

# BUSHFIREbulletin

THE JOURNAL OF THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

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at Mt Kembla

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The views expressed in articles in the Bushfire Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the views or the policies of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

# FOREWORD



of Agriculture indicate just under 70 per cent of NSW remains in drought.

Despite the welcome rainfall, recent months have been a busy period for the RFS with significant fires coinciding with the statutory start to the fire season as well as a tornado on the north coast and outbreak of equine influenza, as this edition of the *Bushfire Bulletin* chronicles.

Shortly before going to print, more than 200 RFS members (comprising strike teams, crews for interstate appliances, aviation specialists, liaison and support personnel) were deployed to South Australia in support of our Country Fire Service colleagues. Additionally, more than 1,000 RFS members responded in support of NSW SES to assist with clean up operations in western Sydney following severe storm activity and major damage to thousands of homes.

There are a number of exciting new developments currently being implemented within the Service, a number of which have been discussed in this issue, including the development of a new Strategic Plan, which will guide the organisation over the next five years. I have had the opportunity to attend a number of events across the State and have collected a lot of your ideas on the direction of the Service, which I will continue to utilise as we plan for the future.

I wish everyone a safe, and hopefully fire and incident free, festive season and trust you are able to spend time with your family and friends. A sincere Merry Christmas to all.

Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM  
Commissioner



RFS volunteer firefighters have put in an enormous effort yet again this year and it has been an honour to work with the many outstanding men and women of the Service. Not only have you participated in fire fighting operations across the State but you have also provided invaluable support to your fellow colleagues in orange, the SES, in two of the most significant emergency operations of the year – the June long weekend Hunter and Central Coast Floods and the more recent December Western Sydney Hail Storm.

It has been my privilege to get to know many of you and I hope that my commitments allow me to continue to visit as many brigades as possible.

This year the State government allocated an extra \$9 million to the RFS to undertake important additional hazard reduction works in key areas of the State. This major undertaking is designed to help reinforce the community's defences against bush fires and will also assist all of our dedicated volunteers in the magnificent job they do.

The NSW government also recently approved the implementation of a new Community Bush Fire Hazard Reporting System that will allow the RFS to more accurately quantify all of the vital hazard reduction work firefighters and public land managers conduct each year.

I hope you and your families all enjoy a happy and safe festive season and fingers crossed that the much needed rainfall currently being experienced by a large part of NSW continues throughout the warmer months.

The Hon. Nathan REES, MP  
Minister for Emergency Services

# OUR VALUES UNDERPIN ALL OUR ACTIONS

# INCIDENTS

## AIRCRAFT, TECHNOLOGY AND OLD FASHIONED HARD WORK USED TO CONTAIN EVANS HEAD FIRE

Story by Superintendent Boyd Townsend,  
Northern Rivers  
Photos by Inspector Laurence McCoy  
& Dr Richard Gates

**T**he Bundjalung section 44 fire began on the first day of the Bush Fire Danger Period and continued to challenge fire fighters right up until its very conclusion two weeks later.

### Monday 1 October

At approximately 0400 hrs, the Northern Rivers Duty Officer was notified of a small fire along a walking track near the 'Gumma Garra' picnic area within the Bundjalung National Park, south-west of Evans Head.

### Air support requested

Woodburn RFB initially responded to the report and upon daybreak were able to access limited parts of the fire, although the extent of the fire made it impossible to completely contain. Air support was requested to assist ground crews.

### 'THE ADDED RISK OF UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE FROM WITHIN THE RAAF BOMBING RANGE'

The fire was burning through a dangerous mix of forest, coastal heath and grassy swamps. This was further complicated by the added risk of unexploded ordnance from within the RAAF Bombing Range, which made it difficult for fire fighters to reach the fire.

During the course of the day, two fixed wing aircraft were successful in slowing the spread of the fire towards the western containment line located along Olive Gap track.



### Tuesday 2 October

On the morning of 2 October, a meeting between the RFS and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) was conducted to reclassify the fire from Class 1 to Class 2, given the involvement of numerous agencies.

### 'THERE WAS A HIGH LIKELIHOOD OF PROPERTIES COMING UNDER THREAT'

Due to a lack of access to the fire for crews, it was found to have spread significantly to the south and south-east overnight. By mid morning the fire had intensified dramatically and it became clear that there was a high likelihood of properties coming under threat, particularly around Evans Head, a rural land sharing community (MO) known as Korindiri Ridge and also to the RAAF Weapons Range as well as a number of isolated dwellings in the area.

It was also clear that the original proposed containment lines to the south and east would most likely be breached. The camping area at Black Rocks in Bundjalung National Park was evacuated with the only access road being threatened by the fire front.

At 1545 hrs, the fire breached the containment line at Gap Road to the south, which was a pre-defined trigger for the recommendation of a section 44 Declaration.

### 'A SIGNIFICANT BACKBURN WAS COMMENCED AND COMPLETED AROUND SOUTH EVANS HEAD'

With significant potential for the fire to turn and progress northwards towards Evans Head under a forecast southerly change, a significant backburn was commenced and completed around South Evans Head from



**MASSIVE FLAMES  
ATTRACTED ON-  
LOOKERS AT THE  
EVANS HEAD FIRE**



the already established Asset Protection Zone through to the coast line in Dirrawong Reserve.

### Wednesday 3 October

Day three saw crews working to protect infrastructure within the bombing range and the Black Rocks camping area. The number of aircraft tasked to the fire was increased to three rotary and four fixed wing, which greatly assisted the turn around from Evans Head Airfield.

A significant airbase at the former RAAF airfield at Evans Head was now in full swing to service and support the air operation.

Extensive public liaison visits and meetings continued with isolated communities, which proved beneficial in keeping the community informed and prepared.

### Thursday 4 October

Containment lines continued to hold around Evans Head, however the fire continued on its push south and south-west, placing continued pressure on the Korindiri Ridge and lookout road areas. Extensive bucketing and water bombing continued along the fire edge to reduce the rate of fire progression allowing fire fighters to continue and deepen backburning operations ahead of the fire.

At this time, further fall back options were being considered with there being

further potential threats to the south-west, including the rural land sharing community of Serendipity and other isolated dwellings. In addition to this, there was also the possibility of the Pacific Highway being affected.

### Friday 5 October

The status of the fire was changed from going to being controlled on day five. Fixed wing air support was increased to six, which further enhanced the ability of ground crews to employ close containment strategies on the fire and alleviate concerns about further threats to the west and the Pacific Highway. Continued backburning and consolidation of containment lines continued throughout the day and night. Storm activity resulted in patchy rainfall across the fireground that unfortunately didn't affect the fire.

## 'THE MT BROWN FIRE WAS ONLY ACCESSIBLE VIA AIRCRAFT'

Lightning across the region produced new fires in the Mt Brown, Woodburn and Ellangowan Road areas. All of these fires were quickly brought under control by crews, however the Mt Brown fire was only accessible via aircraft, which resulted in a successful deployment of retardant lines from fixed wing aircraft to suppress the fire's spread.



### Saturday 6 – Friday 12 October

Over the ensuing week, a number of storm events occurred, which brought some rain, but not enough to completely extinguish the fire. The small amounts of rain made access for crews difficult at times.

Fire fighters from various agencies put in countless hours of hard work conducting extensive mopping up operations and aerial



incendiary work to deepen completed containment lines.

Numerous other support agencies also provided valuable assistance over the two-week duration of the fire including: the Salvation Army (catering), NSW Ambulance Service (health and welfare support) and the SES who provided an enormous amount of logistical support throughout the campaign.

### **'HELIFIRE AND MAPDESK, WERE EXTENSIVELY USED THROUGHOUT THE FIRE'**

The mapping capabilities of the Service's new award winning software, Helifire and MapDesk, were extensively used throughout the fire to provide fire fighters and the Incident Management Team (IMT) with comprehensive and up-to-date maps of the fireground. The data provided to the IMT consisted of a wide range of maps detailing the fire, environmental considerations and rainfall in relation to the fireground. This valuable information was used to assist the IMT make key strategic and tactical decisions.

Forward Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) was extensively used during the campaign to locate trouble areas during the final days of the fire. Hotspots were identified using the FLIR equipment mounted to a helicopter and this information was relayed to fire fighters on the ground. This information was specifically gathered late each afternoon and used to determine the priorities for the next day. The collected data was also provided to all aircraft for tasking to ensure they were utilised in the most efficient manner possible.

The use of the FLIR and mapping technologies assisted to bring an early end to the campaign fire, and worked to negate the need to backburn over 1,000 additional hectares.

The agencies and services involved during the campaign included, RFS, NSWFB, NPWS, SES, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Police and the Richmond Valley Council.

Over 6,000 ha were burnt before the section 44 was revoked on 12 October.



## QUICK THINKING PROTECTS VITAL ASSETS AT MT KEMBLA S44

Story by Illawarra Zone  
Photos by Glen Boles, Illawarra Zone

**W**ithin hours of a fast moving bush fire being reported on 16 October 2007 in the Mt Kembla area, crews had already realised the danger and requested additional assistance to ensure the fire didn't impact on important infrastructure in the area.

**Tuesday 16 October**

A Total Fire Ban had been declared for Tuesday in many areas of NSW due to forecast extreme fire weather conditions. Temperatures were expected to reach the mid 30s, with winds from the north-west exceeding 60kph.

### 'A FAST-MOVING BUSH FIRE IN DENSE BUSHLAND'

A call was received at about 0526 hrs to bush alight in the vicinity of Mt Kembla, in the Wollongong LGA. Mt Kembla brigade responded, and upon arrival at the scene at around 0540 hrs they located a fast moving bush fire in dense bushland in the area of Cordeaux Road, Kembla Heights. A request was made for additional resources.

While additional crews were being responded, Mt Kembla crews attempted to slow the progress of the fire, however the front burnt into inaccessible rugged bushland.

### Helicopters brought in

A call was made early by the first arriving Group Captain for aircraft to support ground crews and to slow the head of the fire until efforts could be made to redeploy resources to a number of fire trails to the north and to the east of the fireground. A request was made to the State Air Desk for helicopter support, and initially two helicopters were dispatched.

### 'THE FIRE WOULD CONTINUE TO EXPAND BEYOND THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL RESOURCES'

It became clear that the fire would continue to expand beyond the capacity of local resources before it could be contained. On the recommendation of the Illawarra Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) Operations Group, the Commissioner declared a section 44 bush fire emergency at 1015 hrs.

During the day, the fire continued to burn in mostly inaccessible areas of the Illawarra escarpment. A plan was developed to contain the fire within a series of existing fire trails and roads, with additional work being required to construct approximately 700m of handtool line. Around 100 RFS,



NSWFB and NPWS fire fighters were responded by the end of the first day. A dozer was tasked to dress over 4km of the existing trails.

Additionally, heavy plant was tasked to clear a rock fall that had closed Harry Graham Drive.

### Best position for crews

Due to the fire weather conditions on the day and predictions of increasing winds from the north-west prior to a strong late afternoon southerly change, out-of-area crews were staged in the Mt Keira area. This location was also chosen to ensure crews were in the best position to fight the fire should it change direction and head towards the Mt Keira and Figtree areas.

Additional aircraft were deployed throughout the first day, culminating in five rotary and two fixed wing machines slowing the fire's progress eastwards. The fire's spread was successfully slowed to allow containment

lines to be consolidated. An airbase was established at Illawarra Regional Airport to support fixed wing operations.

RFS crews and a task force from NSWFB were staged at Kembla Heights village and surrounding isolated assets. Illawarra Community Safety members were tasked to fulfil the role of Public Liaison Officers within the Mt Kembla and Kembla Heights areas. These volunteers doorknocked residences that were potentially threatened by ember attack, initially, and provided information and support to residents for the first two days of the fire.

Fire fighters and IMT personnel from Sydney Catchment Authority (SCA) and NPWS assisted in operations.

There were a number of issues that confronted the IMT which warranted special consideration, including air shafts to local mines and power supplies and infrastructure required to maintain workable conditions underground for mining operations.

### Wednesday 17 October

With continued aerial support, ground crews commenced backburning on day two of the fire, working from containment lines that had been completed on the first day. Crews were also mindful of the fire's progress towards the Cordeaux Catchment, which provides drinking water to the area.

### 'THE TOTAL LENGTH OF THE BACKBURN WAS APPROXIMATELY 6KM'

Backburning operations continued throughout the day, with fire fighters working to black out and mop up along containment lines. The total length of the backburn was approximately 6km. With weather conditions moderating, crews were successful in achieving good depth with the backburn, which was imperative, as unfavourable fire weather conditions were forecast for Friday.

### Thursday 18 - Friday 19 October

Blacking out and patrolling continued, with the objective of ensuring that the containment lines were secured. The unfavourable forecast weather conditions for Friday did not meet predictions. By Friday afternoon, the IMT, in consultation with Division Commanders and the BFMC, considered operations had been successful and recommended that the section 44 declaration be revoked. The Commissioner revoked the declaration at 1900 hrs on Friday 19 October 2007.

The fire was declared out on 26 October after it had burnt out around 250ha of private land.

Although the fire had the potential to burn into the urban interface and threaten significant mining and power infrastructure, due to the extraordinary efforts of the combined resources from all agencies, the fire area was contained to less than 300ha, and within the primary containment lines.

In addition to firefighting and land management agencies, the local SES volunteers were kept busy providing transport and logistical support around the clock for the duration of the fire. The Illawarra Local Government Councils also provided exceptional assistance and support upon request.





## TORNADO HITS DUNOON

Story by Dunoon RFB Captain Ross McDougall  
Photos by Tracy Rudd, Fred Ford, Helen Wallace and Will Mercer

**C**onfronted with a tornado that threatened parts of the small village of Dunoon, north of Lismore, the RFS and the local community were quick to respond once the weather phenomenon had completed its trail of destruction.

Friday 26 October 2007

A severe weather warning had been issued for the Lismore area. It was less than three weeks after the hailstorm that devastated Lismore. The residents of the village of Dunoon (population 500), in the heart of the macadamia country 18km north of Lismore, waited with anticipation as the storm approached from the south. No one could have predicted the events that were about to unfold.

Shortly before 1600 hrs a second storm cell quickly developed into a tornado, which touched down 1.5km south-west of Dunoon. After destroying one house, it tracked across a paddock and followed the ridgeline straight into the southern end of the village.

### 'CREWS WERE CONFRONTED WITH MANY FALLEN TREES AND POWERLINES ACROSS THE MAIN ROAD'

**1625 hrs:** Dunoon RFB Captain Ross McDougall arrived on scene at the edge of the village as soon as the storm had passed. Confronted with many fallen trees and powerlines across the main road into Dunoon Village, Captain McDougall immediately called for assistance from SES, Police and Country Energy. Dunoon and Tullera brigades were also responded with

the full extent of the damage still unknown.

An initial inspection revealed houses without roofs, while the small brick Anglican Church had three of its walls blown out. The house next door to the church also sustained severe damage.

First priority was to block the road and secure the scene as cars were attempting to drive through and villagers, in a state of shock and confusion, were walking over and around fallen powerlines. One RFS truck driver arrived minutes later and had to skirt around the village on foot through farm paddocks to the brigade station so that Dunoon's Cat 1 tanker could be used to secure the northern end of the scene and a full assessment of the situation could be made.

**1630 hrs:** John Hildebrand, Captain of Tullera Brigade, arrived on scene and stopped all traffic 1km south of the village. RFS personnel had to contend with worried parents trying to get through to their

children at Dunoon Public School situated in the middle of the secured area. There were reports that it had suffered considerable damage and there were still some teachers and children sheltering at the front of the building unable to exit because of the fallen powerlines.

