



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



NSW RFS ANNUAL REPORT

2014/15

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Letter to the Minister

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 2015.

Despite a busy start, the NSW bush fire season of 2014/15 was a relatively benign. Our members remained busy late into the season assisting other agencies with firefighting including our colleagues in South Australia and Western Australia, offering housing assistance to cyclone-affected communities in the Northern Territory and supporting the SES in NSW during destructive floods in April 2015.

Throughout the reporting period, the Service has performed well against the NSW 2021 Goal 28 targets including hazard reduction works despite adverse weather conditions, identifying more Neighbourhood Safer Places and continuing the success of the Secondary Schools Cadet Program.

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 the *Public Disclosures Act 1994*.

Yours sincerely

NSW RFS Commissioner

Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM

Minister for Emergency Services the Hon. David Elliott meeting award recipients at the St Florian's Day Award Ceremony 2015 at NSW RFS Headquarters. Photo by Adam Hollingworth

Commissioner's Report

The 2014/15 period again demonstrated the professionalism and wide range of roles that our people perform every day, in communities right across NSW and further afield.

The early parts of the bush fire season were busy for many of our members and operational partners. Indeed, between July and November 2014, there were in excess of 6,300 bush and grass fires across the state, during which was one of the warmest spring seasons on record. This included fires near Tamworth, Dubbo, Glen Innes, Forbes, Cessnock, Gosford and the Blue Mountains.

As the season developed, in September 2014 the Bushfire & Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre released its annual outlook which indicated an above normal bush fire season for large parts of NSW, particularly in forested coastal areas.

Towards the start of summer, many areas received some much needed and very welcome rain. This resulted in a lull in fire activity, and a more benign bush fire season than predicted. Nonetheless, there were still more than 12,000 bush and grass fires across the state across the season.

Outside of NSW, our people were deployed to bush fire emergencies in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria. The NSW RFS coordinated a request to send firefighters and Incident Management Team personnel from the NSW RFS, Fire & Rescue NSW, Forestry Corporation, National Parks & Wildlife Service, and NSW Ambulance, along with crews from the ACT and Northern Territory. In a major logistical exercise, one of the Air-Cranes based in NSW was despatched, in a long journey across the Nullabor to assist with the fires.

Due to our recent investment in increasing our base camp capacity, the NSW RFS was requested to provide assistance in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Lam in the Northern Territory. Indigenous communities on the remote Elcho Island had been significantly impacted by the cyclone, with most homes and structures destroyed. Our people worked with the indigenous communities and the NT government to establish temporary accommodation for more than 200 people.

In April, an East Coast Low brought heavy rain and strong winds to Greater Sydney and the Hunter Valley. This resulted in more than 20,000 calls for assistance to the SES. Our people assisted the SES during the lengthy and challenging response and recovery effort.

Throughout the reporting period, we continued to ensure our firefighters were equipped with world standard of support and equipment.



Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM

The Service purchased an additional helicopter which is used during firefighting, hazard reduction and emergency operations across the state. We also conducted research to establish a trial of Large and Very Large Air Tankers across the next bush fire season.

The safety of our firefighters remains the highest priority, which is why we've been reviewing Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) in consultation with our members. Our PPC is world-class, and the new-style garments being trialled incorporate feedback from members making them lighter and more comfortable for both men and women.

Our work in informing and engaging the community continued. The three-year 'Planning to Make a Plan is Not a Plan' public awareness campaign came to close in 2014/15, with a marked improvement in the number of people making a bush fire survival plan. Work also began on a new campaign for 2015/16 and beyond.

The NSW RFS website and social media remain critically important to communicating with people in bush fire prone areas across the state. During the reporting period, the NSW RFS website was

INTRODUCTION

significantly enhanced and upgraded to ensure an increased level of capacity and redundancy, especially during major incidents. The new website went live in July 2014. The Service's Facebook page continues to be one of the most popular social media channels of all NSW Government agencies.

Encouraging the community to be prepared for the bush fire season is increasingly important for NSW RFS. Prior to the 2014/15 fire season the NSW RFS hosted two large community state-wide community-focussed events. In September Open Day saw 300 brigades involved and in October the inaugural Get Ready weekend was held.

