

# BUSHFIRE BULLETIN



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Cover photo by Lindsay Gorrie



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## COMMISSIONER'S FOREWORD

It's easy sometimes to think of damaging bushfires as a uniquely Australian problem. Recent "wildfire" events, resulting in the loss of hundreds of homes and many lives, in North America, France, Portugal and Spain, are a stark reminder that we are not alone in having to find solutions to the problems confronting bushfire prone communities.

How timely then for the third International Wildland Fire conference to be held in Australia in October.

Under the auspices of the Australasian Fire Authorities Council, the conference will be held at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, between October 3rd and 6th, a "summit" will follow on the 8th. As chair of New South Wales Organising Committee I invite you to learn more about this important event from [www.wildlandfire03.com](http://www.wildlandfire03.com)

Some eight hundred registrations are expected from around the globe and given recent fire events, nationally and internationally, high quality presentations are assured.

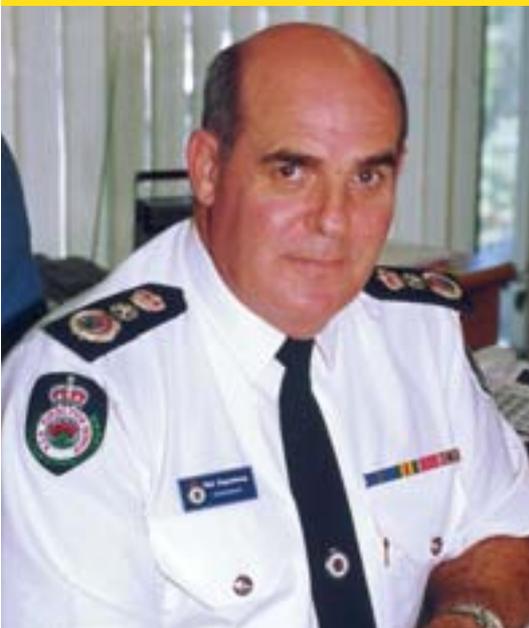
The following Summit will bring together one hundred of the world's top fire managers and experts with the objective being to formulate policy to enable a better way of sharing resources and information including appropriate research results.

Our Minister, the Honourable Tony Kelly will host the Summit and the Honourable N K Wran QC, former Premier of New South Wales will chair it. This will not be another "talkfest" but rather, a serious attempt to share the best information available and to pave the way for heightened international cooperation and problem solving.

I am pleased to announce the RFS will sponsor in the order of eighty RFS volunteers to attend the conference so that our firefighters can participate in this important event. Discussions are under way with the RFSA to ensure that an equitable selection process is undertaken to choose the sponsored volunteers.

I would again place on record my appreciation to our firefighters and to my staff for their unyielding efforts in making the Rural Fire Service an organisation of which they and the community can be justly proud.

Phil Koperberg





1 GENERAL NEWS



*Photos by Karen Gorrie*



## THOUSANDS FIGHT FIRES

### YARROWLUMLA SECTION 44 STATISTICS

**Out of Area Task Forces**  
37 over 24 days

**Out of Area Task Force Personnel**  
1800 over 24 days

**Local Task Forces**  
2 - 3 daily over a 30 day period

**Local Task Force Personnel**  
two shifts of 60 - 80 daily over a  
30 day period (about 350 local brigade  
personnel rotating continuously).

**IMT Personnel**  
20 - 50 daily over 30 day period.

**Aircraft**  
16 rotary wing and 2 fixed wing, one  
main helibase and two helipads during  
the peak period of 15 - 24 Jan.

**Plant**  
20 pieces of earthmoving equipment  
during peak plus fuel tankers,  
maintenance units etc.

**As severe electrical storms blasted mountainous terrain in Victoria, NSW and the ACT on the afternoon of 8 January 2003, emergency services personnel knew they faced weeks, perhaps months, of firefighting in the most inaccessible country in Australia.**

A protracted campaign was expected. The number, size and locations of the lightning strike fires led to the declaration of four Section 44 incidents covering the Yarrowlumla, Snowy River, Bombala, Tumbarumba, Cooma Monaro, Tumut and Yass Rural Fire Districts.

Over the next six weeks, thousands of volunteers in taskforces from around NSW rallied to support crews in southeastern NSW and the Emergency Services Bureau in the ACT.

**Crews fell back to property protection in Fairlight and Dingo Dell while fire managers met that night to plan strategies.**



Accessible fires were quickly rounded up. Direct attack was used where possible and hard work on containment lines began on those where direct attack was considered to be exceptionally dangerous and impractical.

