long period.

It was my pleasure to witness the NSW RFS work in Botswana in May 2013. The Botswana Fire Management Program is in its fourth year and so far more than 70 NSW RFS members have travelled to the southern African country to assist in building an effective fire management capacity. It was humbling to observe firsthand the positive impact that the Service is making in Botswana.

I would like to thank the NSW RFS Executive for their leadership in what has been a busy year. Of particular note, thank you to Assistant Commissioner Dominic Lane. I have been inspired by his leadership over the years and wish him well in his new appointment as Commissioner of the ACT Emergency Services.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Hon. Michael Gallacher, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, as well as Mr Les Tree, the Director General of the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services.

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

Of course the biggest thanks must go to those men and women on the frontline – our volunteers. Once again, you have shown professionalism, commitment and versatility.

This 2012/13 reporting period has been a team effort and I want to thank each and every person, no matter what their role, for their contribution.



Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM
NSW RFS Commissioner

NSW Rural Fire Service Vision and Mission

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

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

Values

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

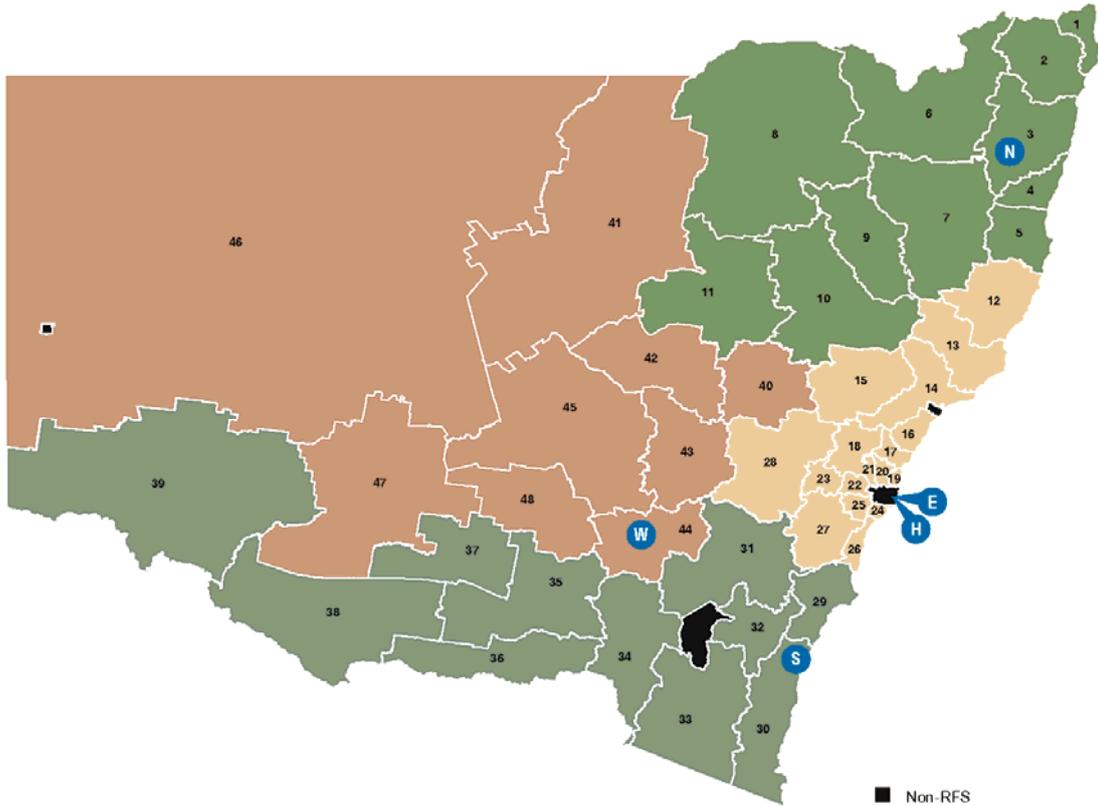
Customers

- > The people of NSW
- > Our members

Stakeholders

- > Community
- > Our members
- > Planners and developers
- > Media
- > Minister for Police and Emergency Services
- > Ministry for Police and Emergency Services (MPES)
- > Department of Attorney General and Justice
- > Members of Parliament – State and Federal
- > LGNSW and local councils
- > Other State and Territory Governments
- > Rural Fire Service Association (RFSA)
- > NSW RFS member representative groups
- > Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC)
- > Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC
- > Consultative Committees (Community Engagement, Membership Services, Regional Services, Infrastructure Services and Operational Services)
- > Emergency Service peak groups
- > Insurance industry
- > Tourism industry groups
- > Peak industry groups
- > NGOs and service providers
- > Other government authorities
- > Employers of volunteers
- > Other associations (Farmers Association, Country Women's Association etc)