A review of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Scheme was conducted throughout the reporting period. The 10/50 scheme allows people in a designated area to clear trees on their property within 10 metres of a home and clear underlying vegetation such as shrubs (but not trees) on their property within 50 metres of a home, without seeking approval. The review took recommendations and suggestions from more than 3,500 interested parties to government. The changes were passed by NSW Parliament and the Government announced the changes to the scheme publically just after the end of the reporting period.

Engaging with and recognising our members is a priority for the Service. The NSW RFS Leadership Forum was held in Dubbo in May 2015, and was well attended by staff and senior volunteers from across the state.

In October 2014 I joined members of fire and emergency services agencies from across Australia and New Zealand for the inaugural National Memorial Service in Canberra to honour those who have been killed on duty. In a moving ceremony NSW RFS water bombing pilot David Black, who died while water bombing fires in October 2013, was honoured for his sacrifice.

St Florian's Day in May is the annual day for the NSW RFS to recognise and award acts of bravery and outstanding service of NSW RFS members. Along with myself and the Executive team, the Hon. David Elliott MP, our new Minister for Emergency Services attended the ceremony at NSW RFS Headquarters in Lidcombe. In total 21 individuals were presented with awards and 16 Units were recognised, represented by more than 100 members. For the first time Remote Area Firefighters from the National Parks and Wildlife were also included in the awards.

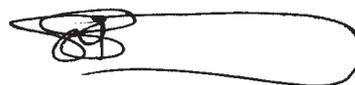
Achievements during this period are due to an incredible team effort. As always, throughout all of this, our people have remained a constant. The professionalism, dedication and commitment of

our members, particularly our more than 74,000 volunteers, is second to none. It has been satisfying to see, once again, our volunteer numbers increase during this time.

I would also like to thank the families, employers and supporters of our volunteers. While sometimes going unnoticed, your contribution is always very much appreciated.

Finally, a thank you also to the Hon. David Elliott, the Minister for Emergency Services, and former Minister Stuart Ayres, for your support of the Service and our members.