### 'THREE BUSES WERE BLOCKED AT THE EDGE OF THE VILLAGE'

Tullera crew members were despatched to accompany and offer support to school children on three buses that were blocked at the edge of the village. Once it was determined to be safe, traffic was diverted via the villages of Corndale and Dorrroughby to the northern end of Dunoon where worried parents could be reunited with their children.

**1700 hrs:** Lismore Police arrived on scene to assist RFS with security, followed by the SES. Country Energy and NSW Ambulance arrived at around 1720 hrs. A second storm came in from the northwest but luckily only brought rain. After the removal of fallen powerlines, Country Energy declared the area safe for emergency personnel to enter at 1800 hrs. Teachers and children who were trapped in the school were released and school buses were allowed to pass through the area. SES took over control of the incident at this time.

**1800-2130 hrs:** Ten crew members from Dunoon, eight from Tullera and six crew from The Channon continued with road security, cleared roads and driveways of

debris and assisted SES with door knocking to check the welfare of residents and assess property damage. At 1900 hrs, members of Dunoon Brigade took their portable generator to the Dunoon Sports Club, which had sustained some damage and a refuge area was set up to provide support and hot food and drinks to residents and emergency personnel. Country Energy took over control of the scene security at 2130 hrs and all RFS areas stood down for the night.

### Saturday 27 October 2007

Power had been restored to some sections of the village overnight. At 0800 hrs the Dunoon brigade shed was set up as an operations command centre for the SES and the adjoining park provided adequate shade for a rest and refreshment area given the hot and humid conditions.

### 'DUNOON'S SUB POWER STATION HAD BEEN HIT BY FLYING ROOFING IRON'

Approximately six SES and four NSWFB crews conducted further damage assessment and prioritised tasks. Country Energy continued to work around the clock in large numbers to restore power – a process which saw them working in Dunoon for several days. Apart from the many fallen powerlines, Dunoon's sub power station had been hit by flying roofing iron causing considerable power disruption.

RFS personnel with chainsaw qualifications were tasked to clear fallen trees and

debris from residential blocks as well as liaise with the community on the clean-up process. In addition, specialist teams of tree loppers were called in to assist with trees considered too dangerous for RFS crews to handle. This enabled the SES to concentrate on tarping roofs and attending to structural damage to ensure all properties were safe and secure.

Crews from Tullera and The Channon assisted with the clean up until 1130 hrs while Dunoon Brigade continued throughout the day until they were stood down at 1600 hrs.

The RFS were first on the scene to quickly and effectively secure the area and control the peak hour traffic, however all agencies who assisted did a tremendous job.

In total, two houses, two schoolrooms and the local Anglican Church were all destroyed. The sports club amenities block and several houses were severely damaged while a further 20 houses suffered roof damage. The power sub station and many powerlines were also damaged.

Amazingly, the tornado only travelled around 650m into Dunoon, randomly touching down on buildings before reaching the school then swerving off into farm paddocks. It then skirted around most of the village and caused more destruction to another house and the community-built sports club and amenities building as it swung back into the northern edge of the village. Dunoon can consider itself extremely lucky more devastation did not occur, and no injuries were reported.

## HOW DOES A TORNADO FORM?

In a normal storm there is an updraft of air which cools as it rises and the water vapour contained in it condenses, creating rain. Once the rain starts to fall there is a downdraft of air through its updraft causing wind gusts and dissipating the updrafts.

A severe storm cell is more intense than a normal storm, often containing strong winds and hail. However, a super storm cell is different to a severe storm cell because it is longer lived and its pattern of up and downdrafts is different.

Super storm cell updrafts and downdrafts are separated. The updraft keeps going with no down draft to dissipate it. The updraft begins to rotate, causing the storm to stretch and creating strong rotating winds; similar to when an ice skater spins and brings their arms in close to their body to intensify the spin.

A narrow column of rotating air forms under the storm clouds and because it is spinning so fast air pressure within the column can drop low enough to condense water vapour, creating a cloud within the column.



When the column, which is now a tornado, touches the ground extensive damage can be expected. Tornadoes are usually short-lived, lasting only a few minutes before dissipating. The time between a super cell turning into a tornado is often very short, making it difficult to warn nearby residents.

Tornadoes, or waterspouts, are more likely to occur over the sea than over land.

This information was provided by Bureau of Meteorology severe weather meteorologist Dr Andrew Haigh.

## FIRE INVESTIGATION IN THE LOWER HUNTER ZONE - A 'DIFFERENT' CAUSE FOUND

Story and photos by Alan Hepplewhite,  
Volunteer Authorised Fire Investigator  
- Lower Hunter Zone

**T**he investigation of an unusual fire  
in the Lower Hunter Zone uncovers  
more than expected...

### Arsonist at work?

On Monday 29 January 2007, crews using aerial water bombing and a portable pump from the Myall River suppressed a fire within the Myall River National Park, north of Nelson Bay on the Central Coast. On Saturday 3 February, another fire was reported nearby, causing crews to suspect an arsonist was working the area. Fire investigators were subsequently called and thus the mystery began.

As the Myall River National Park draws many boating enthusiasts during weekends and holiday periods, the speculation of deliberate fire lighting was well founded.

The area of focus for the investigation centred on the 'Engels Reach' fire, on the shore of the Myall River between Tamboy and Little Brasswater in the Great Lakes District, which also adjoins an open waterway known as the Broadwater.

### The investigation begins

Lower Hunter District Authorised Fire Investigators Alan Hepplewhite (volunteer) and Mark Lewis attended the scene, accompanied by Police Forensic Services Officers from Taree. The two emergency services agencies travelled cross country for 27km to a point where they could access the 450ha fire.

### 'INVESTIGATORS BOARDED A HELICOPTER TO VIEW AND PHOTOGRAPH THE BURN AREA'

To canvass the first attack crews, investigators met with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Officers who had attended both fires, to gain an appreciation of what they had observed during the early stages. To complement their perspective, investigators boarded a helicopter to view and photograph the burn area.

Following the aerial tour, investigators boarded a NPWS boat and were taken to the area where the fire was first observed, which was only accessible by water.

### 'THE BURNT AREA APPEARED DIFFERENT TO WHEN THEY LAST CHECKED'

On arrival at the scene of the first fire, which occurred on 29 January, the first



Fisherman's Huts threatened by the fire  
- adjacent River Bank is Tamboy



From the air the burn area appeared as fire paths



Ground fire flares up

attack crew were interested to find that the burnt area appeared different to when they last checked on 30 January when the fire had been extinguished.

### Peat bed continued to burn

The investigation quickly identified why the appearance of the fireground had changed since their last visit. Unbeknown to the crew, the area consisted of peat and while they had suppressed and blacked out the fire at the time, the water had failed to reach the burning peat bed, which continued to burn. The peat bed had since resurfaced and burnt out what were previously untouched patches of vegetation sometime after their last visit on 30 January.

Investigators found a number of circular burn patterns of various sizes on the fireground that confirmed the resurfacing of ground fires as a number of them had burnt together. These became hazardous to investigators as they walked around the fireground - opening up in various places and resulting in the exposure of hot ash.

Investigators concluded that the suspected cause of the original fire was incendiary-based, as a boat had been moored in the vicinity leading up to the initial fire.

### 'BURNING UNDERGROUND AND RESURFACING TO START THE SECOND FIRE'

However, the cause of the second fire was determined to be a result of the original fire travelling outside its boundary, burning underground and resurfacing to start the second fire.

### Arsonist let off the hook

It was not, as first suspected, the work of an arsonist. In fact, while investigating the fire scene, a ground fire again became active, surfacing in unburnt fuels within the perimeter of the containment lines.

The registration of a boat reported near the area of the first fire was unfortunately not remembered by local fishermen who were canvassed during the investigation.

As a side issue, an important part of the fire investigation process is obtaining GPS records of fire perimeters overlaid in aerial and topographic view, making the job of the investigator much easier. Additionally, this investigation illustrates the important role first attack crews have in providing key information regarding the fire area first discovered burning. This in turn cuts down the time taken for investigators to do their work.

### Co-operation key to success

It is clear that fire investigation in the Lower Hunter Zone and Hunter area generally is actively operating to identify fire cause, with the support of Service staff throughout the



The interface of lighter vegetation with the dense Cabbage Tree Palm area



Heavy surface litter that supported the containment line breaching



Arrow identifies Engels Reach on the Myall River – the water in the background is known as the Broadwater

area. Co-operation of all agencies is the key to successful investigations.

For more information on the role of the Fire Investigation Unit, contact your District or Regional Office.



# SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

## FAR WEST TEAM IN FOCUS OFFICER IN PROFILE

**Name:** Clive Maxwell Linnett OAM  
**Rank:** Group Captain, Central Darling Shire  
**District:** Ivanhoe  
**Years in Service:** 46 (1961-2007)

### How did you get involved in the Service?

My first involvement with the Bush fire Brigade was in 1955 at the age of nine. I was hose boy for my father, burning off along the Parkes-Broken Hill railway line in the Ivanhoe area.

Depending on the season, this procedure had to be done before the summer as the steam trains would start a lot of fires with they sparks they emitted. Burning off along the route would clean up the old railway sleepers and any excessive fuel that was between the railway line and the fire break. The burning off was an annual event in those days.

At that time Dad's equipment was the first model of the long wheelbase Land Rovers and was equipped with two 44 gallon drums and a Moffat Virtue petrol motor and a Fox Terrior pump which was a jetting plant for sheep.

### Can you give us a history of your progression through the Service?

**Ivanhoe Bush fire Brigade:** Joined in 1961 after leaving school  
**Zone Captain:** 1968-1998 (30 years)  
**Honorary Secretary:** 1971-2007 (36 years [current])  
**Group Captain:** 1998-2007 (9 years [current])  
**National Long Service Medal:** Awarded 19 July 1994  
**Rural Fire Service:** Long Service Award (35 years) – awarded 15 August 2007

### What has been your most memorable moment in the Service?

One of my most memorable moments was in the late 1980's when the spear grass was up to the top wire of the fences after



excellent winter rains. We had a fire north-east of Ivanhoe and we had put a fire break through thick mallee which was heavy going and was done by an early model Caterpillar 94 grader as the modern graders couldn't get traction.

I was sent in by the Group Captain with four units to tidy up an unburnt pocket and burn back to cut off that section of fire. All was going well until a sudden wind change came, which was not forecast, so we quickly pulled out and within a few minutes the area was a ball of flames.

I had a RFS Codan 7727 single sideband transceiver at the time, which was useless. You would probably get New Zealand because of the skip instead of getting a message from around the fire to the Ivanhoe Base or return.

### What has been the most intense fire you have been responded to and why?

The 1974 fire season was the worst I have ever experienced as there had been in excess of 30 inches of rain for the year when the average at the time was 12 to 14 inches.

There were fires from storms covering an area from the Sturt Highway (Balranald/Wentworth) to the Barrier Highway (Wilcannia/Cobar).

I spent over a month away from our property fighting fires that season. If you did get home it was to check the livestock and water and try to catch up with some rest, then in most cases the telephone would ring and off we would go again.

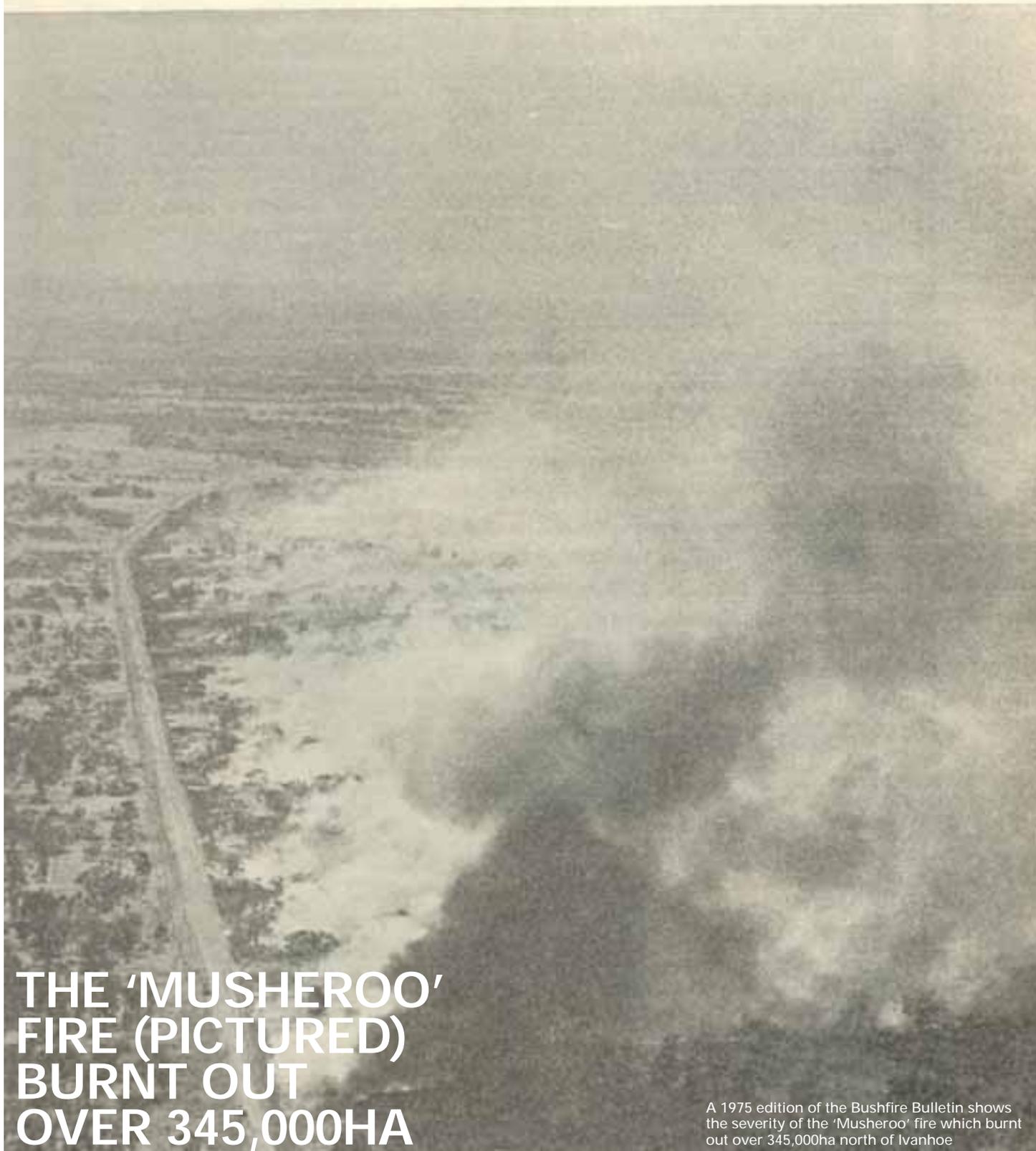
During that fire season, I was tasked with taking charge of certain sections of fires as Captain in the Cobar, Wilcannia and



# bush fire bulletin

AUTUMN 1975

OFFICIAL JOURNAL  
OF THE BUSH FIRE  
COUNCIL OF  
NEW SOUTH WALES



THE 'MUSEROO'  
FIRE (PICTURED)  
BURNT OUT  
OVER 345,000HA

A 1975 edition of the Bushfire Bulletin shows the severity of the 'Musheroo' fire which burnt out over 345,000ha north of Ivanhoe



Wentworth Shires as well as my own Shire of Central Darling once they were declared a state of emergency.

My firefighting unit in this era was a short wheel base Land Rover with an 80 gallon tank and a Finsbury Pump.