### YARROWLUMLA

The McIntyres Hut Fire was one of the last caused by the lightning storm at approximately 1600 on 8 January 2003.

The fire took hold on the western side of the Brindabella National Park, north west of Canberra near an old drovers' hut known as McIntyre's Hut with several ignition points also in the adjacent Mountain Creek area. This fire also spotted onto Baldy Range some 6km to the east of the main strike at McIntyre's Hut shortly after the initial ignition and fire run.

ACT fire towers reported smoke to Yarrowlumla Rural Fire District and Queanbeyan National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). By approximately 1700 the fire had already assumed an area of approximately 200ha and was running erratically uphill in exceptionally steep country. Direct attack was assessed as impossible as the fire was moving rapidly in steep, rugged territory with very limited access for fire fighting resources, was spreading rapidly and posed serious problems for firefighter safety.

Crews fell back to property protection in Fairlight and Dingo Dell while fire managers met that night to plan strategies.

A Section 44 declaration was discussed early as reports flooded in of 60 fires affecting all surrounding rural fire districts, as well as the Stockyard Spur, Bendora and Gingera fires in neighbouring ACT's Namadgi National Park.

All of these fires would bring greater complexity to Yarrowlumla's operations as several blazes merged into one fireground with a 400km perimeter stretching from Yass to Cooma Monaro and Tumut across the ACT.

The first Incident Management Team meeting was held at 6am on Thursday 9 January and Yarrowlumla's Section 44 was declared at 1300 that day.

Yarrowlumla brigades continued to protect property on the western and eastern perimeters and initial strategies aimed to stop the fire crossing the ACT border and entering the Uriarra Pine Forest estimated to be worth in excess of \$40,000,000.

Containment lines chosen included the Goodradigbee River, Folly Trail to Doctors Flat Road, Two Sticks Road to Baldy Range Fire Trail and the Transgrid 07 Powerline easement. In a high risk strategy, aircraft protected volunteers as they



backburned from the serpentine 07 easement track after earthmoving equipment undertook trail work.

Work also began on suppressing accessible fires. By 12 January crews had extinguished fires at Mt Vale, Wild Cattle Creek and Yenununbeyan National Park.

Trail work on McIntyres Hut began on Thursday with Yarrowlumla brigades concentrating on the southern section of the Transgrid easement while Yass crews assisted in the north from Follys Trail to the Goodradigbee River. Soil Conservation earthmoving equipment were involved in most of these locations

Once trailworks were completed on Saturday morning, backburning began. Considerable difficulties were experienced on the western end of the 07 Power Line Track (Charlie Sector) adjacent to the Goodradigbee River.

"Two big machines were needed to get to the river - it must be the most expensive piece of ground in the Brindabellas considering the man power, earth moving equipment and aircraft put in there," Incident Controller, Yarrowlumla Fire Control Officer, Superintendent Bruce Arthur said.

Eighteen aircraft took part in the entire operation, including an Air-Crane and the Kaman Kmax helicopter. They were shared by ACT fire agencies when required for property protection in the Territory.

Task forces from around NSW began arriving on Sunday 12 January. A total of 37 out of area task forces would work in Yarrowlumla.

Changing winds on Monday 13 January caused fires in the ACT, the Stockyard Spur, Bendora and Gingera fires, to move west into NSW territory, concerning the farming community on the Brindabella Valley floor, which was eventually ravaged by several fires from all sides.

"We then had two areas of operation. We worked with the ACT on the Brindabella Valley and used Mount Franklin Road as a division line with the ACT working to the east and NSW resources to west."

Containment was being achieved on McIntyres Hut and lines around the Brindabella Valley also held in difficult weather on Wednesday 15 January.

Both were contained on Friday morning - but managers expected weather conditions to cause all fires to breach containment. By the afternoon weather conditions deteriorated to 65km/h winds and on-the-ground temperatures in the 40s.

The Broken Cart fire in the Kosciuszko National Park, Tumut Rural Fire District, blazed off to the east and rapidly hit the Brindabella Valley. McIntyres Hut was spotting off the eastern flank into grass area and Stockyard Spur in the ACT had spotted across the Corin Dam.

By 11pm there was fire on Mt Tennant, a couple of kilometres from the Monaro Highway and objectives changed to keeping fire west of this major road.

"If it entered the Tinderry National Park to the east of the highway it had the potential for a run all the way to the coast," Supt Arthur said.