Yours sincerely,



NSW RFS Commissioner
Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM

NSW RFS Vision & 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

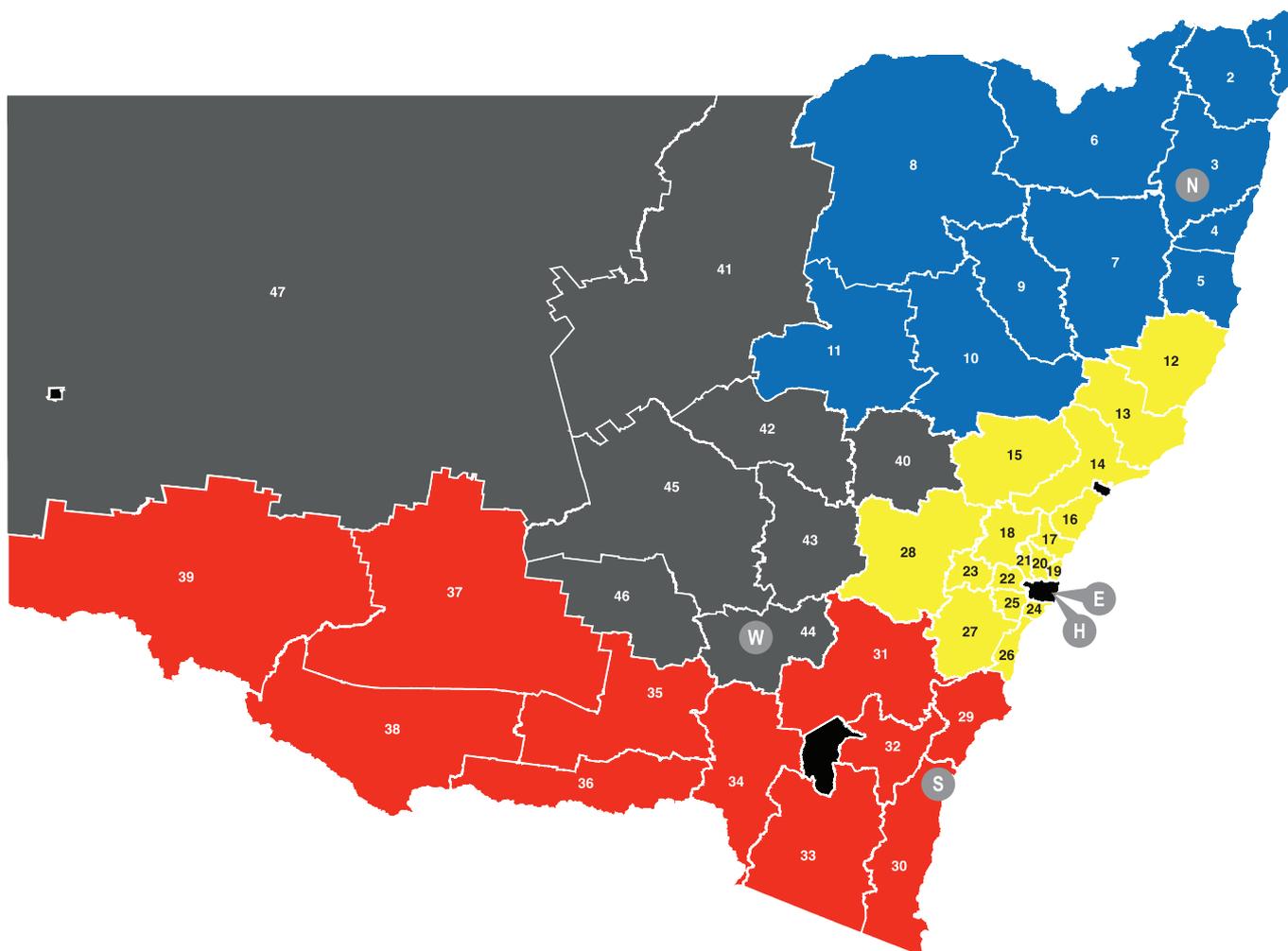
Stakeholders

- › community
- › our members
- › planners and developers
- › media
- › Minister for Police and Emergency Services
- › Ministry for Police and Emergency Services
- › Department of Justice
- › Members of Parliament - state and Federal
- › Local Government NSW (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 Cooperative Research Centre
- › consultative committees (Community Engagement, Infrastructure Services, Membership Services, Operations and Regional Services.)
- › emergency Service peak groups
- › insurance industry
- › tourism industry groups
- › peak industry groups
- › non-government organisations and service providers
- › other government authorities
- › employers of volunteers
- › other associations (Farmers Association, Country Women's Association etc)