NSW RFS Districts 2012/13



H: Headquarters

15 Carter Street, Lidcombe

N: Region North

Level 4, State Office Block, Victoria Street, Grafton

S: Region South

7-9 Kylie Crescent, Batemans Bay

E: Region East

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

W: Region West

3/21 Lovell Street, Young

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

Totals	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
District Offices	48	48	49
Brigades	2,031	2,036	2,039

Key to NSW RFS Districts Map

Region North

1. Far North Coast

Ballina
Byron
Tweed

2. Northern Rivers

Kyogle
Lismore
Richmond Valley

3. Clarence Valley

4. Mid North Coast

Bellingen
Coffs Harbour

5. Lower North Coast

Kempsey
Nambucca

6. Northern Tablelands

Glen Innes Severn
Inverell
Tenterfield

7. New England

Armidale Dumaresq
Guyra
Uralla
Walcha

8. Namoi / Gwydir

Gwydir
Moree Plains
Narrabri

9. Tamworth

10. Liverpool Range

Gunnedah
Liverpool Plains
Upper Hunter

11. Castlereagh

Gilgandra
Warrumbungle

Region East

12. Mid Coast

Greater Taree
Hastings

13. Gloucester / Great Lakes

Gloucester
Great Lakes

14. Lower Hunter

Cessnock
Dungog
Maitland
Port Stephens

15. Hunter Valley

Muswellbrook
Singleton

16. The Lakes

Lake Macquarie
Wyong

17. Gosford

18. Hawkesbury

19. Warringah /Pittwater
Pittwater
Warringah

20. Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai

Hornsby
Ku-ring-gai

21. The Hills

22. Cumberland
Blacktown
Fairfield
Penrith

23. Blue Mountains

24. Sutherland
25. Macarthur
Camden
Campbelltown
Liverpool

26. Illawarra

Kiama
Shellharbour
Wollongong

27. Southern Highlands

Wingecarribee
Wollondilly

28. Chifley / Lithgow

Bathurst Regional
Lithgow
Oberon

Region South

29. Shoalhaven

30. Far South Coast

Bega Valley
Eurobodalla

31. Southern Tablelands

Goulburn Mulwaree
Upper Lachlan
Yass Valley

32. Lake George

Palerang
Queanbeyan City

33. Monaro

Bombala
Cooma-Monaro
Snowy River

34. Riverina Highlands

Gundagai
Tumbarumba
Tumut

35. Riverina

Coolamon
Junee
Lockhart

Urana

Wagga Wagga

36. Southern Border

Albury
Berrigan
Corowa
Greater Hume

37. MIA

Griffith
Leeton
Murrumbidgee
Narrandera

38. Mid Murray

Conargo
Deniliquin
Jerilderie
Murray
Wakool

39. Lower Western

Balranald
Wentworth

Region West

40. Cudgegong

Mid Western

41. North West

Bogan
Coonamble
Walgett
Warren

42. Orana

Dubbo
Narromine
Wellington

43. Canobolas

Blayney
Cabonne
Cowra
Orange

44. South West Slopes

Boorowa
Cootamundra
Harden
Young

45. Mid Lachlan Valley

Forbes
Lachlan
Parkes
Weddin

46. Far West/Barwon Darling

Bourke
Brewarrina
Central Darling
Cobar
Unincorporated NSW

47. Mid West

Hay
Carrathool

48. Bland Temora

Bland
Temora

NSW RFS Regions – Overview and key facts for 2012/13

Region North



Volunteers	13,716
Male	10,815
Female	2,901
Incidents in 2012/13	4,725
Vehicles	2,032
NSW RFS Districts	11
NSW RFS Brigades	523
Square kilometres	152,495
Population	634,314