#### **What role do you see Group Officers performing in mentoring less experienced officers?**

Firstly, I believe the more senior officers need to work alongside their less experienced counterparts and encourage them in activities like training. It is also essential that they realise the more practical experience they can get the better. Give the younger officers responsibility so they gain confidence in what they are doing.

#### **What is the strangest thing you have experienced at a fire?**

I saw a mallee tree root burning for some two to three weeks underground after the fire had gone through and then igniting some unburnt spinifex.

#### **What did you enjoy about the training to become a Group Officer?**

I came up the ranks to become a Group Officer which made it easier for me, however I always looked forward to the practical training, although the theory side of training is necessary.

#### **What has been the best and worst meal you've eaten at a fire?**

All fresh food has been gratefully received, especially after living out of a tucker box for days.

As volunteers, our women in the back country have always done a great job where possible to get fresh food to fire fighters and at times under difficult conditions. I am not one to complain about food, I am very appreciative.

#### **What is your favourite type of hose and nozzle and why?**

There have certainly been big improvements with hoses through the years. I do think the synthetic hoses are a great improvement and with the Storz Dial A Jet Nozzle there is a good combination. The change over time to Storz fittings was a problem for a while with RFS equipment and private equipment.

#### **Any final thoughts, comments or funny tales?**

The organisation change from being Bush fire Brigades to the Rural Fire Service, was huge but I think it is now generally accepted by most volunteers in the Western Division of NSW. Our biggest problem is the decline in our rural population owing to the continuous droughts and commodity prices.

In conclusion, I encourage anyone interested in joining the RFS to do so as you meet some great people to work with and it gives you confidence in yourself to be working for your community and beyond. You will also be well looked after by the Service.

**Top:** Deputy Group Captain Clive Linnett (second from right) with the brigade's first purpose-built tanker (ex State Forests 'M' Series Bedford) in 1993. (Photo from Bushfire Bulletin)



## FAR WEST TEAM IN FOCUS BRIGADE IN PROFILE

**Name of Brigade:** Nymagee Brigade  
**Year brigade formed:** 1949 (approx)  
**Current Captain:** David Betts  
**Current President:** Phil Harley  
**D/T/I/Z:** Cobar (Far West Team)

### Can you give us a brief history of the brigade?

The Nymagee Bush fire Brigade began almost 60 years ago. The first equipment was purchased by landholders and the annual subscription was based on number of head of livestock carried on each property. Small farm utilities and trucks, carrying pumps and tanks and sometimes a beater were the usual response unit.

The first brigade truck was a privately owned Ford truck, followed in later years by a Blitz wagon, a Studebaker, and a Bedford. The volatile mallee vegetation area and extensive grasslands around Nymagee and further west provided the brigade with many wildfire events, especially after the big wet years of the 1950's, 70's and 80's.

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

Like many remote rural brigades, Nymagee members had to be fairly creative thinkers in the early years to overcome some of the problems they faced. One such innovation was the use of motorbikes to communicate on the fireground, like an 'RFS-style pony express'. The call out system was the local telephone exchange and the party line (great until a timber pole/s burnt out), the catering unit was the local women of the area who would prepare the meals and drive out to the fireground to feed the men. The women also assisted with radio communication when the brigade progressed to HF radio and later UHF's.

### What type of area do you cover?

The Nymagee brigade is 100km south of Cobar and includes the small village of Nymagee and surrounding large rural properties.

### What types of incidents does your brigade attend?

Nymagee Brigade attends structural and bush fires, as well as MVA's. The Kidman Way (major highway) and a number of other mainly unsealed major roads run through

the Nymagee brigade area so unfortunately, as outback tourism increases, so does the risk of MVA's.

### What vehicles do you have?

An Isuzu Cat 1 and a Landrover Cat 9.

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

We have completed Bush Fire Grasslands and Senior First Aid over the past couple of years. We have also held a training day focusing on MVA's. Training is a comparatively new concept for this brigade but one enthusiastically embraced by many of the members.

### What are some unique skills and features of your brigade?

Compared to similar brigades in our area, we have a relatively high number of young members. This, combined with the vast experience of our more senior members, puts the brigade in a unique position of having both youth and experience. The enthusiasm of the brigade is evident through their initiatives such as participation in training and community education events and their active participation in community events.

**What are some unique features of your community?**

Nymagee was once a busy mining town with five pubs and over 3,000 residents. Big stations in the area included 'The Overflow', made famous by Banjo Paterson's poem about a stockman named Clancy. Today there are about 50 residents, one busy pub, a police station, a hall, a church, CWA and a new brigade shed. Recent mining exploration has resulted in the discovery of a substantial gold deposit a short distance from the village so Nymagee may have an exciting future!

**What community events does your brigade participate in?**

We participate in a range of local events including: holding a Community Education display at the Annual Garden Show; driving Santa to the Nymagee Christmas Party in the truck, carrying out clean ups and hazard reductions around the village and assisting with a variety of community functions such as the Nymagee Outback Music Festival.

Thanks to David Betts, Eric Harland and Barry Betts from Nymagee Brigade for their assistance with this story. 



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# SPOTFIRE!

## RIVER SWIMMING WITH BEER, ROAD ROLLING WITH BREAM... WHAT THE?

Story by Wardell RFB Captain Ray Collyer AFSM

**W**ardell RFB, south of Ballina in the State's north, are rapidly becoming specialists in major truck accidents. Earlier this year, in the space of just two months, the Brigade attended three serious trucking incidents.

The first incident involved a semi trailer jack-knifing on the Wardell Bridge. Major disruptions to the Pacific Highway resulted for several hours but no one was injured.

### 'TWO TRUCKS CAME TOGETHER WITH ONE OF THEM, LADEN WITH BEER, ENDING UP PARTIALLY SUBMERGED IN THE RICHMOND RIVER'

The second incident occurred between two B-doubles involved in a side-swipe. The two trucks came together with one of them, laden with beer, ending up partially submerged in the Richmond River approximately 3km south of Wardell. The load of beer was partly salvaged, however many cartons and loose bottles floated away with the tide before a boom could be secured.

### 'THE FISH ARE ALL HAPPY IN THE RICHMOND RIVER'

Many rumours are floating around (no pun intended) as to where the remnants of the lost load have ended up. Needless to say the fish are all happy in the Richmond River. The Pacific Highway was closed for many hours on two occasions following the initial accident and during the salvage. No serious injuries resulted from the accident.

### 'CREWS LATER FOUND A REASONABLE SIZE BREAM ON THE ROAD'

The third incident again involved two heavy vehicles side-swiping. One of the B-doubles involved entered the Richmond River only 200m south of the previous incident. This time the vehicle entered the river at high speed and became completely submerged. As a result of the impact with the water, crews later found a reasonable size Bream on the road - an expensive way to go fishing. The load of steel and camper vans was salvaged, however one driver suffered serious leg injuries.

Wardell Cat 1 and Cat 7 were active in assisting with rescue, traffic control and clean-up at all three incidents.



# MyRFS

## MYRFS IS OPEN TO ALL VOLUNTEER MEMBERS...

MyRFS is the most immediate source of information for volunteers, and every volunteer has access to the service. There have been questions about whether probationary members can use the service, and the answer is definitely yes. Likewise, if you are a non-active member you can access MyRFS too.

MyRFS now displays important information like training schedules, personal qualifications and we're now working on a module that will allow your District, Team or Zone office to communicate important information to you through MyRFS.

### I can't get my password because my email address has changed...

This problem has been more widespread than we expected when we first setup MyRFS, so based on your feedback we have changed the system for the better.

Requesting your username and password has never been simpler. You can collect it by email, or over the phone. To collect your details by phone, look for the unique **transaction id** that appears after you've confirmed your details. Simply dial 1300 269 737, quote the **transaction id** and an operator will read your username and new password over the phone.

### MyRFS Help by Email

Did you know you can now contact MyRFS support by email? To get help with any MyRFS issue, including how to register or login, send an email to [myrfs@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:myrfs@rfs.nsw.gov.au).

If you do email - give us as much detail as you can about the problem, and we will contact you to provide assistance. Email support will help people on dial-up who can't call for help while connected to the internet.



### Your Brigade in Profile

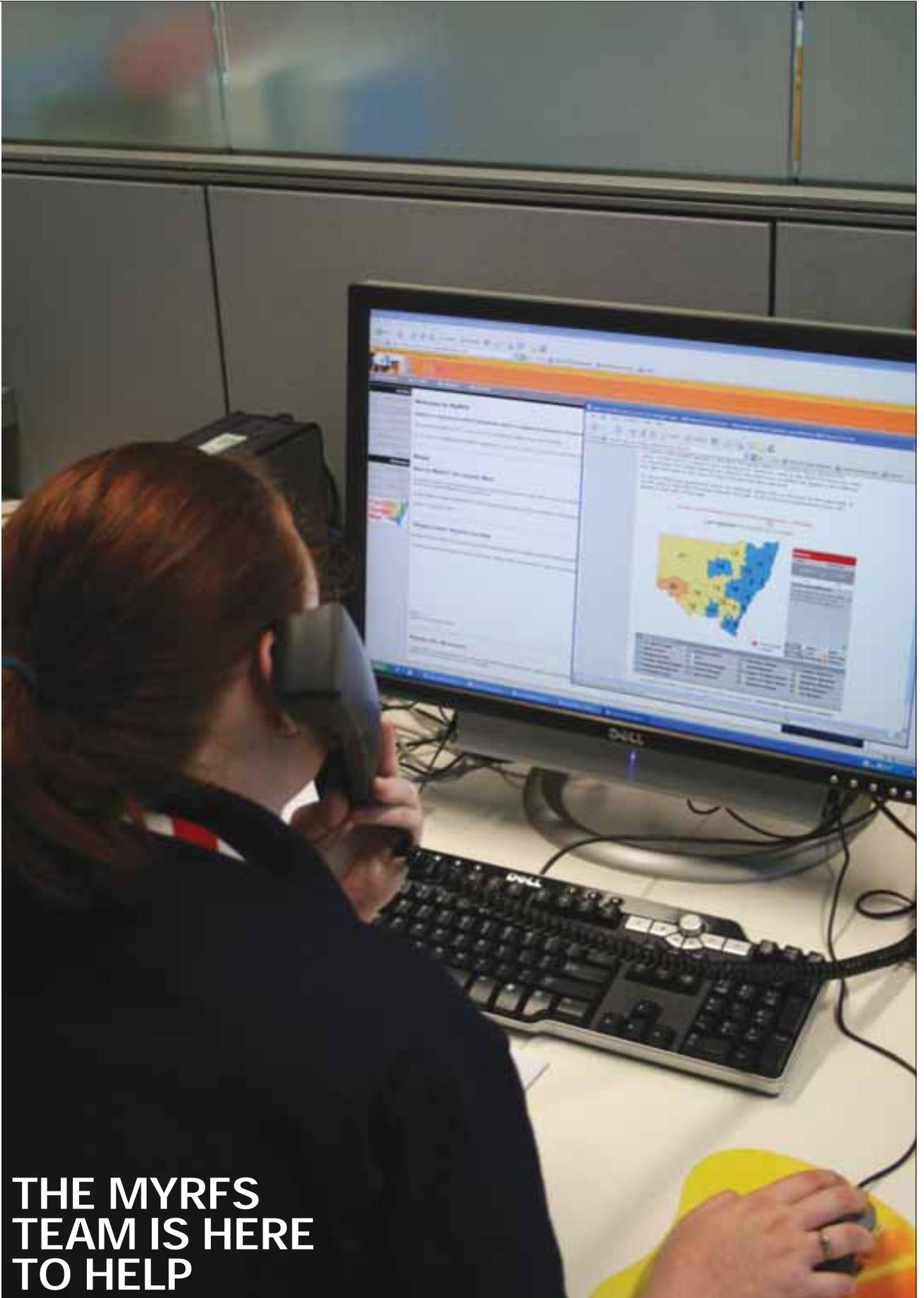
We have started a new series on MyRFS called Brigade Life. This is where you get to send in information about your brigade, so other users get to know more about you. Every brigade who nominates their brigade for profiling in MyRFS goes in the running to win great quarterly prizes for their brigade. Check MyRFS for details on prizes and instructions on how to nominate your brigade.

### Meet the MyRFS Support Team

MyRFS now has two dedicated support officers to help you with MyRFS issues. **Jess Morgan** has previously worked with the RFS in the Operations Customer Service Centre and has experience supporting the MyRFS product. She is a member of Muogamarra Brigade in the Hornsby Kuring-gai District.



**Matt Gould** is an active volunteer from the Wollondilly district and is currently learning the ropes. He is a long time user of MyRFS himself and knows first-hand what should be available online for volunteers. Both Jess and Matt bring brigade experience to their support role and will be there to help MyRFS work for you. 



**THE MYRFS  
TEAM IS HERE  
TO HELP**

# TRAINING



## IMT EXPERIENCE – OPPORTUNITIES WITH KINDRED AGENCIES

Story by Nick Helyer, Hornsby Heights Deputy Captain

**M**y 35 years of military service should have taught me at least one golden rule – never volunteer for anything! But then I thought that rule couldn't possibly apply in the largest volunteer fire suppression organisation in the world (RFS). Anyway that consideration didn't even register when, along with 30 other interested hopefuls, I attended the long-awaited ICS (Incident Control System) Workshop at Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai FCC one Saturday late in September 2007. We steadily worked our way through four scenarios of increasing complexity in four separate groups of varying background and experience. I think most of us got a lot out of the workshop but the final words of our facilitator were ringing in my ears as I headed home: "All of this 'what if' stuff is great but what all of you really need to

do is get yourself into a real IMT (Incident Management Team) somewhere and then what you have learnt today should fall into place."

### 'I WAS TO RELIEVE A VOLUNTEER CAPTAIN FROM THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS'

When the pager went off at 8.30pm that evening with the statement: "Planning staff required for Equine Influenza (EI) IMT at Camden" I thought it was a set up – the facilitator must be in cahoots with Region East! My wife actually spurred me into action: "Why don't you ring the duty FCO and find out – you wouldn't want to die wondering!" I waited ten minutes and then rang: "Hi Pete, I suppose I'm the tenth caller you've had in response to the page? No Nick, you're the only one – let me call Region East and see if you'll fit the bill." Five minutes later Pete called back confirming my suitability and with instructions to pack for four days and report



to Elizabeth MacArthur Agricultural Institute, South Camden, by lunch time the next day. I was to relieve a volunteer Captain from the southern highlands as SITREP/IAP staff officer in the Planning Section of the Equine Influenza, Local Disease Control Centre (EI LDCC). Essentially this was an IMT of 120 people lead by an Incident Controller and reporting to the State Disease Control Centre (SDCC) based at the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) HQ in Orange.

### 'RFS WAS PROVIDING ABOUT SIX PERSONNEL FOR THE IMT SPREAD ACROSS PLANNING AND LOGISTICS AND ROUGHLY HALF SALARIED/HALF VOLUNTEERS'

The trip there was relatively straight forward and before long I was passing the outskirts of Camden heading south. Elizabeth MacArthur Agricultural Institute was also well sign posted and I arrived well in time for lunch. NSW RFS was providing about six personnel for the IMT spread across Planning and Logistics and roughly half salaried/half volunteers. There was a formal induction process run by the DPI Logistics team which included an OH&S brief, site brief, EI brief, ID card photo, accommodation and meals, and time sheet requirements. My boss for the four days was to be Ross Burton, Planning Manager, a veterinarian and full time DPI



**THE EQUINE  
INFLUENZA CALL  
CENTRE RECEIVED  
THOUSANDS OF  
CALLS**



executive. Although most of the personnel on site were salaried, the other volunteers (besides RFS) happened to be working in the Planning Section and included two representatives of horse owners' groups NOT related to the racing industry.