Fire was on both sides of Mount Franklin Road. Crews were cut off in Brindabella and by the end of Saturday resources were pushing into a quadrant

*Continued on page 4*



*Continued from page 3*

from Fairlight to Uriarra and Stromlo where aircraft were strongly focused.

Firefighters concentrated on property protection as the fire ran off the mountains onto flatter grazing land. Cooma Monaro was now included in the fireground with fire closer to Williamsdale and Michelago to the south. A spot over the Monaro Highway was rounded up.

Descriptions of conditions on Saturday 18 January encompass all the clichés - firestorm, inferno, hell on earth - and all reflect what firefighters experienced as hot dry winds caused enormous runs.

Wind and flame lifted trees. Runs of 45km in one day were reported in some areas. The smoke cloud from Bendora reminded onlookers of Hiroshima.

*Brindabella Rural Fire Brigade, a Shoalhaven task force and some Wollondilly appliances protect buildings and wait for the "ferocious" Broken Cart fire to break out into open country near the Brindabella Valley's southern most property, Koorabri, at 1600 Saturday 18 January 2003.*

The Brindabella Valley was ravaged from all sides throughout the campaign, three homes were destroyed and the Brindabella Rural Fire Brigade station was threatened.

"Fire was tearing across grass horizontally with 80kph winds, it was crowning in the forests and creating its own wind," Brindabella RFB Senior Deputy Captain Paul Szymik said.

"Flame heights were incredible, 50 to 60 metres would not be an exaggeration. Mountains were exploding from radiant heat.

The fires merged creating a fireground over 250,000ha. During the merge, the ACT fires and NSW fires created a single front, which hit ACT suburbs, where over 500 homes were destroyed and an RFS base camp was razed.

Containment work resumed on Sunday 19 January with the aim of keeping fire out of Doctors Flat and the northern suburbs of Canberra and from crossing the Monaro Highway into the Tinderry Ranges to the South.

Cooma Monaro Rural Fire District took control of areas south of Michelago.

Lines were maintained for the remainder of the week with the focus on severe conditions expected over the Australia Day long weekend. More taskforces arrived and containment lines were re-established across the fireground.

On Australia Day the Brindabella Valley was threatened in the south again, properties at the valley centre were also of concern and later in the day fire roared in from the northwest.

In coming days the northern edge of the Yaouk Valley south of the ACT was threatened as fire came off the Clear Range into Cooma Monaro's territory. Michelago was also of concern.

"Large task forces and the Cooma Monaro brigades managed to keep the fire west of the Monaro and that strategy succeeded in every respect," Supt Arthur said.

At the peak of the operation approximately 950 personnel worked in Yarrawlumla on one day at the height of activity with local brigades supported by taskforces from over 60 districts.

Mild conditions eased fire activity significantly following the long weekend, task forces left by 4 February. After confirming that another series of lightning strikes had not ignited new fires the declaration was revoked on 7 February.

*Photos by Ian Hodgson*

## 50TH – SANDY POINT RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

**Nearly 200 people attended 50th anniversary celebrations for Sandy Point Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) on 15 March 2003.**

Revesby Workers Club was the chosen venue as it assisted the Sandy Point community during bushfire evacuations.

NSW Premier Bob Carr, then Minister for Emergency Services Bob Debus and Commissioner Phil Koperberg attended.



"Most importantly, we recognised the 50 years of service of our members who dedicate many hours of their time in assisting their community and protecting their neighbours from harm, often at the risk of their own personal safety," Sandy Point RFB President Vanessa Gorman said.

To commemorate the occasion, Sandy Point RFB established a 'sister' relationship Towrang RFB near Goulburn.

"We intend to fundraise for our sister brigade whenever we conduct our own fundraising as well as share information, socialise and wherever possible, help them to purchase equipment," Ms Gorman said.

Members of Towrang RFB attended the evening.

### 50-year Service Award Presented to Eddie Cotter

Sandy Point RFB founding member, life member and past Captain Eddie Cotter, was presented with a 50-year service award during the celebrations.

The Brigade was formed by the Sandy Point Progress Association due to residents' concerns about isolation and distance from the nearest fire service.

A public meeting held under a tree agreed to accept an offer from Sutherland Shire Council to supply equipment consisting of six metal knapsacks, six flapjacks (canvas hose fitted to timber handles) and six shovels.

The progress association built a hall in St George Cr with an annex for the Brigade in 1958 and a 10,000 gallon tank was erected. In 1963 a 1926 Garford fire tender was purchased – it went uphill better in reverse. The Brigade now has a state of the art urban firefighting unit, primarily for house fires, motor vehicle accidents and property protection, indicating how the area has changed since the Brigade began.