Training Day at Loftus Brigade 2015.
Photo by Sharon Quandt

NSW RFS Regions and Districts



H Headquarters

15 Carter Street,
Lidcombe

N Region North

Level 4, State
Office Block,
Victoria Street,
Grafton

E Region East

42 Lamb Street,
Glendenning

S Region South

7-9 Kylie
Crescent,
Batemans Bay

W Region West

3/21 Lovell
Street,
Young

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

REGION NORTH		REGION EAST		REGION SOUTH		REGION WEST	
1	Far North Coast Ballina, Byron, Tweed	12	Mid Coast Greater Taree Hastings	29	Shoalhaven	40	Cudgegong Mid Western Regional
2	Northern Rivers Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley	13	Gloucester/ Great Lake Gloucester Great Lakes	30	Far South Coast Bega Valley, Eurobodalla	41	North West Bogan, Coonamble, Walgett, Warren
3	Clarence Valley	14	Lower Hunter Cessnock, Dungog, Maitland, Port Stephens	31	Southern Tablelands Goulburn Mulwaree, Upper Lachlan, Yass Valley	42	Orana Dubbo, Narromine, Wellington
4	Mid North Coast Bellingen, Coffs Harbour	15	Hunter Valley Muswellbrook, Singleton	32	Lake George Palerang, Queanbeyan City	43	Canobolas Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Orange
5	Lower North Coast Kempsey, Nambucca	16	The Lakes Lake Macquarie, Wyong	33	Monaro Bombala, Cooma-Monaro, Snowy River	44	South West Slopes Boorowa, Cootamundra, Harden, Young
6	Northern Tablelands Glen Innes Severn, Inverell, Tenterfield	17	Gosford	34	Riverina Highlands Gundagai, Tumbarumba, Tumut	45	Mid Lachlan Valley Forbes, Lachlan, Parkes, Weddin
7	New England Armidale Dumaresq, Guyra, Uralla, Walcha	18	Hawkesbury	35	Riverina Coolamon, Junee, Lockhart, Urana, Wagga Wagga	46	Bland Temora Bland, Temora
8	Namoi/Gwydir Gwydir, Moree Plains, Narrabri	19	Warringah/ Pittwater Pittwater, Warringah	36	Southern Border Albury, Berrigan, Corowa, Greater Hume	47	Far West Bourke, Brewarrina, Central Darling, Cobar, Unincorporated NSW
9	Tamworth	20	Hornsby/ Ku-ring-gai Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai	37	MIA Griffith, Leeton, Hay, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera, Carrathool		
10	Liverpool Range Gunnedah, Liverpool Plains, Upper Hunter	21	The Hills	38	Mid Murray Conargo, Deniliquin, Jerilderie, Murray, Wakool		
11	Castlereagh Gilgandra, Warrumbungle	22	Cumberland Blacktown, Fairfield, Penrith	39	Lower Western Balranald, Wentworth		
		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				

Note: Where a district is a team or zone, local government areas (LGAs) are listed.

TOTAL VOLUNTEERS 74,516

REGION NORTH
13,615
VOLUNTEERS

REGION SOUTH
21,968
VOLUNTEERS

REGION EAST
23,568
VOLUNTEERS

REGION WEST
15,564
VOLUNTEERS

NOTE: Dual members in different Regions are counted in both Regions.



TOTAL VEHICLES

Vehicles	North	East	South	West	Total
Tankers	844	914	1,384	1,243	4,385
Pumpers	6	44	17	2	69
Personnel Transport & Command Vehicles	146	397	167	121	831
Bulk Water Carriers	3	31	22	8	64
Tanker Trailers	683	33	382	238	1,336
Cargo, Tip Trucks & Various Trailers	100	232	123	68	523
Communications Vehicles & Trailers	9	16	8	8	41
Catering Vehicles & Trailers	18	43	23	5	89
Marine Craft	0	27	2	0	29
Slip on Units & Miscellaneous Vehicles	190	65	60	98	413
Total	1,999	1,802	2,188	1,791	7,780

NB: Non-Service owned vehicles are not included in 2014/15 figure for tankers

TOTAL EXPENSES BUDGET

\$332.9 million

INCIDENTS

	North	East	South	West	Total
Bush and grass fires (attended by NSW RFS)	2,095	2,829	1,752	1,161	7,837
Structural fires	259	530	289	186	1,264
Motor Vehicle fires	271	958	258	146	1,633
Motor Vehicle accidents	864	2,159	831	382	4,236
Investigation	506	2,073	698	235	3,512
Refuse fires	92	311	128	121	652
Spillages	140	481	116	39	776
Assist other agencies	150	517	173	77	917
Flood	8	61	5	2	76
Other incidents	320	1,401	386	138	2,245
Totals	6,183	15,036	4,754	2,467	23,148

Controlled burns/pile burns (Rural Fire Districts)

1,960

INCIDENTS: FOUR YEAR VIEW

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Bush and grass fires	4,154	7,474	8,032	7,837*
Structural fires	849	957	1,090	1,264
Motor Vehicle fires	1,500	1,638	1,535	1,633
Motor Vehicle accidents	4,211	3,881	3,909	4,236
Investigation	2,020	1,777	2,302	3,512
Controlled burns/pile burns (RFDs)	964	1,088	2,664	1,960**
Refuse fires	592	608	634	652
Spillages	252	214	590	776
Assist other agencies	318	258	547	917
Flood	58	22	115	76
Other incidents	3,310	4,410	1,957	2,245
Totals	18,913	23,436	23,375	23,148

NOTE: In 2014/15 reporting of incidents in ICON has been further enhanced including the integration of the post-incident reporting function to ensure that ICON is the single point of truth for incident information. These upgrades have seen the data in the yearly reports improve in precision and accuracy.