I was accommodated at the Camden Valley Inn for three nights and could not complain about the quality of the room or the standard of cuisine. Our working hours were 0700 hrs to 1900 hrs with no night shift. Whole of team briefings occurred at 0900 hrs and 1700 hrs each day and free comment from Section Managers was encouraged. Six Forward Command Posts (FCPs) were also hooked in by conference call to these briefs. I spent the first afternoon being trained by Captain

Adrian Reynolds to relieve him the next day as SITREP/IAP officer. However that plan changed on day two when a higher requirement was identified to train a 'Front Gate'/Mapping Officer to relieve Inspector Eric Berry from Blue Mountains FCC.

This demonstrated the constant need to remain flexible to the team needs in any IMT environment. 'Front gate' is a DPI developed software application which allows identification of property ownership and use anywhere in NSW. It is a secure system and access was limited to the Planning Section of the LDCC.

On day three, another task was given to me to facilitate Community Education about EI through the forward command

posts. While I have no formal Community Safety qualifications within the Service, this additional task was given to me purely in recognition of the fact that DPI management perceived that the RFS as an organisation fulfils this role better than any other State Government agency.

Furthermore, this requirement had some priority, because at that stage it was apparent that some communities were inventing their own spin on EI in the absence of any positive engagement with those communities by DPI. This emerged through monitoring EI stories in local 'shire' newspapers.

The LDCC Media Officer (who was also located in the Planning Section) helped turn this problem around by ensuring the editors received regular media releases and were supported in this effort by the Incident Controller.

### **'IT WAS PRETTY AMAZING TO BE PART OF AN IMT OF 120 PEOPLE'**

So what was the 'take home' value of four days working at LDCC? It was pretty amazing to be part of an IMT of 120 people and no matter what the emergency might be AAIMS ICS works well for all scenarios. While the spread of EI was pretty 'scary' to horse owners it was relatively slow when compared to wildfire and hence no requirement for a night shift. For someone who understands the theory of ICS but is a little short on experience with IMT's this provided an excellent training environment in which to build some experience.

The size of the team also meant that there was some flexibility to learn on the job without unduly impacting on the overall outcome.

All RFS members were universally welcomed into the DPI 'team' and easily integrated into the common task. For me the experience was a real eye opener and I will certainly volunteer again if the opportunity presents. I recommend this type of experience to anyone trying to get a foot in the door to the RFS IMT world.

**Nick Helyer joined the RFS in January 2001 after 35 years service in two Navies. He has seen fireground experience in the Blue Mountains (2001 and 2006), Pennant Hills, Kurrajong and Colo River (2002), Glenorie (2002), Thredbo (2003), Coal and Candle (2004), Narrabeen, South Maroota (2006) and Oxford Falls and Cowan (2007). He occasionally assists with ICS training for Korean Forestry Managers within the Business Development section at RFS HQ. He is currently a Deputy Captain with Hornsby Heights Brigade in Hornsby/ Ku-ring-gai District. He is also an alternate delegate to the L&D Advisory Committee at RFS HQ. **

# SPOTFIRE!

## SMOKELESS GUN POWDER THREATENS WAREHOUSE IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Story and photos by Cumberland Zone Community Safety Officer, Inspector Justin Back

At about 0110 hrs on 29 October 2007, Cumberland Zone received a call to an Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) at Toll Logistics on the Great Western Highway at Arndell Park. Soon after the initial call, it was confirmed as a fire in a chemical warehouse and subsequently deemed a hazardous materials incident.

### Gunpowder causes fire

The warehouse was around 150m by 50m in size and contained a range of chemicals including nitrocellulose, otherwise known as guncotton, which is a major component in gunpowder. An amount of this product was suspected to have ignited causing the fire.

RFS crews were quickly on scene and had a Breathing Apparatus (BA) team, made up of members from Plumpton and Eastern Creek, ready to work with NSWFB crews. Two other RFS Cat 1 Tankers, from Eastern Creek and Erskine Park, were used as water relay to supply water to a NSWFB aerial appliance from a hydrant outside the site to allow other resources within the property to use the ring main on site, if required.

An RFS Group Officer and Inspector were also responded to the incident to assist in the coordination of resources and to assist NSWFB.

### 'THERE WERE 60 TONNES OF NITROCELLULOSE STORED WITHIN THE WAREHOUSE'

The fire was soon extinguished with the automatic sprinkler system activating and assisting in the quick suppression of the fire.

Due to the nature of the incident and the materials involved, entry to the warehouse was limited to a Hazmat crew, warehouse manager and a chemical engineer who established the extent of the fire and damage to its contents. It was reported that there were 60 tonnes of nitrocellulose stored within the warehouse.

The NSWFB Incident Controller closed the site off and the building was shut down with all openings remaining closed to contain the fire, smoke and any runoff resulting from the sprinkler system. Police were required to close the Great Western Highway soon after the contents of the warehouse were determined with the Highway re-opened later that morning.

Due to the complexities of the large warehouse and its contents, the NSWFB responded their Incident Management Team to identify how to manage the incident,



particularly given the range of chemicals involved.

### Toxic smoke and water

Some of the issues that the NSWFB had to consider were the toxicity of the smoke, and the toxicity of the water within the warehouse due to the possible damage to the materials. Venting of the warehouse was not possible till the smoke hazard was assessed due to the potential impact on the surrounding areas if released.

RFS resources were replaced by NSWFB pumpers and the BA team was stood down with only hazmat teams allowed to enter the building. At around 0400 hrs, all

remaining RFS resources were released from the incident with the fire extinguished and the site remaining a hazardous materials incident.

Nitrocellulose is also known as smokeless gun powder and is usually formed with a mixture of nitric and sulphuric acids on purified cotton or wood pulp. It is sometimes used in magic and pyrotechnics, with the resulting flash cotton or paper burning completely clean without smoke or residue. Gun cotton replaced black powder as a propellant in the 1860s and is also found in some fabrics, wood lacquers, paint, film and cosmetics. The product is kept moist in packaging as it becomes extremely volatile when it becomes dry.

# CORPORATE NEWS

## SECONDARY STUDENTS TAKE ON A FIRE CHALLENGE

Photos by Matthew Schroder

Imagine yourself in a firefighting situation. A fire has broken out and you are working as a volunteer in a local Fire Control Centre.

### A new multimedia resource

Fire challenge is a new multimedia resource for Geography Stage 5 that re-creates this experience for students. Through a role-playing exercise, students have the responsibility of bringing a fire outbreak under control. The resource was developed by the RFS in collaboration with the NSW Department of Education's Centre for Learning Innovation.

The resource was officially launched on 24 October 2007 at RFS Headquarters by RFS Commissioner, Shane Fitzsimmons.

### 'SCHOOLS WILL BE ABLE TO BROADEN STUDENTS KNOWLEDGE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF FIRE SAFETY'

"This new valuable resource will be available to every public and private secondary school in the State," Mr Fitzsimmons said. "That means around 1,000 schools will be able to broaden students knowledge on the importance of fire safety, while meeting the current requirements of the existing Geography syllabus."

"Fire Challenge was developed by a dedicated group of fire and education experts. It is a fantastic program for secondary students and cadets and will form a vital cog in the community education programs the RFS delivers across NSW in future years."

Fire challenge helps students to better appreciate fire behaviour, the geographical



Senior Education Officer Kate Surrey, CLI A/General Manager Karen White, Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and Operations Officer Terry Jackson

processes that underpin it, and the complexities involved in responding to real firefighting situations.

#### Fire challenge includes:

- Animated maps showing the progress of the fire
- Interactive activities on fire behaviour and safety
- Video and audio updates of the fire outbreak
- Glossary
- User guide for students and cadets
- Teacher guide with resources and Quality Teaching notes





**NEW  
COMMISSIONER  
LAUNCHES FIRE  
CHALLENGE  
PROGRAM**

## UK LEARNS A FEW LESSONS FROM RFS

Story by Brad van Wely  
Photos by Rob Gazzard

The RFS recently hosted Rob Gazzard from Forestry Commission Great Britain, who was on a fact finding mission to uncover ways of enhancing the United Kingdom's firefighting policies.

Rob spent several days observing and discussing the RFS's policies and procedures as part of an international trip which also incorporated Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania.

### Chalk and cheese

NSW couldn't be more different to the UK in terms of population, land mass and even the number of fire services used to protect the community. NSW has a population of over seven million people, spread over 800,000 square kilometres, which is protected from fire by the RFS and NSW Fire Brigades.

In stark contrast, around 60 fire and rescue services exist to look after the UK's population of 60 million people who are spread over 245,000 square kilometres, encompassing England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### 'AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY TO IDENTIFY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN AUSTRALIA'S GUIDELINES AND POLICIES'

As part of his role, Rob is charged with the large responsibility of analysing the UK's policy and delivery on fire, including wildfire statistics and national needs analysis. The trip Down Under was seen as an important opportunity to identify strengths and opportunities in Australia's guidelines and policies that could be applied to the UK to better serve their fire agencies.

The lessons learned from Australia will also be used to provide UK landowners and managers with tried and tested policies and guidance to assist in asset protection.

### Valuable information learned

Rob said he left Australia with a lot of valuable information to assist the UK in its progression of various policies on fire and rescue services.

"Wildfires in the UK have a considerable impact on to the environment, economic and social assets, which the RFS and other government agencies have dealt with over the last ten years to an internationally recognised high standard," Rob said.

"I was impressed by the financial management, investment in multi-functional infrastructure and equipment as well as



effective fire suppression that the RFS provides. I observed some excellent examples of inter-agency working; from policy and processes, design of incident control centre and local fire stations, to a bush fire in the Ku-Ring-Gai National Park."

"My research would not have been possible without the generosity and experience of RFS Superintendent Brian Graham (Business Development Unit), who took the time to ensure I observed as much as possible within the short time I had. I am also extremely grateful to Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons for allowing me to explore the RFS organisation."

Rob's trip was supported by the Forestry Commission Great Britain and Chief Fire Officers Association with scholarship assistance from the Institute of Chartered Foresters, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and Institute of Fire Engineers.



# SPOTFIRE!

## WHAT ARE THE ODDS? BATTERY FAILURE OCCURS AT MOST INOPPORTUNE MOMENT

Story and photos by Graham Lawrence,  
Wherrol Flat Rural Fire Brigade

On 11 August 2007 at about 1430 hrs, Wherrol Flat Brigade responded to an escaped private burn off with an embarrassing and expensive casualty.

The Bush Fire Danger Period on the mid North Coast had been implemented early due to hot, dry and windy conditions in the area which had been keeping local brigades busy.

On this day, a burn off was reported to have escaped on a property 24km from Wingham, despite a number of people and a small spray unit being in attendance.

On arrival, Wherrol Flat RFB was directed down a steep track by a neighbour who had called in the fire. With the fire rapidly progressing up a hill and a caravan and out building in its path, a property protection backburn was put in place. Stopping the fire at its present location was essential in saving many hectares to the east and ensuring a much larger fire didn't develop.

### 'A KRUMP NOISE, CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY A SHOCK WAVE, WAS HEARD AND FELT BY FIRE FIGHTERS'

While this routine procedure was taking place, a very large explosion in the form of a *krump* noise, closely followed by a shock wave, was heard and felt by fire fighters. The explosion was found to have occurred 500m away from the fire but no one could work out the cause as Wallaby Joe and Marlee RFBs arrived to assist.

### 'THE 4WD HAD EXPERIENCED BATTERY FAILURE AT THE MOST INCONVENIENT OF MOMENTS'

The puzzling event was soon uncovered when a local owner rushed up the hill to report that a private LPG/petrol powered Land Rover had caught fire. The aftermath revealed that the 4WD had experienced battery failure at the most inconvenient of moments as the fire spread up the hill and engulfed it.

Fortunately no one was hurt, although a few red faces remained.





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## HELLO and GOODBYE !!

We have had a very good response to our 'new look' advert - thank you all. It is our hope that we can continue to add more items to our range at intervals.

The '**HELLO**' is to tell you about the **NEWEST** Baseball Cap (see photo top left) which replaces the original cap.

It is similar to the **LOGO** Cap we 'introduced' to you in the last Bulletin and on our website, but it has a **LARGER** Embroidered **EMBLEM** at the front in place of the 'RFS', for the Traditionalists, but with the Stripes on the sides which has a Modern look about it, we feel. Check out this item on our website! Prices remain the same for both styles and we are the Approved Supplier.

The '**GOODBYE**' is to farewell our **ORIGINAL** Navy Brushed Cotton Baseball Cap with the Embroidered Emblem only at the front, now discontinued on notification from State HQ.

We do have a few of these remaining for any 'sentimental blokes and ladies' out there who would like to take advantage of a limited **SPECIAL OFFER** while stock of this Cap is still available.

Our Christmas/New Year shutdown is from December 19th to January 2nd and we would like to wish you all the best for the festive season.

You may still send orders via post, fax, email or on the website during this period and they will be promptly dealt with, in our usual way, on our return. **OF COURSE, IF YOU AREN'T ON THE WEB, WE CAN ALWAYS POST OR FAX AN ORDER FORM TO YOU.**

**OUR CURRENT RANGE OF GOODS INCLUDING THE NEW ITEMS**  
View our Website for Pictures and Information on the various Items

Caps - New Emblem & RFS Logo Style Caps			
1 to 24	\$8.50	25 to 99	\$8.00
100 +	\$7.50		
Cricket Hats			\$15.00
Polar Fleecy Beanies			\$12.50
Screen Printed T Shirt (100% Cotton)			
(White Emblem)			
Small to 2XL	\$18.00	3XL to 8XL	\$20.00
(Coloured Emblem)			
Small to 2XL	\$20.50	3XL to 8XL	\$22.50
Screen Printed Polo Shirt with Pocket (100% Cotton)			
(White Emblem)			
XS to XXL	\$31.00	3XL to 7XL	\$34.00
(Coloured Emblem)			
XS to XXL	\$33.50	3XL to 7XL	\$37.50
Embroidered Polo Shirts (Poly-Cotton)			
XS to 2XL	\$28.00	3XL to 7XL	\$30.00
Firewise Polo Shirts (Poly-Cotton)			
Small to 2XL	\$37.00	3XL to 6XL	\$39.00
Embroidered T Shirts (100% Cotton)			
Small to 2XL	\$17.75	3XL to 8XL	\$19.75
Embroidered Sloppy Joes			
Small to 2XL	\$28.00	3XL to 6XL	\$30.00
Embroidered Polar Fleecy Half-Zip Jumper			
XS to 3XL	\$39.60	4XL & 5XL	\$42.60
Embroidered Polar Fleecy Full Zip Jacket			
Small to 2XL	\$45.00	3XL to 5XL	\$50.00
Embroidered Polar Fleecy Full Zip Vest			
Small to 2XL			\$41.00
Embroidered Dress Jumper			
Small to 2XL	\$77.00	3XL to 5XL	\$79.00
Embroidered Medium Kit Bag			\$33.00
Embroidered Large Kit Bag			\$42.00
All Garments (excluding headware) and bags can be embroidered with your Brigade or Name at No Cost if required.			
Brigade and Name is now a low			\$4.00
Be sure of your size before requesting this service!			
Embroidered Name or Brigade Badges			
1-99	\$3.30	100 +	\$3.00



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Fireground Signs – Sector Boundary and Water Point Vehicle with an Arrow indicating direction



# FIREGROUND SIGNS

Emergency events have the potential to have significant social, economic and environmental consequences. Emergency Service combat agencies are responsible for planning, preparation for, response to and coordination of such events, which includes the safety of everyone involved.