*Story by Vanessa Gorman*





## \$400,000 DAMAGE IN NUT SILO FIRE

A fire in two macadamia nut silos, attended by Federal and Clunes Rural Fire Brigades (RFB), caused \$400,000 damage on 14 July.

The initial call just after 7am to a Eureka property in Byron Rural Fire District indicated four silos alight. On arrival Federal RFB confirmed two silos well alight.

Although the incident was challenging, brigades had attended a previous fire in the same silos, and were well versed on how to conduct operations.

"The oil content of nuts made the job difficult," said Federal RFB Captain John Nardi.

"As soon as water went into the silo the oil floated to the top so we had to pull the silo apart with an excavator."

"We also had a lot of nuts underneath the silo which we blasted away with a 65."

RFS Far North Coast Zone Fire Control Officer Bob Wilcox said the main concern was preventing the fire from spreading to adjoining silos.

"We had about 100 ton of nuts in each silo and the two alight were in amongst about 9 to 10 other silos connected with conveyor belts at the bottom and bridges at the top."

The surrounding silos were cooled while work



An excavator rips open the macadamia nut silos at Eureka. Photo submitted by NSW Fire Brigades.

started on ripping open the fire-affected silos with an excavator.

An explosion occurred as the silos were opened.

"There was a flash over with a big puff of flame, which was quite spectacular," Mr Nardi said.

"The nuts reignited within 24 hours during the last incident, so we knew we had to spread them thinly on the ground and carefully monitor them in

order to prevent reignition. There was a lot of clean up involved."

Clunes RFB provided changeover crews at about midday, working into the afternoon, extinguishing and cooling the contents of the silo.

Crews remained on scene until 3pm. The cause of the fire remains undetermined.

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# CANBERRA FIRE RESPONSE

Saturday afternoon, we are at Bulli station for training. Shortly after 2pm, an officer from Wollongong Fire Control Centre walks over and tells us to respond to Canberra. We are on the road in Bulli 1 Bravo within five minutes, along with Farmborough 1, who were on a maintenance run at the time and had dropped into the Control Centre for a visit. We don't know exactly where we are going, or when we will be back. We hear *en-route* that 50-100 homes have been lost already.

As we approach the ACT, near Lake George, we can see a huge dust storm in front of us, then we realise it is actually smoke. It is a constant black across the sky. At approximately 5.30pm, we arrive just inside the ACT border and regroup. We now have Bulli 1 Bravo, Farmborough 1, Austinmer 1, Austinmer 12 and Group 1 vehicle. At this point, we also 'suit up' in full firefighting gear. We respond from this point under lights and sirens.

Our first stop is the National Zoo and Aquarium. We are clapped and cheered by the staff as we enter the gate. They are obviously happy to see us arrive. They appear to be well prepared. They have fire extinguishers located at various places, along with garden hoses and fire hose reels already extended and charged. The fire is clearly visible, crowning through the pine trees just a few hundred metres away. Soon Albion Park 1 and Gerringong 1 join us. A bulk water carrier also follows them.

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We can see a huge dust storm in front of us, then we realise it is actually smoke. It is a constant black across the sky.

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Shortly after, we are requested to leave our current location and head to Curtin. We leave Albion Park and Gerringong and respond to Curtin. We pull up outside the Equestrian Centre Group 1 vehicle heads into the Equestrian Centre, while Austinmer 12 heads into a paddock a little further up. We are waiting on the road, with some houses just to our left.

Suddenly, flames appear through the trees, headed towards the houses. We notify Austinmer 12 and head through the gate, followed by the other two Cat 1's. Austinmer 12 passes us and heads further up the trail behind the houses. We realise we are actually behind a street full of houses. We take up position and begin putting out spotfires.

Austinmer 12 has found houses alight and requests assistance. We head further up the track, passing one house fully involved in fire and find Austinmer 12 further up the track, with another fully involved and threatening others. As we approach, a 'Red Red Red' message is sent regarding a leaking gas line. Thankfully it is already alight. This will be the first of many we will find throughout the evening. The other two crews go to work protecting the surrounding houses, while we head back down the track to the other house that is fully involved.



We walk through the yard of a neighbouring house and onto the street. There are a couple of residents with garden hoses, with others bringing more, connecting them together however they can. The truck is brought around into the street, where we run a length of hose to protect the surrounding houses, by lessening the intensity at which the house is burning. We are also able to hook up to a hydrant with good pressure for water supply.