Landscape types

Coastal scrub, forested hills and flat cropping and grazing in the west

Region East



Volunteers	21,153
Male	15,812
Female	5,341
Incidents in 2012/13	11,750
Vehicles	1,728
NSW RFS Districts	17
NSW RFS Brigades	503
Square kilometres	55,874
Population	3,294,981

Landscape types

Urban interface, coastal heathlands, mountains and rolling farm and grasslands

Region South



Volunteers	20,115
Male	15,893
Female	4,222
Incidents in 2012/13	4,028
Vehicles	1,684
NSW RFS Districts	11
NSW RFS Brigades	490
Square kilometres	169,060
Population	551,061

Landscape types

Native and plantation forests, coastal heathlands, alpine forests, flat and rolling grasslands

Region West



Volunteers	16,992
Male	14,054
Female	2,938
Incidents in 2012/13	2,933
Vehicles	1,524
NSW RFS Districts	9
NSW RFS Brigades	515
Square kilometres	422,600
Population	273,041

Landscape types

Region West covers more than 62 percent of the State. Largely open grasslands with cropping and grazing, also heavily timbered near Mudgee and Orange

Key facts for 2012/13

Total volunteers	71,976
Region North	13,716
Region South	20,115
Region East	21,153
Region West	16,992

NSW RFS Total Expenses budget	\$303.128M
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Vehicles	
Total	6,994
Tankers	3,931
Pumpers	71
Personnel transport and command vehicles	757
Bulk water carriers	60
Tanker trailers	1,198
Cargo, top trucks, various trailers	448
Communications vehicles and trailers	42
Catering vehicles and trailers	76
Marine craft	26
Slip on trailers and miscellaneous vehicles	385

NB: Non-Service owned vehicles are not included in the 2012/13 figure for tankers.

Communications	
Radios total	22,378

Incidents: Four year view

Incidents	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
Bush fires	3,325	2,602	1,897	3,446
Grass fires	4,149	1,552	2,316	2,549
Building fires	957	849	846	927
Vehicle fires	1,638	1,500	1,462	1,475
Motor vehicle accidents	3,881	4,211	4,016	3,544
False alarms	1,777	2,020	2,201	2,028
Controlled burns	1,088	964	1,095	
Smoke scare	1,109	685	864	
Refuse fires	608	592	788	
Oil Spills	214	252	461	
Assist other agencies	258	318	265	
Flood	22	58	120	
Other	4,410	3,310	2,499	6,177
Total	23,436	18,913	18,830	20,146

Note: Since 2010/11 the 'Other' category has been expanded to show more details about incidents attended

Incidents: Region by Region in 2012/13

Incidents	North	South	East	West
Bush fire	811	641	1,484	389
Grass fires	1,186	699	1,245	1,019
Building fires	204	196	407	150
Vehicle fires	281	209	980	168
Motor vehicle accidents	764	769	1,965	383
False alarms	250	315	1,080	132
Other*	1,229	1,199	4,589	692
Total	4,725	4,028	11,750	2,933

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

Planning for the future: NSW 2021

NSW 2021: A Plan to Make NSW Number One is the NSW Government's plan to rebuild the economy, return quality services, renovate infrastructure, strengthen our local environment and communities, and restore accountability to Government over 10 years.

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

The NSW RFS Corporate Plan 2011-2015 has been aligned with Goal 28. Reports on the performance of the NSW RFS in 2012/13 appear in the Key Focus Area chapter.