Within NSW we use the Incident Control System (ICS) for a single appliance incident right through to a Class 3 fire (section 44 declaration) during which operational integration and coordination must occur seamlessly. In essence, poor management of any emergency event will, in most instances, invite chaos, prolong the operation, make it harder to control and possibly lead to unnecessary losses, injury or death. Fireground signs are a particularly valuable tool to assist in fireground management and ensure that all personnel on the fireground are readily able to identify all key aspects at the incident. This is particularly useful for those resources unfamiliar with the local area. Fireground signs, of course, correspond exactly to the mapping symbols adopted in 2001 by the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee in NSW which are also shown on page 66 of the October 2005 version of the Fire Fighters' Pocket Book.

Enroute, the OIC briefs their crew using the SMEACS briefing sequence and then the OIC of the first arriving appliance sets the foundation for the fireground organisation and takes command as the IC. The IC should concentrate on the management of the incident, including sectorising the fireground, rather than becoming embroiled in the direct task of firefighting. If initially resources are so short it may, of course, be necessary to become directly involved, but immediately action should be taken to overcome this shortage.

As the access, threatened properties, staging area, sectors, water supply, safety considerations using LACES and other functions on the fireground are identified or established, it is essential to ensure that the fireground signs are utilised for the benefit of all subsequently responded. A staging area type 1 should be established

within striking distance of the incident to ensure that appliances do not simply drive onto the fireground unless they have been allocated a task.

In 1976 the first attempt to provide fire trail information saw the creation of fire trail signs comprising 230mm diameter metal discs painted red and yellow and these were introduced to identify 2WD, 4WD and walking trails, denoting whether they were dead end or through trails. In 2003, after a considerable amount of deliberation and consultation, the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee established a policy for fire trails. This encompassed the classification of fire trails as primary, secondary or dormant, permanent trail name signs to identify trails together with some permanent fire control advantage signs for waterpoints, permanent helicopter landing area and permanent staging area together with directional arrows. In addition, fire trail warning signs for no through trail and no turn around beyond this point were depicted.



State Forests Yellow Chevron Sign showing a waterpoint National Park's Green Chevron Sign



Permanent Staging Area/ Medivac Point Permanent Helicopter Landing Point Waterpoint



No Through Trail No Turn Around Beyond This Point

## District and Field Kits

It became apparent that a standardised system for fireground marking was required, so in 2003 Superintendent Bryan Daly, Region North Operations Officer, embarked on the project which culminated in the manufacture of eight sample sets in 2004. Production then followed with the kits in purpose made bags being available in early 2005 requiring only the separate purchase of a hammer, galvanised clouts and a broad permanent marker pen.

Each kit has a different set of contents with multiple copies of each sign and can be used for most circumstances encountered including fires, hazard reductions or in fact other emergency incidents. Blank signs have been included for specific messages or for some unforeseen situation. The signs are made of coreflute material which is durable, waterproof and reusable. Care should be taken in the placement of signs – appropriate height, clearly visible, avoiding proximity to fire and should be removed at the conclusion.

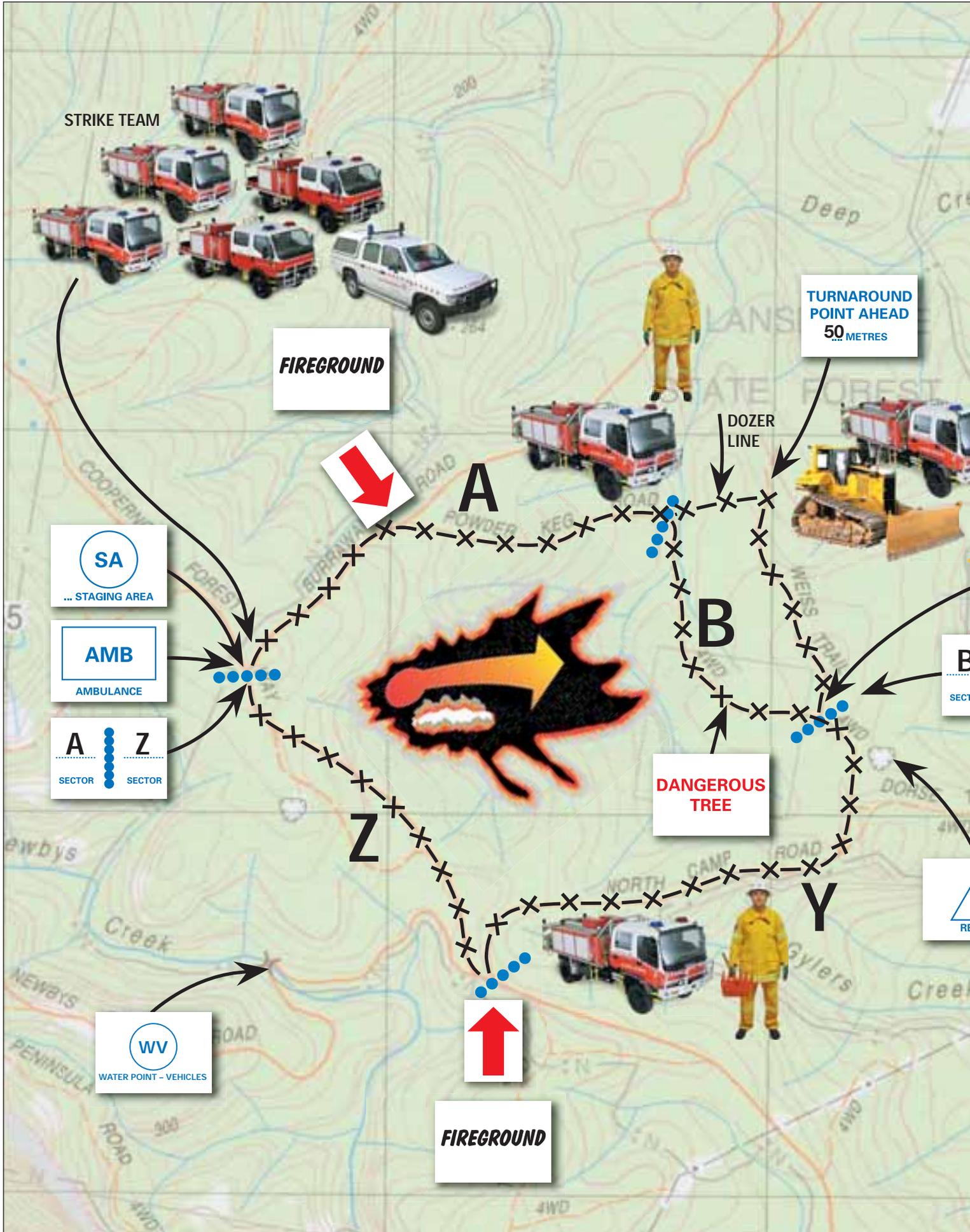
It is envisaged that the District Kit is held at the Fire Control Centre and the Field Kit is carried in a Group Officer's vehicle or a tanker dependant upon local circumstances.

The District Kit contains a total of 98 signs. "Control Centre, Division Boundary, Ambulance, Basecamp, Divisional Command, Staging Area, Directional Arrows and Blank Signs".

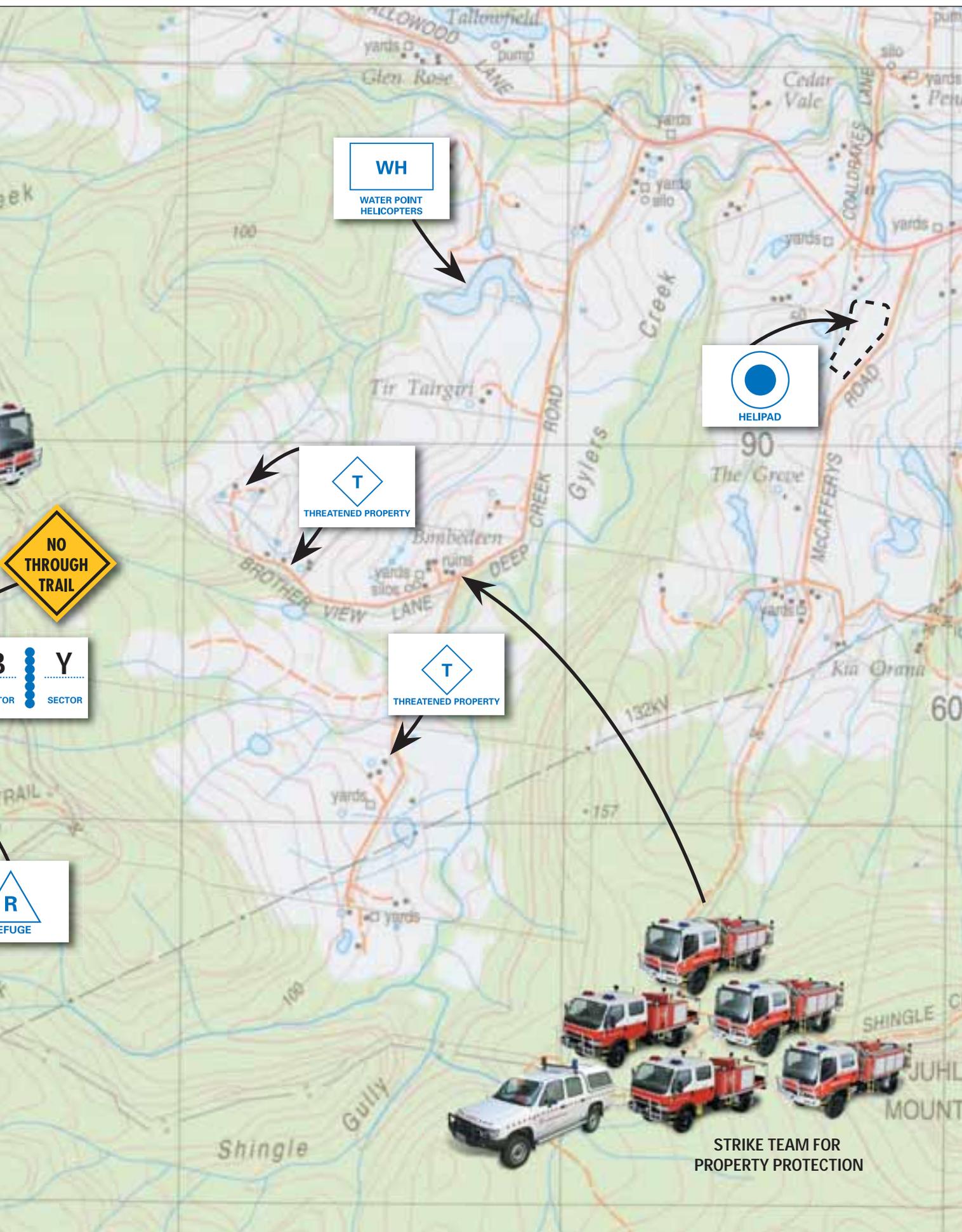
The Field Kit contains a total of 64 signs. "Refuge, Dangerous Tree, Trail Closed, Helipad, No Through Trail, Light Vehicle Access Only, Waterpoint – Vehicles, Sector Boundary, Escape Route, Threatened Property, Waterpoint – Helicopter, Danger Ahead, Directional Arrows, Turnaround Point and Blank Signs".



# FIREGROUND



# ND SIGNS



Pull out this section to display in your station or Fire Control Centre

## SMEACS for briefing sequence

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Current and Predicted</b> – Incident details, what is at risk, topography, weather, fire behaviour, hazard risks and resources deployed, enroute or available
<b>Mission</b>	<b>Objectives</b> - Overall or specific objectives, who or what is saveable, where to stop the fire/incident
<b>Execution</b>	<b>Strategy and Tactics</b> - task allocation, timing and safety considerations
<b>Administration</b>	<b>Assistance and Logistics</b> - What support is needed and being provided, staging areas, personnel, fuel, food, water, supplies, facilities, information – where, when and how much
<b>Command</b>	<b>Command, Control and Communications</b> - organisation, divisions, sectors, who is in charge of what, chain of command, communications plan, channels and procedures
<b>Safety</b>	<b>Hazards</b> (LACES checklist) – safety hazards and precautions, safety advisor, personal protective clothing and equipment

## LACES for SAFETY considerations at an incident

### Fire fighter

<b>Lookouts</b>	Everybody looks out for everybody else
<b>Awareness</b>	Everybody is aware of the current and anticipated behaviour of the fire and other incident hazards and precautions
<b>Communications</b>	Everybody speaks up about what is happening and their concerns at the incident and everybody listens
<b>Escape Routes</b>	Everybody has an “out” planned
<b>Safety Refuge</b>	Everybody helps everybody to survive. Everybody supports the decision to get clear of a hazard

### Crew Leader

<b>Lookouts</b>	Assign a “lookout” to a safe vantage point in communication with the crew leader
<b>Awareness</b>	Terrain, weather, fire behaviour, the tasks and nearby activities
<b>Communications</b>	Maintain suitable radio or other contact
<b>Escape Routes</b>	Suitable escape route/s checked and known by all
<b>Safety Refuge</b>	Suitable, large enough, close enough and free of hazards

## Driver Under Instruction Plates

With the increasing demand for the Rural Fire Service to provide driver training to its members, there is a need to display appropriate signage on vehicles to alert other road users that a driver of a heavy vehicle is undergoing instruction and training.

For this reason, the newly designed yellow and black reflective aluminium “DRIVER UNDER INSTRUCTION” signs are now available through your Fire Control Centre. Each 600mm x 300mm reflective sign has two nylon tie down straps to allow it to be attached to the front and rear of most fire appliances.

These signs are for any driver who is upgrading from a C class licence to a LR, MR, HR or HC licence and has begun driver training on any Rural Fire Service vehicle.

All drivers of Rural Fire Service vehicles must comply with the Safe Driving Standard Operating Procedures and as also noted on pages 12 – 14 of the October 2005 Version of the Fire fighters’ Pocket Book.

Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth AFSM  
Manager Operational Readiness



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## DROUGHT, RECRUITMENT AND DIVERSITY ALL PART OF THE RFS STRATEGIC PLAN

The end of September 2007 saw the appointment of Shane Fitzsimmons as new Commissioner of the RFS. In this new era, one of the Commissioner's first priorities was to help establish a shared direction for the organisation by developing a Service-wide Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan provides direction for the Service for the next five years and helps us with our priorities, resources and plans.

## 'THE PLAN ALSO ALLOWS US TO MONITOR OUR PERFORMANCE TO CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE OUR SERVICE DELIVERY'

It has the vital role of linking what we do to meet the requirements of the State Government, the communities we serve and all Service members. Importantly, the plan also allows us to monitor our performance to continuously improve our service delivery.

The members of the Executive and a number of other representatives devoted a day and a half to developing the Strategic

Plan for the RFS. Prior to the planning days, a large amount of research was undertaken which included using the information from all volunteer surveys spanning the last five years and other relevant internal and external papers.

Some of the issues we will be focusing on in the next five years include climate change and its effects on how we do business, the changing face of the volunteer, encompassing people's availability, issues around diversity and the importance of recruitment and retention.

Look forward to seeing further communication about the Service's Strategic Direction which will help guide both volunteers and staff.



# ALIES

## AUSTRALASIAN LIBRARIES IN THE EMERGENCY SECTOR



### EMERGENCY SECTOR LIBRARIANS CONTRIBUTE TO THE BIG PICTURE

Besides being home to one of the most comprehensive collections on fire in the environment in the country, the RFS Library is also playing an important role in the development of a national web portal linking to valuable information on emergency management in Australia.