After a short period at this location, we are requested to respond to Lyons, another suburb where houses are alight. We make up and respond to this location, where we rejoin our other two Cat 1's. We arrive to find two houses fully involved in fire. While the other two crews attend to these, we proceed around the corner to check on another street. After extinguishing a tree, which some residents are concerned about, we head back and assist the other crews in attempting to extinguish the two houses.

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We are requested to respond to Duffy, where there are reports of a fatality.

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We are requested to respond to Duffy, where there are reports of a fatality. We all fill our tanks. The scene that greets us is of total devastation. We go down Eucumbene Drive and find many of the houses gone.

We see a flame on the front porch of an unburnt house and stop to investigate. It turns out to be a candle. The gentleman that lives there comes out to the driveway to talk to us. He tells us that a hazard reduction was done on the pine forest located across the road just 12 months earlier, but the fire 'came out like a freight train'. All that was damaged was his wheelie bin. We congratulate him on a job well done and proceed around the corner to Renmark St. There is a house fully involved fire,

burning very intensely. We assist the crew of Farmborough Heights in extinguishing this house.

We regroup once again and decide to continue mopping up in this area, before heading back to a motel for dinner and some sleep. Some residents still remain in the area and come out to the street to greet us with drinks and thanks.

We walk from street to street, looking for hotspots, calling the truck when we need it. Walking is easier, as we can walk between houses where there are no fences left. There are bathtubs full of water and taps still running among the ruins of houses. There are wooden letterboxes still standing, in front of smouldering ruins of houses. We use a garden hose at one unburnt house to extinguish smouldering railway sleepers only a couple of metres from the back door. The back steps of the house, also constructed from railway sleepers, are burnt away.

Around 11.30pm we decide to head back to our motel. We eat around 1am. The people in the kitchen were evacuated from their homes earlier in the day. They have volunteered their time to come and cook for us. We head off to get a few hours sleep before heading home the next day. The coach ride home is pretty subdued. Not the rowdy trip you would normally expect. I think we have all seen enough devastation and are looking forward to going home to our own homes and families.

Due to the immediacy of our response, I didn't have time to collect my camera. But even though I have no photos, I will always have those images in my mind. People's homes burning to the ground, smouldering ruins of houses, cars abandoned in the street, where people had jumped out and left them. This is something I will never forget. I'm sure nobody that was ever there ever will.

*Story by Phil Thompson - Bulli RFB  
Photo by Troy Cashen*



## APOLOGY TO GRAHAM DAVIS

In our last edition we featured a story on page 21 "Our Firefighters to the Rescue" about the Waterfall train crash. We published that the story was written by Cameron Wade and Andrew Pinfold.

It was actually written by one of our most prolific contributors, Graham Davis, a volunteer in the Sutherland District. Graham has supported the Bushfire Bulletin with more contributions than anyone else in the last few years. So it was with considerable embarrassment that we realised we had committed the cardinal sin of publishing - wrongly crediting someone's story.

We unreservedly apologise to Graham. Graham's contributions to the Bulletin are greatly appreciated and valued and his story on the Waterfall train crash was no exception.

*John Winter*  
**Director Corporate Communications**



## CANBERRA BASECAMP DEMOLISHED

The firefront that destroyed hundreds of homes in Canberra demolished a NSW Rural Fire Service basecamp at a forestry settlement near Mount Stromlo before it hit the suburbs.

Three airconditioned marquees, a kitchen and toilet block and three cool rooms were destroyed as well as the personal belongings of many firefighters.

Tents melted to the ground and metal cots were found in trees hundreds of metres from the site.

The camp was established on Monday 13 January to accommodate task force crews and cut their travelling time to the fireground. It was suitably located over 30km from the fire on an oval, which provided a substantial fuel break from the pine forest.

It was considered safe under general circumstances, however, conditions on Sunday 18 January were extreme, with the loss of 520 homes in Canberra bearing testimony to their severity.

Evacuation plans were implemented at around 2pm as winds pushed fire towards the surrounding pine forest.

*It got very dark, hot and noisy with things falling all around us*

It was a change-over day, so personnel numbers were down. The day shift was working and about 50 night shift firefighters from Shoalhaven were sleeping in the camp.

They were woken as the evacuation plan was executed. Village residents were door-knocked while some houses were dampened down before a convoy of RFS vehicles carrying personnel and villagers left the area. The fire was not far behind.

A Horsley Park Cat 7 stayed behind to help remaining residents protect what they could of the

settlement's 23 homes and forestry buildings. It was crewed by Roger Benjamin from Glenellen Rural Fire Brigade in the Riverina and two Shoalhaven firefighters.