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

28.2 Defend against suburban and bushland fires

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

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

28.2.3 Increase the number of identified Neighbourhood Safer Places

Increase hazard reduction across NSW

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

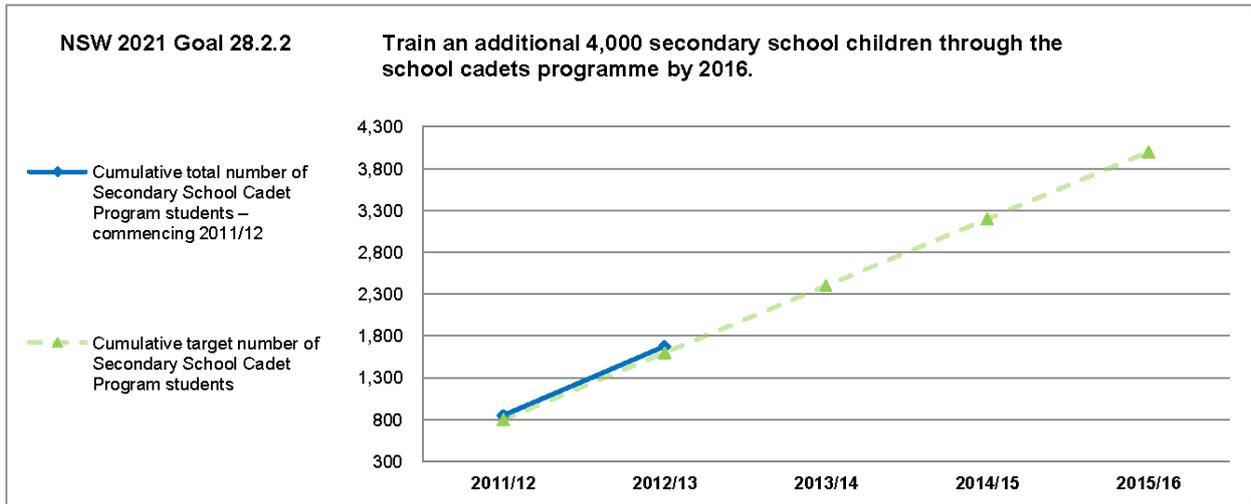
28.2.5 Increase the annual average level of area treated by hazard reduction activities by 45 percent by 2016.

NSW RFS Planning Structure



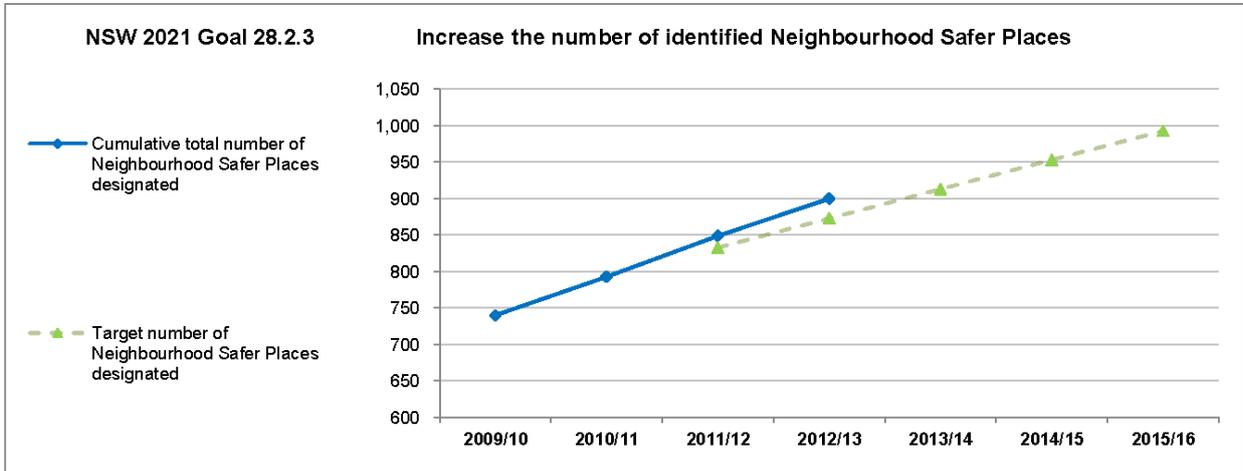
NSW 2021, Goal 28: NSW RFS Performance 2012/13

Goal 28.2.2



	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Cumulative total number of Secondary School Cadet Program students – commencing 2011/12	840	1,667 (827)			
Cumulative target number of Secondary School Cadet Program students	800	1,600	2,400	3,200	4,000