### 'THE PORTAL IS DESIGNED TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION WEBSITE'

Known as AusDIN (Australian Disasters Information Network), the new portal <http://www.ausdin.gov.au> is a multi-agency initiative of the AusDIN Portal Group and Australian Emergency Management Committee (AEMC). The portal is designed to establish a national knowledge and information website to serve the emergency management community in the Australian

region by providing ready access to clear, understandable, user-friendly information.

### 'IT DIRECTS USERS TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT-RELATED INFORMATION AND SERVICES'

AusDIN operates primarily as a gateway or 'signpost'. It directs users to emergency management-related information and services that are provided by government and, in future, selected non-government organisations. The target audience includes emergency management practitioners, volunteers, teachers, school children, researchers and the media. The portal is housed on servers at the Federal Attorney-General's Department.

ALIES (Australasian Libraries in the Emergency Sector), of which the RFS Library is a part, are playing a key role in the project.

ALIES is a cooperative network of libraries supporting the information needs of the emergency management community. Member libraries are from agencies in Australia and New Zealand that have a role in the EM PPRR (Prevention/Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, Recovery) framework. The network includes libraries from fire, police, land management and emergency management sectors as well as agencies such as Geoscience Australia, Red Cross Australia and CSIRO.

### The ALIES vision

The ALIES vision is that emergency management organisations have the information capacity for current and future challenges. ALIES librarians are dedicated to promoting and facilitating the sharing of information across the diverse member agencies within Australia and New Zealand.

RFS librarian Barbara Glass is a member of the ALIES Executive Committee and in her role as Liaison Officer is responsible for coordinating the ALIES contribution to the AusDIN Portal, and working with the AusDIN Support Team based at the Attorney-General's Department in Canberra.

The AusDIN involvement has led to ALIES being included as a national group reporting to the NSIM (National Spatial and Information Management) Working Group which is under the strategic direction of Australian Emergency Management Committee, National Counter Terrorism Committee (NCTC) and the National Committee on Critical Infrastructure Protection (NCCIP).

As an ALIES representative, Barbara recently attended the NSIM Working Group meeting, made up of over 40 delegates from Federal and state jurisdictional agencies.

This is a fresh opportunity for ALIES librarians to contribute ideas and expertise to wider strategic issues, including interoperability of spatial and other information in the emergency sector, and the development of standards including symbology that can be used across all jurisdictions and agencies.

# GENERAL NEWS

## LIGHTS, SIRENS AND... BARBEQUES?

Story by Matthew Schroder  
Photos by various RFS brigades

Lights, sirens and barbeques were just some of the features as NSW Rural Fire Service stations opened their doors on 15 September 2007.

Thousands of families turned out to see their local volunteers and to learn a little bit more about those who protect their communities.

The Open Day Organising Committee would like to thank all who worked so hard to make Open Day 2007 a success.

A feedback survey is available through MyRFS or at <http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB2272AHLL5JB>. This is an opportunity for you to provide comments and suggestions so that the next Open Day can be bigger and better.

## 'THE PUBLIC TURNED UP IN DROVES TO SUPPORT THEIR LOCAL VOLUNTEERS'

Feedback so far has been extremely positive with a number of brigades writing to say they combined the day with other emergency services and conducted a variety of practical demonstrations for the public who turned up in droves to support their local volunteers.

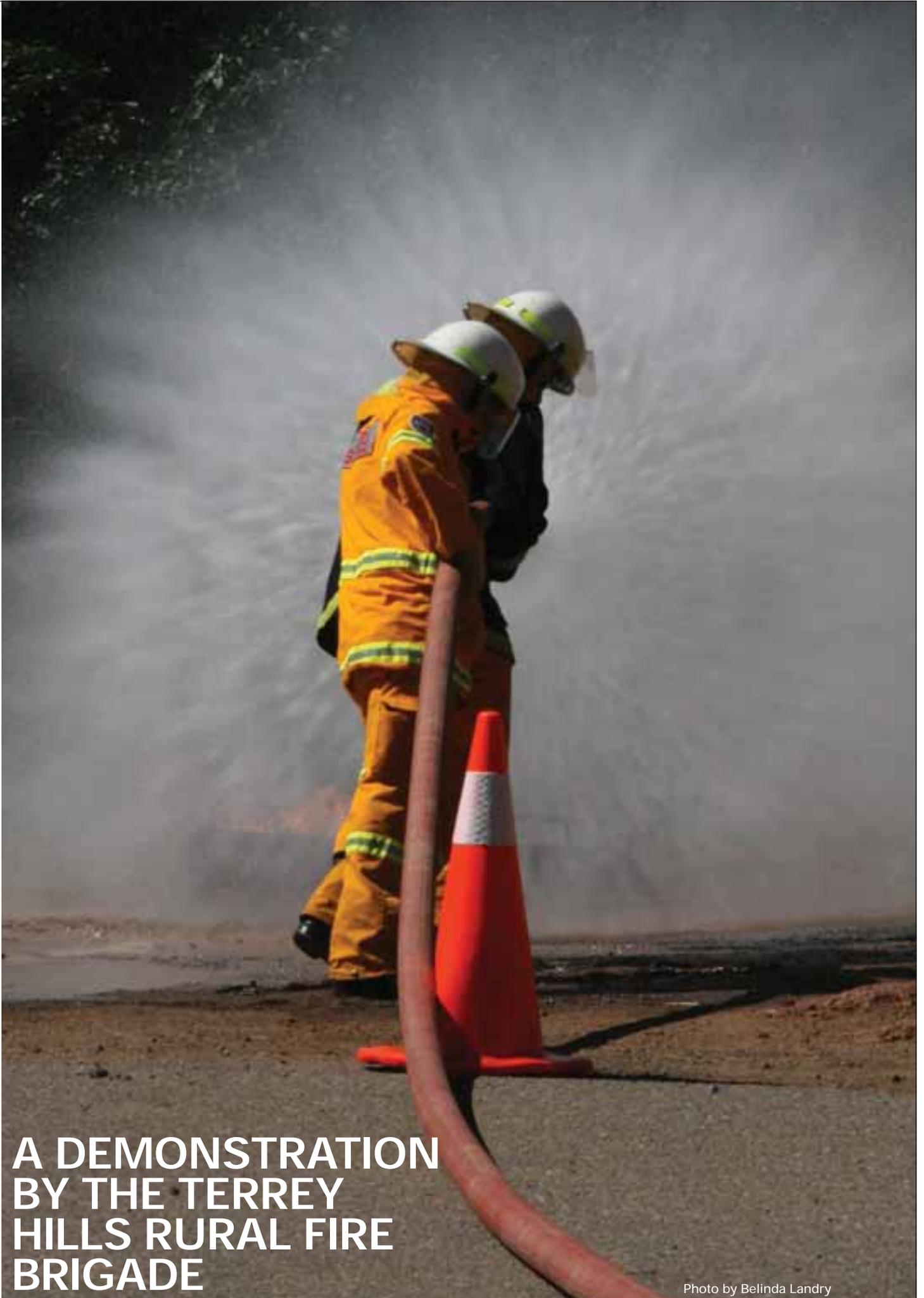
Thank you to everyone who submitted photos from their brigade's Open Day. The following snapshots are just a sampling of the many memorable photos we received.



Artwork from the Clarence Town RFB Open Day.  
Photo by Di Bennett, Peninsula RFB



Yorklea RFB demonstrate their fire suppression.  
Photo by Yorklea RFB



**A DEMONSTRATION  
BY THE TERREY  
HILLS RURAL FIRE  
BRIGADE**

Photo by Belinda Landry

Packsaddle Rural Fire Brigade Open Day.  
Photo by Tom McDevitt, Far West team



The Peninsula Rural Fire Brigade Open Day.  
Photo by Peninsula RFB



A new recruit for the Peninsula Rural Fire Brigade.  
Photo by Peninsula RFB



Services join forces at Beacon Hill RFB.  
Photo by Beacon Hill Brigade



Woodford Open Day 07



Salt Ash Rural Fire Brigade Open Day.  
Photo by Salt Ash RFB



Orangeville Werombi RFB ready to respond in Fisher-Price PC. Photo by June Hickey



Volunteers demonstrate their wares. Photo by Illawong RFB



Volunteers and the public enjoyed the day. Photo by Illawong RFB



Volunteers put on a show for the crowd. Photo by Illawong RFB



## VOLUNTEERS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES HONoured

Photos by Adam Hollingworth

**E**mergency Services Minister Nathan Rees and RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons joined volunteers and members of the public on Sunday 14 October 2007 to remember all those volunteers who have lost their lives serving the community of NSW.

### 'A MASSIVE STONE REPRESENTING THE STRENGTH AND DURABILITY OF VOLUNTEERS'

The seventh annual Volunteers Memorial Service took place at Mrs Macquarie's Chair in Sydney, site of the 'scuncheon' - a single piece of massive stone representing the strength and durability of volunteers and incorporating a carefully hand crafted honour roll, which was laid in 2001.

The Memorial is dedicated not just to RFS members but volunteers from the State Emergency Service, Volunteer Rescue Association, Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and Australian Volunteer Coast Guard as well.



"Thankfully, we have lost no members of the emergency services family in the course of their duties over the past year but we owe those whose names are inscribed on this Memorial the highest commendation," said Minister Rees. "We must remember the sacrifice they made and the loss endured still by their families, friends and colleagues in uniform."

RFS Senior Chaplain Major Ron Anderson led the Service, along with Chaplains from various other emergency service

organisations. The RFS Pipes and Drum Band also played a number of songs on the day.

Sixty four RFS volunteers have lost their lives protecting the community since 1952. A further 17 volunteers from the other four organisations honoured on the day have also died serving the people of NSW.



## NEW WOLLONDILLY EMERGENCY CONTROL CENTRE OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Story by Michael Shaw  
Photos by Matthew Gould

On Saturday 17 November 2007, Wollondilly's new \$1.5m Emergency Control Centre (ECC) was officially opened by NSW Minister for Emergency Services Nathan Rees.

The event saw the attendance of a large number of volunteers from local brigades, District officers and parliamentary dignitaries. Guests were treated to a sausage sandwich put on by the SES before the official ceremony took place. Later in the afternoon, Minister Rees also presented the keys to two new Category 1 bush fire tankers to brigades from Cawdor and Menangle as part of the tanker replacement program.

The Centre includes a custom-built operations room, communications room and training room, plus much needed additional space to accommodate the large amount of equipment and supplies required by the RFS

and the SES who are both located at the new facility.

The previous Fire Control Centre at Wollondilly was outgrown due to the expanding nature of the District, which responds to a significant number of incidents every year.

The new Centre will allow both the RFS and the SES to be housed under the one roof which will improve communications and efficiency.

"Wollondilly District RFS fire fighters are responsible for protecting the lives of over 46,000 residents that call this great area home," said Minister Rees. "This is a huge responsibility and this new Emergency Control Centre will go a long way to ensuring volunteers can fulfil their duties efficiently and safely."

Over 130 students from South-Western Sydney Institute of TAFE helped turn the disused factory into the modern ECC that now exists as part of their on-the-job training. The project was a joint initiative by Wollondilly Council and the NSW Institute of TAFE.





## MIA ZONE CADETS AT YANCO AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL

Story by MIA Zone Community Safety Officer, Matthew Ross  
Photos by MIA Zone Fire Mitigation Officer, Charles Anderson

The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) Zone ran its first cadet group with the help of the Yanco-Wamoon Brigade at Yanco Agricultural High School from July through to September 2007.

Approximately 15 students, plus Deputy

Principal Dennis Benjamin took part. All the Cadets thoroughly enjoyed the program, to the extent that Yanco Brigade has got three new members already.

MIA Zone Community Safety Officer Matthew Ross said the cadets learnt a variety of new skills during the three-month initiative. "This program has given the students an introduction to the way RFS volunteers handle a range of fires.

This course has allowed the students to practice techniques like five man fog attack, extinguisher techniques, hose bowling and rolling and the correct use of fire appliance pumps. We also introduced them to other aspects of what it is involved in being a RFS member such as casualty assistance, communications, hand tools and working with the other emergency services in the local area.

The highlight of the program was a visit to the MIA Zone's Village Fire fighter training area at Narrandera Airport where most cadets including the Deputy Principal ended up getting quite wet!



## AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL FIRE CADETS CHAMPIONSHIPS GATHER MOMENTUM

By Matthew Schroder

Cadets from around the country descended on St Paul's Grammar School in Cranebrook, NSW, for the first Australian National Fire Cadet Championships in early October.

First conceived in early 2006, the idea of an Australian National Fire Cadet Championships was given life when the RFS and the NSW Rural Fire Service Association became major sponsors.

All cylinders were firing as Anthony Head embarked on the long road to organising the Championship. Along with a small army of volunteers, he managed to coordinate 20 teams, 11 events and hundreds of spectators.

Each team was made up of six cadets and two adult leaders, fulfilling the manager and coach positions. The teams competed for points in portable pump relay, hose and hydrant drill, two lines two lengths drill, bucket brigade, knapsack relay, light tanker drill, station response drill, tanker and ladder drill, two tanker exercise, team challenge, and the remote area exercise. In addition to this, there was an interstate challenge and the NSW two person hose challenge.

### Technical skills tested

These events were designed to test the technical skill of the cadets as well as demonstrate their enthusiasm, leadership, safety awareness, initiative and quick thinking.

The cadets were housed at the nearby YMCA Yarramundi camp, which allowed for the cadets to mingle and meet others from across NSW and interstate.

RFS teams St Paul's Grammar, Orchard Hills and Oakville, along with team Greta from the CFA won the top honours.

Anthony Head and representatives from around the country are now looking ahead to the next Australian National Fire Cadets Championships and the possibility of founding a national cadet organisation.

### COMPETING TEAMS:

#### RFS

Blue Mountains Alpha  
Blue Mountains Bravo  
Oakville  
Orchard Hills  
St Paul's Alpha  
St Paul's Bravo  
Warringah-Pittwater  
Candlagen  
Regentville  
Shoalhaven  
Smiths Road  
Tumut Alpha  
Forbes Central  
Tumut Bravo

#### CFA

Greta Alpha  
Greta Bravo  
Linton Alpha  
Linton Bravo

#### CFS

Region Representation Team

#### BFS WA

Serpentine Jarrahdale



## EVER THOUGHT ABOUT COMPETING IN THE NSW RFS STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS?

Ever wondered how your brigade stacks up against the rest of NSW when it comes to firefighting prowess? If you have, then now is the time to enter your team for the 17th annual NSW RFS State Championships to be held at the picturesque beachside village of Kingscliff from 13-14 September, 2008.

A hand picked selection of the State's finest brigades will descend on Cudgen Leagues Club, located just 13km from the Queensland border in one of Australia's most popular tourist regions.

Given the great location, the organising committee are putting together some great 'add on' options for volunteers and their families who wish to take advantage of the Coolangatta-Tweed area and extend their stay.

### 'A MAGNIFICENT ALL WEATHER OVAL SUITABLE FOR HOSTING THE CHAMPIONSHIPS'

The sports ground features a magnificent all weather oval suitable for hosting the Championships and the facility is only a short stroll through the sand dunes away from some of the best beaches in the country. The setting makes you wonder, could a tanker traverse these sand hills? Will the competitors be able to answer this question after the event?

As in the past, the Championships will commence on Friday evening with a Welcome Reception for competitors, sponsors and officials. The Championship Opening and Parade, on Saturday morning, will be hosted by RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and will feature the RFS Pipes and Drum Band.