"We worked with residents on a house we thought was the most exposed and saved it (but)... we knew we would lose it all and the safety of the crew then the truck was paramount so we decided to get on the end of the convoy... and come back in when it cooled down around us," Mr Benjamin said.

"As we left we noticed another car behind us. We stopped to let them pass so they weren't at the tail end. By the time we got going again the flames had got across the road and through the pine."

They decided to stay and waited for the main spotfires to pass before driving over burnt ground back to the village.

"It got very dark, hot and noisy with things falling all around us. We only had 1200 litres, so we had one dial jet on the side, two (people) working on the back and one in the cab. There was judicious use of the spray system when the fire really impacted and we got through the whole 1200 litres."

After the front passed they went on to save more homes.

"It was still dark at about 4pm. We located a spare standpipe on the vehicle and scrambled around on hands and knees in the pitch black for a hydrant cover," Mr Benjamin said.

"Conditions eased off and we got the standpipe hooked up. We filled the tank up and went back up to the top to get hoses and equipment and then helped save two homes."

*Story by Meeka Bailey*  
*Photo by Troy Cashen*

## SERVICE MEMBERS IN QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

Congratulations to the following Service members whose distinguished service to the protection of the community and personal dedication were recognised by awards in the Queen's Birthday Honours:

**OFFICER OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA (AO)**

**Commissioner P C Koperberg AO, AFSM, BEM**

**AUSTRALIAN FIRE SERVICE MEDAL (AFSM)**

**Captain A Barter**

(Bendalong Brigade – Shoalhaven District)

**Group Captain K Browne**

(Wellington District)

**Assistant Commissioner M Croweller**

(Head Office)

**Deputy Group Captain J Jackson**

(Cessnock District)

**Former Captain Alan Margerison**

(Kiama/Shellharbour District)

It is with great sadness that we have to report that in July, **Alan Margerison** suffered a fatal heart attack while attending a fire incident.

## A FRIDAY AFTERNOON AT QUEANBEYAN

We arrived in Queanbeyan on Friday afternoon to be greeted with the news that it looked like the weekend was going to be a bad one. We were allocated to our shifts and, oh joy we pulled night shift. Our night crews were made up of members from Headquarters, Grose Wold, Grose Vale, East Kurrajong and Wilberforce.



Driving through Canberra we were told that as the Stromlo Base Camp was full, we would be staying at the Greenhills Conference Centre for the night. Real beds!

We arrived after dark and sent the day shift people to bed, while we night shifters started the process of acclimatising – by staying up and talking all night.

Saturday morning saw us greeting the sun bleary eyed, farewelling the day shift crew and catching our first real look at the smoke, still some distance away on two fronts.

Many of us made a few valiant attempts to get to sleep during the morning but the view was too compelling. Many bets were placed and opinions revised that morning regarding the progress and estimated arrival time of the fires.

After lunch we made a concerted effort to sleep, to be woken after a few minutes with the news that we had to evacuate the camp, as the fires were moving much faster than expected. We packed our gear, with each team storing it in a safe room and went to the main building for a briefing.

At that briefing, with many nervous glances out of the windows, we were told that we would be staying to defend the complex. The complex consisted of three weatherboard dorms, a residence, two halls, four besser block dorms, and the conference centre.

We had a single Cat 1 tanker, a few PC's, a minibus and around 35 firefighters.

Water was available from fire hoses attached to the buildings plus a 20,000 litre cement tank.

"When would we be getting extra resources?" We were told what we had was all we were getting.

Tasks were quickly allocated and plans laid. Our team got the job of protecting the besser block dorms which let us set up 2 people per building with Crew Leaders and our Group Officer coordinating.

The first order of business was to prepare the buildings, doing the usual things such as fill gutters with water, close windows, and clear combustibles away. As I was up on the roof with a hose I could see quite clearly how quickly the fires were moving. I also felt the force of the wind which was running ahead of the fires.

We raided the Cat 1 and set up the portable pump with two lines. We were informed that the pump for the fire hoses was run by the site's generator, which was housed in a shack located right about where the two fires would first impact. We ran out and tested the fire hoses anyway.

The flames, so impressive at a many-kilometre distance, began to show a very real menace. The smoke columns from the two fires were meeting directly over our heads and blocking out the sun. A lone helicopter was seen passing by to the north, and then it got busy.

The air became filled with embers and the Cat 1 began sounding its siren – the signal that the fires has impacted the first buildings. The fires were not only impacting from the north west but had moved around and were coming in from the north and northeast as well.