*The figure of total bush and grass fires refers to the incidents in which the NSW RFS responded.

**Controlled burns/pile burns are not included in the total incidents figure for 2014/15.

Planning for the future: NSW 2021

During 2014/15 NSW RFS continued to work towards achieving its *NSW 2021: A Plan to Make NSW Number One* responsibilities.

NSW 2021: A Plan to Make NSW Number One is the NSW Government's plan to build 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 RFS has responsibilities under Goal 28 of the Plan and we report on those responsibilities through the annual NSW 2021 Performance Report to Parliament.

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

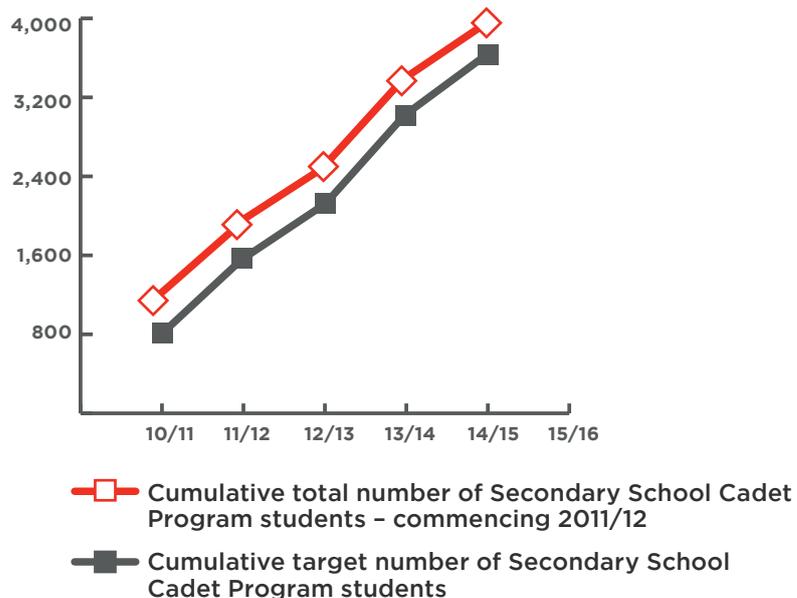
28.2.5 Increase the annual average level of area treated by hazard reduction activities by 45 percent by 2016.

In September 2015 the NSW Government announced a new State Plan based on 30 State Priorities including 12 Premier's Priorities. These new priorities are being taken into consideration and will inform the 2016/17 planning cycle.

The NSW RFS Corporate Plan 2014-2021 has been aligned with Goal 28. Reports on the performance of the NSW RFS in 2014/15 appear in the Key Focus Area chapter.

Goal 28.2.2

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

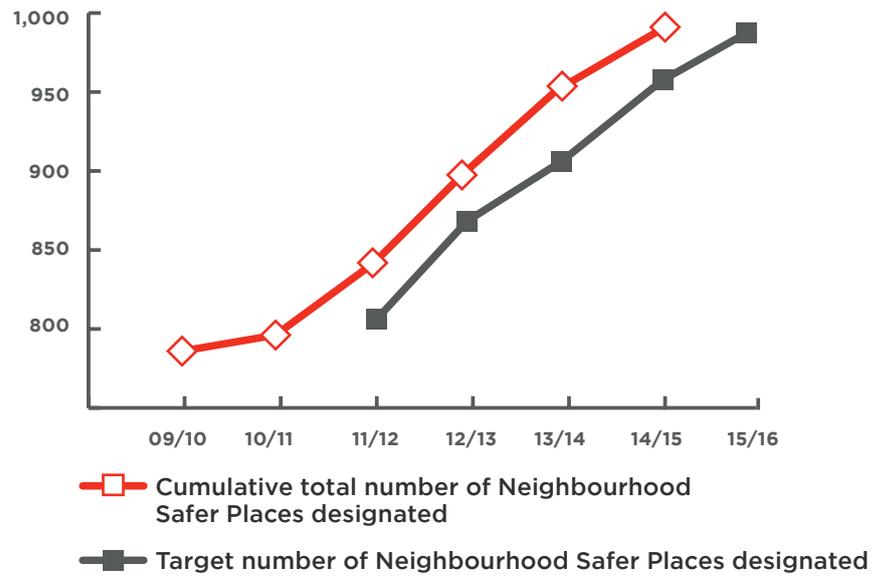


SECONDARY SCHOOL CADET PROGRAM

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Cumulative total number of Secondary School Cadet Program students - commencing 2011/12	814	1,654 (840)	2,484 (827)	3,341 (860)	4,164 (823)
Cumulative target number of Secondary School Cadet Program students	800	1,600	2,400	3,200	4,000