### Prestigious dinner venue

The prestigious 1,500 seat Stardust theatre at the Seagulls Club will provide the venue for the Saturday evening State Championship Dinner. Uniquely, this facility will be able to cater for all the competitors and officials, their families and supporters. Extra tickets will be made available 'at cost' so competitors can bring all their family and friends. The Championship Dinner will also feature a live musical production.

### 'A NUMBER OF CHANGES WILL BE MADE TO NEXT YEAR'S EVENT SCHEDULE'

The competition will commence on Saturday morning and conclude early Sunday afternoon. A number of changes will be made to next year's event schedule, including the introduction of a discipline not tested at this event for many a year (stay tuned to see if the event committee slip up and reveal more details). The Championships will conclude with the presentation of trophies and prizes to individual event winners and the overall champions.

Will defending champions, Oakville Seniors and St. Paul's Cadets, have their efforts to

again take home the highly sought after title and 'bragging rights' as RFS State Champion derailed?

### Like to compete?

If your brigade is interested in competing, please contact Region for the details of the qualifying route to the 2008 State Championships which will be determined as follows:

**Region West** – EOI process to be conducted.

**Region East** – Brigades must compete in the 2008 Regional Exercise and finish in the top 3, while also ensuring they have registered their intent to be considered for State Championship selection. Note: As State Champions, Oakville will gain automatic entry, should they finish in the top 3, this the fourth place getter would then be considered.

**Region South** – Brigades must compete in the 2008 Regional Exercise and finish in the top 3, while ensuring they have registered their intent to be considered for State Championship selection.

**Region North** – Brigades must compete in the 2007 or 2008 Regional Exercise and finish in the top 2, while ensuring they have registered their intent to be considered for State Championship selection.

## RFS CREWS TRAIN TO WORK WITH ONE OF THE ARMY'S BIGGEST BIRDS – THE BLACK HAWK

Story by Michael Shaw  
Photos by Cameron Wade

**O**ver 50 officers from a number of districts around western Sydney attended a training session like no other in late October 2007, the focus, how to respond to a military helicopter crash.

The Australian Army's Black Hawk Squadron has recently made the Holsworthy Barracks in Sydney their permanent residence, increasing the need for emergency response crews to be aware of the procedures involved with a potential incident.

### A unique training experience

This unique training experience was undertaken to inform RFS district and brigade officers of the risks that would be associated if an incident were to arise with the massive helicopters. Brigades that attended were chosen due to their close proximity to the Barracks. Macarthur and Wollondilly RFB's also participated as their stations are located along the Black Hawk's regular flight paths.

The training session highlighted the precautions RFS crews must take in the event of an incident involving one of the choppers. These included what crews should and should not do, identifying the risks, and the many other aspects that may vary from a regular aircraft incident.

One unique aspect of these high powered aircraft is the special materials the Black Hawk is made of. The composition of the aircraft's frame includes Beryllium along with a type of carbon fibre compound. These materials can cause respiratory problems if they are inhaled in some circumstances.

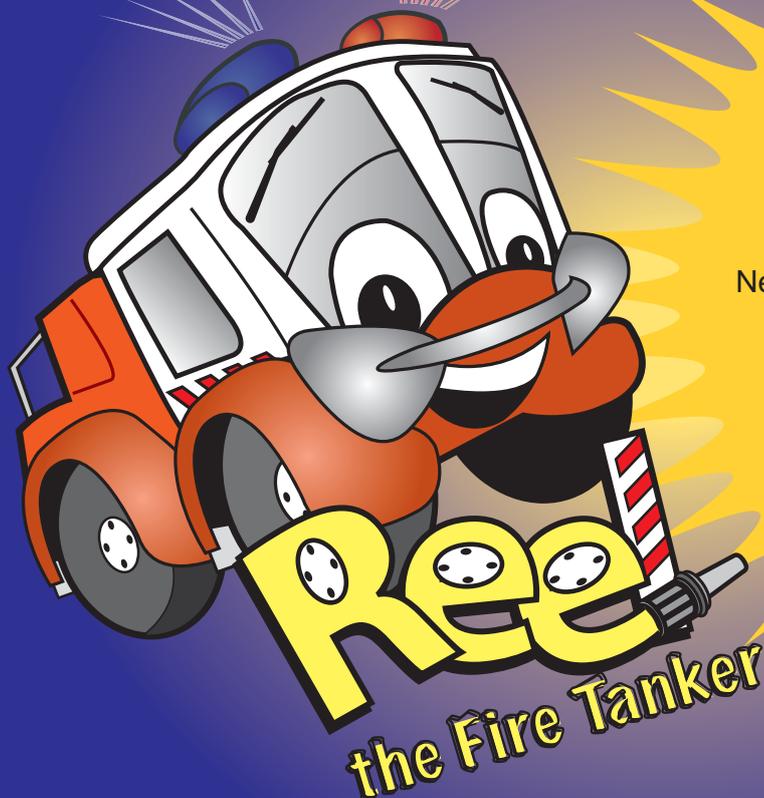
### 'EXERCISES INCLUDED AIRCRAFT FAMILIARISATION AND HOW TO TURN OFF THE HELICOPTER'

The training consisted of a mixture of theory and practical elements to educate and engage RFS personnel. Exercises included aircraft familiarisation, how to turn off the helicopter, what equipment the crew would be wearing and how to safely remove any trapped passengers.

Inspector Michael Markwort from Macarthur Zone was pleased with the outcomes of the day and believes this type of training is extremely important now that the squadron is based in Sydney. There are hopes that the training will turn into an annual exercise to ensure the relevant brigades remain updated and prepared should their services be required.



## Meet one of our NEW CHARACTERS



## Send us a SHORT STORY

NSWRFS are looking for a new story for children.

Needs to be short (no more than 700 words) with a fire safety message theme.

Your name will be credited in the final printed book.

Please email your story to:  
tony.longa@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

**AGREEMENT ON COPYRIGHT**  
If your story is selected you will release all copyrights to the NSW Rural fire service



### DID YOUR BRIGADE WIN \$500 WORTH OF GEAR?

**T**hank you to all those who have sent in entries to the Bushfire Bulletin competition to win \$500 worth of

gear for their brigade. Remember, this competition is ongoing so if you have an interesting story or dazzling photo that was taken by your brigade send it in!

After sifting through all the story and photo entries, congratulations goes to Dunoon



RFB (Northern Rivers Team) and Marsden Park RFB (Cumberland Zone) for their terrific submissions.

Dunoon Brigade wins \$500 worth of equipment for their fascinating story on the recent tornado, which swept through the town, while Marsden Park Brigade also wins gear for their brigade to the same value for their eye catching photo of Bershire Park 7 and Castlereagh 7 accessing the southern edge of the Cranebrook fire on 11 December 2006 (pictured left).

To find out more on how to enter and what your brigade can win, log on to [www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au) or check out the inside back cover of this issue of the Bushfire Bulletin.

The RFS will be in touch with the winning brigades shortly to organise their prizes!



## WRECK BAY RFB UNIQUE TO SERVICE

By Matthew Schroder

**A**t around 1300 hrs on Monday 29 October 2007, Nowra Fire Control Centre was notified of an incident developing in the Wreck Bay area of the Jervis Bay Territory, which later became known as the Caves Beach fire.

Among the first brigades responded was Wreck Bay. It however, is not your average brigade, partly because it isn't a part of the NSW RFS or NSWFB.

Wreck Bay is part of the Jervis Bay Territory Rural Fire Service (JBT RFS) and is housed in a two bay station with a Category 2 and Category 7 appliance. They provide protection to the Jervis Bay Village and Wreck Bay Community area, which accommodates 1,000 permanent residents and 250,000 visitors to the area annually. All up, 17 tankers, three strikers and around 80 personnel, were used to combat the Caves Beach fire, which at times burnt through dry and flammable coastal heath creating flame heights in excess of 10m.

The fire burnt for two days and involved the NSW RFS, JBT RFS, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Department of Transport and Regional Services, Federal Police, Wreck Bay Aboriginal Council and liaison from the Royal Australian Navy. Wreck Bay Brigade provided crews for the duration of the fire and carried out mop up and patrol operations.



### Completely indigenous membership

The brigade's membership is completely indigenous and carries out operations and brigade management according to NSW RFS standard operating procedures. They use the same appliances, equipment and personal protective equipment, which has been customised with JBT RFS logos to distinguish them in the field.

The JBT RFS appliances are marked in the same colours as NSW RFS appliances so that they can be sold as part of the NSW RFS Buyback Program.

The Brigade conducts regular training, which encompasses the different courses within the NSW RFS structure and has undertaken community education activities.

The Jervis Bay Territories Act allows for the Service to assist other emergency services, including involvement in incidents and emergencies, which occur over the border in NSW. There is a Memorandum of Understanding and Service Level Agreement between the JBT RFS and the NSW RFS.

The Brigade continues to work on developing relationships with surrounding brigades and using its valuable local knowledge to protect residents and visitors of the Jervis Bay area.



## NEW COMMISSIONER TURNS CHIEFTAIN FOR A DAY

Story by Rebel Talbert

In one of his first official duties as new Commissioner of the RFS, Shane Fitzsimmons accepted an offer to be Chieftain of the Day at the 138th Annual Highland Gathering held at Castle Hill Showground in early November.

The Commissioner was paraded by car around the field to the accompaniment of the RFS Pipes and Drum Band before being met by Highland Dancers and local President John Corry.

### Scottish entertainment

After Commissioner Fitzsimmons declared the long-running Gathering open, spectators were treated to a variety of Scottish entertainment including: Scottish country dancing, stalls, kids races, the haggis hurl, tug-o-war, as well as a heavy events challenge featuring throwing the hammer, tossing the caber and weight over bar events.

Baulkham Hills District set up a FireWise display and promoted the fire safety message to spectators throughout the day with assistance from Kenthurst, Lower Portland, North Rocks and Hillside FireWise coordinators.

A bulk water tanker from Round Corner, a Cat 1 from North Rocks and a Cat 9 appliance from Hillside Brigade were also on display.

### Trophy presentation

Commissioner Fitzsimmons was invited to present trophies to all the winners from the various events before the Gathering was officially closed for another year.



## CASTLEREAGH VOLUNTEER TAKES TOP HONOUR AT NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA AWARDS

Castlereagh Zone RFS volunteer Tammy Samuel took home one of the top honours at the recent National Safety Council of Australia (NSCA) Annual Awards of Excellence announced at a Gala Dinner on 11 October 2007.

### 'OUTSTANDING WORK WITH THE 'SAFETY SCRIBBLES' SERIES OF ARTICLES'

Tammy pipped three other finalists, including Bluescope Steel, Country Energy, and Rail Corporation to win the award for 'Best Communication of a Safety Message' for her outstanding work with the 'Safety Scribbles' series of articles published in RFS's *FireLine* magazine.

The NSCA promote the awards as recognising and celebrating the outstanding achievements being made in Occupational Health Safety & Environment within the Australian business community.

Tammy saw an opportunity to show other safety professionals the benefits of writing simple articles to improve the safety awareness of rural fire fighters and dedicated her win to the memory of Chris Lord, past President of the RFS. "Had Chris not encouraged me to write the safety articles and publish them in the RFS official magazine, there would have been no Safety Scribbles," Tammy said.

Tammy also used her win to acknowledge the great support she has received from volunteer fire fighters throughout NSW, the RFS and the RFS.



Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons also recognised Tammy's achievements in a letter of thanks. "Your dedication to the safety and well being of your fellow fire fighters is commendable. So too, your willingness to devote additional time, on top of your 'normal' volunteering is extremely generous and well appreciated by me and the Service."

RFS State Secretary Jane Hollier, attended the presentation in support of Tammy and was ecstatic when she was announced the winner. "All other nominations in Tammy's category were large corporations and her win is testament to the high quality articles she produces for *FireLine*," Jane said.

A volunteer member of the RFS and RFS since February 2003, Tammy holds a voluntary position as the Castlereagh Zone Safety Coordinator. She says her focus as Zone Safety Coordinator is to promote ways for rural fire fighters to improve their



safety. She has assisted in a review of current safety standards within the RFS and in providing advice and presenting useful information to fire fighters, including publishing regular articles in the *FireLine* magazine. Tammy also writes short safety articles for the Castlereagh Zone Newsletter 'Flamin News'.



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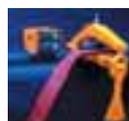


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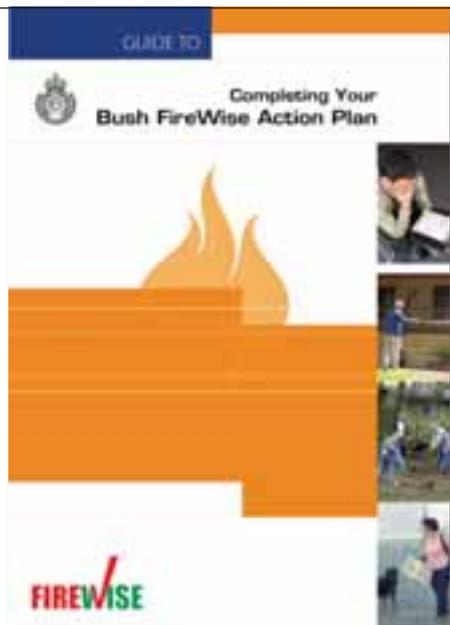


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## BUSH FIREWISE ACTION PLAN



### RFS LAUNCHES BUSH FIREWISE ACTION PLAN

Residents living in bush fire prone areas now have access to a new guide, which clearly outlines the steps they can take to protect their home and their loved ones. The Bush Firewise Action Plan contains two parts - a guide to creating an Action Plan and a template for residents to create their own plan.

The guide enables residents in bush fire prone areas to have a comprehensive understanding of what is involved if they are going to 'Stay and Defend' or 'Leave Early'. The template can be filled out after reading through the guide or residents can opt to research further information on the website before documenting their plan. The Bush Firewise Action Plan is available on the website [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) as well as by calling 1800 679 237 or by contacting your local Community Safety Officer at the RFS Fire Control Centre nearest you.



### SERVICE-WIDE RADIO REPLACEMENT PROGRAM UNDERWAY

The Service has commenced a progressive replacement of its existing MCS2000 series Motorola radios with the new XTL5000 series. The replacement program is expected to span two years.

All D/T/Z operations officers have been briefed on the new channels and this will be integrated in any pre planning processes. Brigades are encouraged to carry a copy of the conversion list in their tankers which will assist with the changes.

#### 'TO ENABLE COMPLIANCE WITH CURRENT RADIO TECHNOLOGY'

Presentations on the 5000 series and its workings can be found in the communications area of MyRFS. The 2000 series has served us well and is being changed due to years in service and to enable compliance with current radio technology.

#### A new profile

As the 5000 series has an enhanced channel capacity, a new profile has been written for all new radios. For example what used to be listed as channel 49 RFS PMR 32 will now display as P032 RFS PMR. In either model radios, both transmit on the same frequency.

All new tankers will have the XTL5000 profile pre programmed into their radios. A channel conversion chart has been developed and accompanies the radio master list, this is also available on the Intranet and MyRFS.



### STEP UP FOR THE RFS

Story by Warringah Pittwater Community Safety Officer, Scott Molenaar

As RFS tankers have become higher over the years, access to the various appliances has become quite daunting for the height impaired, particularly when attending Community Education activities.

Warringah Pittwater District has produced a set of ladders to assist with ease of access into tanker cabins for those long days entertaining children (and adults) at community events.

The ladders are aluminium, and therefore very light, and are compact enough to be placed in the refuge bay of a Cat 1. They have also been designed to sit in the front and rear passenger doors.