As the weatherboard dormitories became involved the Cat 1 moved back up to the conference centre before its line of retreat was cut off. When the fire from the south west impacted the order was passed to evacuate to the basement of the conference centre to wait it out. From first impact to this point took roughly eight minutes.

We spent a very nervous five minutes in the basement, with people watching the ongoing firestorm outside through the full length windows, peeking through the blankets hanging over them. Teams were slowly sent back out as it became safer to search out spotfires.

**"When would we be getting extra resources?" We were told what we had was all we were getting.**

Moving back outside you walked into a surreal environment. The atmosphere was orange air filled with smoke, ash and embers. The heat was still intense.

It took over half an hour to get the area secured, checking all of the rooms many times to ensure that nothing was going to reignite.

During this we found out that the Sydney media were running the Canberra situation live so many mobile phone calls were made to reassure families that we were OK.

Once we had everything under control we were called back into the conference centre for a debrief. We were told that we had saved everything except the three weatherboard dormitories and a hall which was very good news. After the debrief we found that there was still some low water pressure and the hot water systems should hold enough for a couple of showers, which was even better news.

Showers taken care of, consideration was given to our situation, as we were now in a camp with no hot water, no toilet facilities, no feeding capability and no power. We also found out that our alternate base camp at Stromlo was no more.

Just after dark the news came through that we were to be re-billeted at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Canberra. Our day crews rejoined us, we were all stood down for the night and we left the camp.

Postscript: At around 0200 the fire alarm at the Crowne Plaza activated and many a firey smiled as the fire warden let us know we shouldn't panic as the fire brigade was on the way to investigate.

**Story and Photos by  
Karen and Lindsay Gorrie DC  
Grose Wold - Hawkesbury**



## GROSE WOLD'S NEW STATION

On Saturday 14 June 2003 a relieved crew stood proudly watching as Supt. Bruce Holz, Region East and the Mayor of Hawkesbury City Council, Cr. Rex Stubbs officially opened their new fire station. The ceremony was the culmination of 15 months of hard work by the members of Grose Wold Rural Fire Brigade in the Hawkesbury District.

From the Brigade's beginnings in 1936, this is the third station in which they have lived. The first collapsed onto their Blitz tanker in 1974 after a fierce windstorm. The only things salvaged from this were some blocks, wooden beams, and the tanker – almost undamaged. The beams and blocks were re-used in the building of the second station, a single-bay garage.

In 2002 it was decided to finally bite the bullet and start work on a new station, one that could cater to the increased needs of the Brigade. The major problem with the existing station was that the new Category 2 tanker the Brigade had been allocated would not fit! With the expense of having the work undertaken professionally being prohibitive it was decided that contractors would only be used for those tasks that could not be undertaken by members. With welcome financial input from Hawkesbury City Council and the Rural Fire Service plus monies gained by fundraising it was all go.

The same beams and a lot of the blocks from the original station were again re-used, lending a strong sense of history and continuity.

The time put in by the members amounted to more than 2,500 hours, mostly on weekends. Many

local businesses helped with donations or reduced pricing, and local tradespeople donated their time. Many of the members increased their own skills and knowledge, tackling tasks previously unattempted. During the work the Brigade was still active, with over 30 local responses and involvement in many major incidents including the Bala Range, Lithgow and Canberra fires. Fundraising also continued during the period.

The new two-bay station has three times as much available floor space as the original and includes a toilet, storeroom, fully equipped kitchen, upstairs office and a 23,000-litre water tank. The area surrounding the station has been cleared with enough space for parking members' vehicles and over 12 tankers, creating a staging area for major incidents in the Grose Valley area. With the office housing computers, a weather station, fax machine, photocopier, colour scanner/printer and a mapping bench local incident commanders have an excellent base of operations. Plans for the near future include installing both PMR and UHF-CB radios to give better communications coverage. Downstairs the high-tech theme continues, with training catered for by a large television, a video recorder, a DVD player and an overhead projector and screen.

The new Category 2 tanker was taken possession of in April 2003 and sits proudly in its spacious surroundings. This unit replaced a Category 2 'dog-box' Isuzu given to the Brigade in 1995. Prior to this the Brigade utilised a Bedford received in 1976 as a replacement for the Blitz.

The new station has already proven an attraction with membership increasing by 20 percent over the last few months as locals realise that Grose Wold Rural Fire Brigade is a vibrant and active part of their community. With the Rural Fire Service flag flying proudly over landscaped gardens the members feel strongly that the future will bring an increased presence of the Service in the District.