Goal 28.2.3

Increase the number of identified Neighbourhood Safer Places

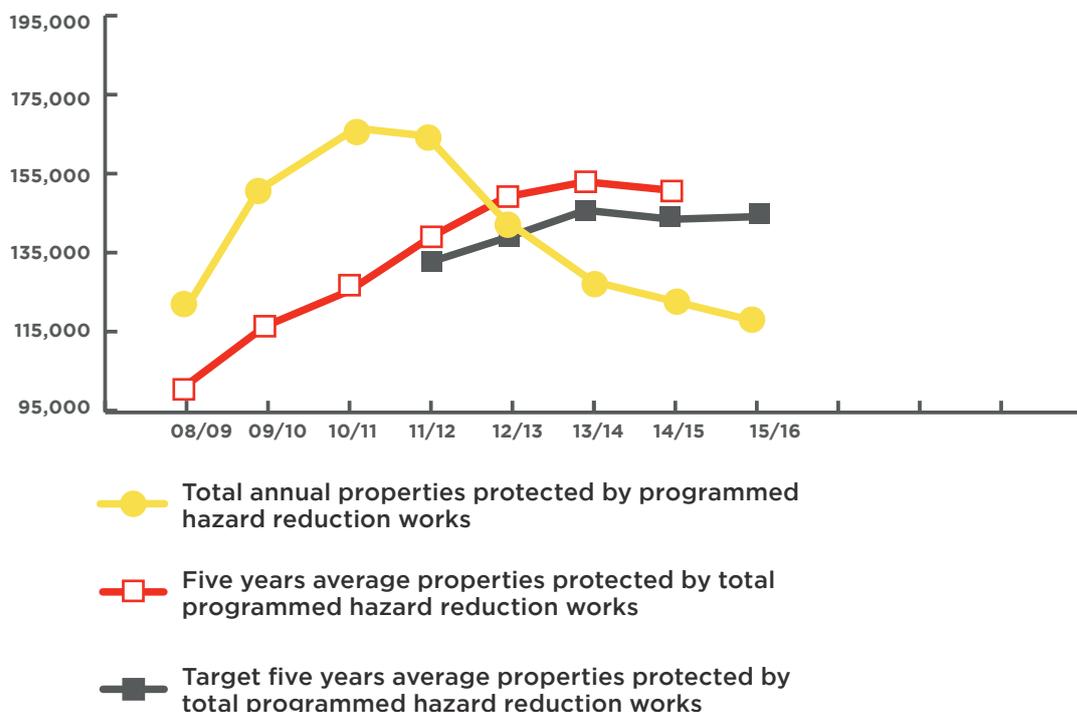


NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFER PLACES

	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	959	983	
Target number of Neighbourhood Safer Places designated			833	873	913	953	993

Goal 28.2.4

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



NUMBER OF PROPERTIES PROTECTED BY HAZARD REDUCTION WORKS

	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	124,414	116,977	
Five years average properties protected by total programmed hazard reduction works	96,313	115,612	128,593	136,063	150,400	151,679	144,232	
Target five years average properties protected by total programmed hazard reduction works				132,793	136,793	140,793	144,793	148,793

Goal 28.2.5

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



AVERAGE LEVEL OF THE AREA TREATED BY HAZARD REDUCTION

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Total annual hazard reduction area completed	123,334.51	174,705.85	117,633.25	138,211.48	281,492.19	157,222.46	152,157.44	
Five year average total area of hazard reduction works (ha) completed	113,946	126,915	128,894	135,688	167,075	173,853	169,343	
Target five years average total area of hazard reduction works completed				139,900	150,435	161,762	173,943	187,041