#### 'SCHOOL CHILDREN MADE QUICK USE OF THE LADDERS WITH STUDENTS CLIMBING INTO THE CABIN IN RECORD TIME'

At a recent launch to thank Terrey Hills Rotary for donating the money to acquire the ladders, local school children made quick use of the ladders with students climbing into the cabin in record time.

#### A great concept

With OH&S concerns and child welfare policies, Warringah Pittwater District have developed a great concept, which will provide many hours of relief for the District's many hard working volunteers at community events.



## SHANIA CRANE DRAWS A BIG CROWD

Story by Brad van Wely  
Photos by Dean Symons

Her pre lift-off, 9,000 horsepower whistle, may not hold the same quality of note as her singing namesake, but the world's other famous Shania generated a huge level of interest at her official welcome back party to mark the start of summer.

This is the seventh year a Skycrane-type aircraft has been used to fight fires in NSW. NSW Premier Morris Iemma, NSW Minister for Emergency Services Nathan Rees, invited guests and a large media turnout were on hand to welcome the Canadian-based aircraft to Granville.

### 'SHANIA IS CAPABLE OF HOLDING UP TO 9,000 LITRES OF WATER'

Shania has an impressive six rotor blades and is capable of holding up to 9,000 litres of water, which can be drawn from a variety of water sources including rivers and dams in less than a minute.

The Sikorsky Skycrane was originally built back in the 1950s and 60s as a heavy lift aircraft, predominantly for military use to transport oversized vehicles and could also be fitted out as large scale emergency hospitals. A number of the versatile Skycranes have since been adapted for numerous roles, including logging, the installation of large electrical staunchions, but are more universally recognised for their firefighting capabilities, under the Helitanker brand.

### 'SHANIA WORKED TO PROTECT PROPERTY DURING THE RECENT CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES'



Around 13 Skycrane Helitankers are still in service. The nine tonne aircraft (empty weight) requires two to three crew to fly and works all year round at fires around the world. Before arriving by boat in Sydney, Shania worked to protect property during the recent California wildfires, which caused an estimated one billion dollars in damage (see WorldFire section).

Premier Iemma was upbeat about the added protection Shania Crane will provide for the State's 70,000 fire fighters. "Proof that Elvis is dead - a move from the blues to pop," he said. "I'm confident that this Shania will be as big a hit as the real one." A further two Aircranes will also be based in Canberra and Melbourne to support firefighting efforts across the east coast over the fire season.

The RFS has over 100 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters on call for firefighting work around NSW this year.

The Premier also inspected three new bush fire tankers which will soon be deployed to regional NSW to assist communities this summer.



**W**ant to be part of the largest event in Sydney since the Olympics?

In July 2008 Sydney will play host to a week-long celebration of a magnitude the city has not seen since the 2000 Olympics.

Around 600,000 people are expected to converge on the city for World Youth Day (WYD) which runs from 15-20 July. Following the fantastic job RFS volunteers did during the Olympics, the call for assistance has gone out again.

If you haven't already seen the expression of interest application circulating at your brigade, please contact your brigade captain or local district office.

While roles for RFS volunteers are still being finalised, it is expected a large part of the Service's involvement will include providing a safe environment for all those in attendance through such tasks as conducting bag checks and providing public information.

Interested members are advised that, unfortunately due to the enormity of WYD, anyone wishing to volunteer will have to arrange their own accommodation in Sydney on this occasion.

See MyRFS for more details –  
[www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au)





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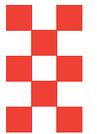
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# RFS EVENTS FROM SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER

## SEPTEMBER

### 7 September

- Region South/West Community Education Forum & Annual Long Service Award and National Medal Presentations

### 8 September

- Kulnura Station Opening

### 12 September

- Monaro IMX Regional Exercise

### 15 September

- RFS Open Day

### 18 September

- Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) Conference (Hobart)

### 22 September

- Box Hill Station Opening

### 24 September

- Yass Fire Investigation Course

### 26 September

- Region West Operations/Team Manager/Community Safety Officer Forum

### 30 September

- Launch of Bush Fire Danger Period (RFS Headquarters)

## OCTOBER

### 10 October

- Gosford Long Service Award and National Medal Presentations

### 13 October

- 60th Anniversary of Kariong/ Gosford RFB

### 27 October

- Lake Albert Station Opening
- Middle Dural Station Extension Opening

## NOVEMBER

### 3 November

- Wiseman's Ferry RFB Station Extension Opening
- Ku-Ring-Gai Brigade 50th Anniversary Dinner

### 4 November

- Arcadia Station Opening

### 17 November

- Dartbrook Station Opening
- Merriva Station Opening
- Wollondilly Emergency Control Centre Opening

**Correction** - Apologies to Willcannia RFB, a photo in the Events section of the last issue should have attributed the Awards Ceremony to them and not Canobolas RFB as mentioned.

Gwandalan 50th Anniversary



Baulkham Hills Awards Ceremony



Box Hill Station Opening



Lower Portland Station Opening



Merriwa Station Opening and Awards



Middle Dural Station Opening



Ku-Ring-Gai Brigade Captain John Corry and District Manager Angelo Baldoat at the Brigade's 50th Anniversary Dinner



Wingecarribee Blessing of the Fleet

# WORLDFIRE



## CALIFORNIA GETS HIT BY DOUBLE DOSE OF WILDFIRES

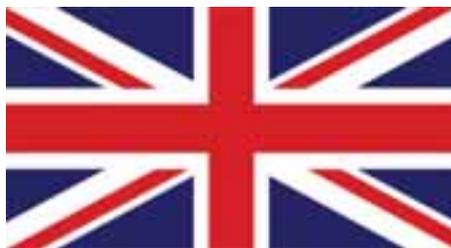
**F**ire fighters from various parts of the US returned to California in late November to battle the second series of major fires to hit the western State in less than a month. Over 1,700 fire fighters were deployed around the exclusive enclave of Malibu and surrounding areas where over 50 multimillion dollar homes were lost.

Fanned by the fierce seasonal Santa Ana winds, the fire quickly burnt thousands of hectares of mountainous and dry parkland, forcing the evacuation of more than 10,000 residents, including numerous Hollywood celebrities. Red Hot Chilli Peppers guitarist 'Flea' lost his mansion in the fires.

At least six fire fighters were injured during the latest spate of fires in the area. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger reactivated a state of emergency he declared in October in response to the wildfires in Los Angeles, Ventura and San Diego counties.

The October fire was one of a series of state-wide wildfires that left eight people dead, destroyed 2,000 homes, displaced 640,000 people and caused more than \$US1 billion (\$1.15 billion) in damage.

Associated Press reported that the latest fire comes after a year of record-low rainfalls in the Los Angeles area, with just 8.15 cm of rain between 1 January and 30 June - a fifth of the average rainfall and the lowest since records began 130 years ago.



## UK FIRE AUTHORITY'S LATEST RECRUIT WEIGHS ALMOST 180KG

**A** company in North Wales has manufactured what is believed to be the world's heaviest and largest training dummy.

Weighing in at 178kg, the dummy takes six people to lift and has been designed due to the increasing number of overweight people fire fighters are being forced to move.

Fire fighters in the UK have received an increasing number of calls for assistance from obese people requiring assistance to be moved to hospital or a nursing home. One crew in Lancashire recently relocated a local weighing over 190kg.

The Daily Mail has reported that the issue has become so prevalent that fire crews are now considering charging individuals who require assistance due to their size.



## CCTV STANDARD FOR ALL FIRE TRUCKS?

**R**epeated threats and violence towards fire fighters in Staffordshire, England, have forced authorities to begin equipping all appliances with security cameras.

Four new appliances are already trialling the technology, which, if successful will be applied to all fire trucks in the district. The CCTV will also be fitted as standard to all new appliances that are purchased in the future.

A report to the Staffordshire Fire Service Authority said there had been a steady increase in incidents involving threats and violence towards their fire fighters, with those who work in urban areas most at risk. The report said: "We will not tolerate attacks on personnel and this CCTV will provide the police with valuable evidence for prosecution."

The fire authority is also investing in training courses to help its personnel to deal with hostility and aggression.



## VIRTUAL FIREFIGHTING JUST PART OF THE TRAINING

**T**raining accidents could be a thing of the past for fire authorities in New Zealand with the introduction of the fireman's version of the flight simulator.

The new computer software has been installed aboard three buses which will travel around the country to further educate fire fighters to assess a situation and make the correct call based on available resources.

Whereas a pilot can learn how not to crash an aircraft with the help of a flight simulator, fire officers are learning about the best and safest ways to manage a range of fires with the help of a wide TV screen, joystick and interactive computer programs, all contained in a specially kitted-out bus.

The training scenarios include everything from factories complete with a cocktail of chemicals, through to ship fires, house fires and vehicle crashes. During a scenario, fire fighters can be asked to answer questions about how to fight a fire based on information provided by an eye witness and just like a real fire, the colour of the smoke changes as a fire is brought under control, proving the right decision has been made.

The training program is particularly useful for assisting fire fighters to maintain their skills on types of fires they least encounter at their respective stations.



## NO WATER TO DOUSE FIRE OF ALBANIA'S LOSS TO DUTCH

**A**N Albanian fishmonger set fire to his van in anger after the national football team lost to the visiting Dutch side.

A simple job for local fire fighters turned into a conundrum when crews discovered their water supply had been stolen, preventing them from extinguishing the burning vehicle.

Reuters reported that Vilson Alushi had vowed to burn his fish-delivery van if Albania failed to win a point against the Netherlands. A scenario, which unfortunately for the Albanian's fish business eventuated.

Alushi subsequently doused his car with petrol in the centre of the southern town of Delvine and watched as his friends alerted fire fighters, newspapers reported.

They arrived promptly on the scene and unreeled the hose, only to find it was dry. It seems that residents living near the fire station had drained the tank to help them cope with Albania's chronic water shortage.



## FIRE TAKES A MERE 180 YEARS TO EXTINGUISH

**I**t's taken around 180 years, but fire fighters in China are believed to have finally succeeded in extinguishing one of the world's longest running fires.

More than \$53m has been spent on fighting the Rujigou coal field fire over the past decade, according to the State-run Xinhua news agency.

The fire is thought to have consumed over one million tons of high-quality anthracite coal annually and authorities estimate that the fire has caused the discharge of around 90,000 tons of hazardous substances into the air each year.

While the actual cause of the fire is uncertain, local folklore states that badly treated miners set the mine on fire because of a dispute with their boss.

Local authorities say that while it is impossible to prove the story, there was a good chance that the fire started from the ground in the first place as miners used to camp on the mining field, lighting fires to cook or warm themselves.

# FOR THE KIDS

Thanks to seven-year-old Josh Robinson from Bywong who receives an RFS pack for sending in this great drawing of his dad Ian driving Gundaroo's tanker along with Brigade Captain Michael and Larry.

Kids, if you want to win one of these cool RFS prize packs simply send your best drawing to the Bushfire Bulletin (Locked Mail Bag 17 Granville NSW 2142) or email it to [bushfire.bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bushfire.bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au)



My dad is driving

The fire  
Brigade name

fire

trucks

this is a

example

Age 7

Josh

# FIREWISE<sup>™</sup> Fact

**Bush fires** - Leaving your home at the last minute is extremely dangerous!

## Prepare a Bush FireWise Action Plan for your whole family.

When you live in an area that is close to the bush then you are likely to see bush fires from time to time. You should work as a family to prepare your home against the danger of bush fires. There are many things you can do, such as clearing up all the fine fuels around your home (including leaves, twigs and bark) and making sure that there are no gaps or spaces where embers can enter the house.

Sit down as a family and plan who will do each of the necessary tasks when a bush fire is close. If you decide as a family that you will leave early plan where and when you will go.

Have a look at the website for more information at [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) or speak to a Community Safety Officer at your local Fire Control Centre (you can find out the location by looking at the website).



Colour in Santa and 'Spot'.  
Then ask mum or dad to help  
cut them out.



# SPOTFIRE!



## THE GREAT DOG RESCUE

Story and photos by Cameron Wade

**J**ust after 2100 hrs on Tuesday 6 November 2007, Box Hill/Nelson and Kellyville Rural Fire Brigades were called to assist NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB) with a delicate dog rescue.

### 'THE TERRIER HAD RUN INTO THE PILE AND BECOME COMPLETELY TRAPPED'

A small terrier had become entrapped at the bottom of a pile of disused mushroom growing racks. The pile was about 6m high, 20m wide and 20m deep. The dog, named Ginger, had escaped from his owner while being taken for a walk and had run into the centre of the pile. Unfortunately the terrier had run into the pile with his lead still around his neck and become completely trapped.

NSWFB Rescue Station 71 (Castle Hill) had attended the scene earlier. As night began to fall they realised they would need some extra support. Due to the relationship formed between NSWFB and the Baulkham

Hills District of the RFS a call was made directly to after hours fire control staff requesting the assistance of manpower and lighting equipment.

### 'LIGHTING EQUIPMENT WAS TOWED IN BY 4WD AND A LAND CRUISER UTE'

The local brigade, Box Hill/Nelson, was responded as well as Kellyville who supplied the lighting unit and extra fire fighters to help out. On arrival the RFS crews were met by NSWFB personnel who showed them how to get to the scene, which was a 500m walk through a muddy paddock. The lighting equipment was towed in by 4WD and a Land Cruiser Ute from Box Hill/Nelson was used to ferry extra equipment in.

The pile was so large that a Thermal Imaging Camera and other search equipment aboard Rescue Pump 71 was unable to locate the dog. A call was made to bring in extra equipment from the NSWFB Urban Search and Rescue Unit (USAR), which was responded from Greenacre.

USAR consists of a semi trailer filled with all the tools required for this type of work.

When USAR 1 arrived, a camera on a long rigid cable was pushed through the pile of timber to locate the dog. Once located, RFS and NSWFB personnel began to pull a section of the pile apart so access could be gained to the scared terrier.

Around five hours later Ginger was freed and returned to a very grateful elderly couple who owned the runaway dog. RFS and NSWFB finished the operation at 0200 hrs.

Besides having a very good outcome, the rescue was an excellent opportunity for RFS volunteers to get involved in a USAR operation. NSWFB were extremely thankful for the assistance and equipment the RFS provided.





# WIN \$500 WORTH OF GREAT GEAR FOR YOUR BRIGADE!

## How would you like to reward your brigade with some new equipment by having your story or photo published in the Bushfire Bulletin?

Throughout the year, RFS members from across NSW send in amazing stories and photos to the Bulletin depicting scenes of heroism, community spirit, despair and mateship.

To reward volunteers who contribute these captivating stories and photographs, the RFS will award two x \$500 equipment packs to brigades who send in the most dynamic story or photo as judged by the editorial team.

The best thing of all is that the winner and their respective brigade get to choose their prize by visiting [www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au) for a full list of items!

### What can my brigade win?

Winners can select from a range of items to make up their \$500 prize pack including: weathermeters, firefighting equipment, DVD/VHS recorder combos, fire blankets, tripod lighting kits and even new bush

fire boots and wet weather jackets!

### What sort of content should we submit?

Whether it's a story you have written about a local volunteer who is making a difference in their community, or what it means to be a volunteer, or even an amazing photo a member of your brigade has taken of a structure fully involved in fire, we would like to receive individual brigade contributions to YOUR magazine.

And don't forget the most important part of all - the RFS will publish the very best stories and photos in a future issue of the magazine.

### How do we enter?

Submitting your contribution is easy! Simply, email your story or photograph to [Bushfire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Bushfire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au) and be sure to read the next issue of the Bushfire Bulletin to see if your brigade has won!

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