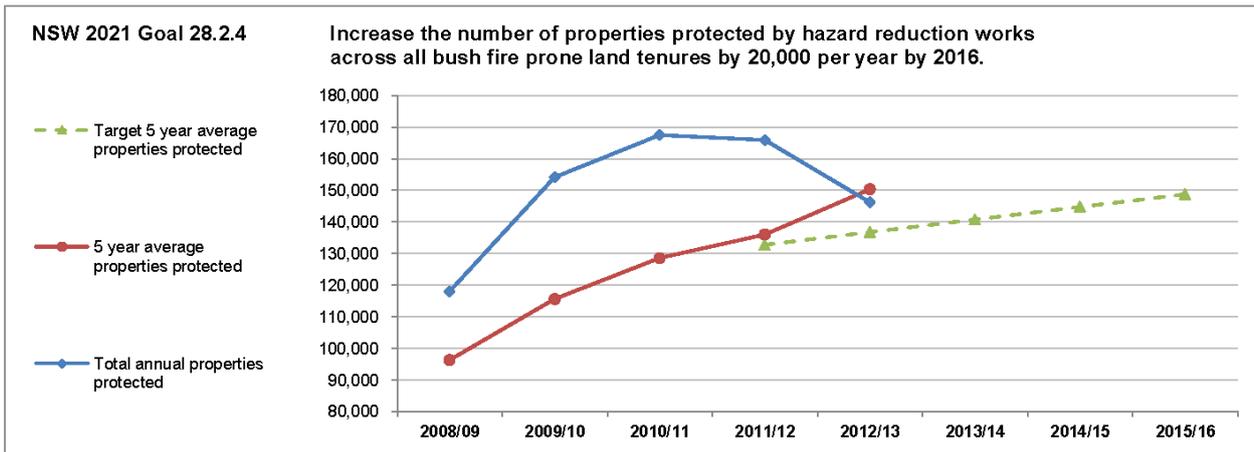
Goal 28.2.3



	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Cumulative total number of Neighbourhood Safer Places designated	740	793	849	900			
Target number of Neighbourhood Safer Places designated			833	873	913	953	993

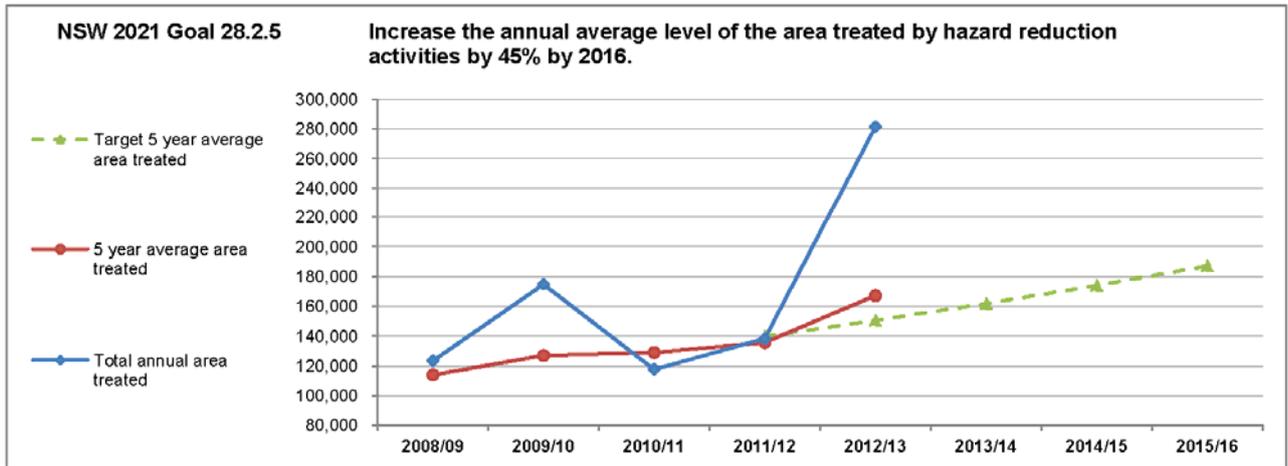
NSW 2021, Goal 28: NSW RFS Performance 2012/13

Goal 28.2.4



	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Total annual properties protected by programmed hazard reduction works	118,021	154,211	167,533	165,945	146,292			
Five year average properties protected by total programmed hazard reduction works	96,313	115,612	128,593	136,063	150,400			
Target five year average properties protected by total programmed hazard reduction works				132,793	136,793	140,793	144,793	148,793

Goal 28.2.5



	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Total annual area of hazard reduction works completed	123,334.51	174,705.85	117,633.25	138,211.48	281,492.19			
Five year average total area of hazard reduction works completed	113,946	126,915	128,894	135,688	167,075			
Target five year average total area of hazard reduction works completed				139,900	150,435	161,762	173,943	187,041