*Story and photos by Karen Gorrie*



# CROSS BORDER EXERCISE

## CROSS BORDER EXERCISE - RFS/CFA REGION SOUTH 25.8.02 JERILDERIE

This regular exercise introduced many of the RFS personnel involved in the recent CFA Tracking System, or 'bar-coding'.

Broadly speaking, appliances, staging areas, personnel, incidents, activities etc are all allocated a bar-code, and can be logged manually or electronically into the main computer system.

Andrew Browning (Group Captain Jerilderie) explains the broad scope of the exercise.

"Jerilderie RFD with Region 22 CFA in Northern Victoria combined to run a successful cross-border exercise on Sunday 25 August 2002, in Jerilderie Shire. Eighteen RFS tankers and crews joined with twelve CFA tankers and crews. All tankers, command vehicles and other resources approaching from the south assembled in Jerilderie, where they were formed into task forces and dispatched to the staging area, 38kms to the North on Kidman Way. Upon arrival, each task force was logged onto the CFA's sophisticated electronic system, whereby all resources and crew members have a bar code label attached, and are scanned into a laptop computer. As the various task forces moved around the six

sectors, they were tracked by a transfer on the laptop.

The task forces were deliberately comprised of a mixture from each agency, typically three RFS tankers and three CFA tankers, with a command vehicle containing a leader from each agency. This was done to provide the challenge of overcoming various compatibility problems (communications, hose fittings etc) and to provide a forum for the interchange of ideas and knowledge. The sectors comprised six different scenarios which volunteer firefighters typically experience:-

- > Tanker tactics when working on a large grass fire in conjunction with earthmoving equipment and aircraft,
- > Hand tools, knapsacks, and small pumps working in timber and isolated areas,
- > A simulated motor vehicle accident,
- > Water bombing aircraft and loading and safety,
- > A 300m closed relay pumping scenario, providing special compatibility challenges,
- > A rural structure scenario involving a simulated house fire and LPG bottle retrieval.

The day was enjoyed by all, with plenty of knowledge and camaraderie exchanged between the volunteers of both agencies. Many thanks to Region 22 CFA Officer John Haynes, for his support, and to the personnel from each agency who assisted to make the day a success.

This really captures the spirit of the exercise – working together with our neighbouring agencies, and helping to improve the safety and effectiveness of our cross-border working relationships between the two Services.

*Story by Roger Benjamin and Andrew Browning*



Andrew officiated throughout the exercise, held mostly on his own property north of Jerilderie.



## STANDING OVATION FOR BAULKHAM HILLS VOLUNTEERS

A standing ovation greeted volunteers accepting an award on behalf of Baulkham Hills Rural Fire District in June.

The hard work and commitment of volunteer firefighters received recognition during the 2003 Hills Shire Times Community Business Awards.

The District received the 'Community Contribution' award during a presentation at Castle Hill RSL.

Rural fire brigade Captains Len Best and Ross Jones and Education Coordinators Larry O'Carroll, Ivan Chan, Sally McDowell, Richard Gregory and David Bryden attended the function.

The award highlighted the dedication and commitment of RFS volunteers to their community, said Baulkham Hills Fire Control Officer John Hojel,

who also attended the presentation.

"The award is recognition of volunteers and the work they do in the community, not only during the fires last December, or any other summer, but the constant work they do 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year," Supt Hojel said.

"When the RFS was called up as the winner of Community Contribution award the whole audience rose as one in a standing ovation.

"If we ever felt that the work of the RFS was unknown to the public it was dispelled in that moment.

"We are very thankful for the respect and appreciation shown by presenting Baulkham Hills Rural Fire District with this award," he said.

The District received an outstanding number of nominations in the Baulkham Hills Shire Council sponsored Community Contribution category, Cumberland Newspapers Marketing Manager Sheree Primmer said.

**"24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year"**

"At the presentation evening the entire 419 guests that attended all gave a standing ovation," Ms Primmer said.



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## IMPRESSIONS OF A GREEN FIREFIGHTER



Wednesday 23 to Thursday 24 October 2002

### AS IT HAPPENED:

Home from work Wed. Obvious fire coming through from south towards Hat Head pushed by strong winds.

- > About 7.30pm call to standby **1st Adrenaline Rush**
- > Super keen get my gear on
- > Waiting, Waiting, Waiting
- > Fire looks pretty bad
- > Why no call out yet?
- > On back verandah siren goes off. Here we go!
- > Get to shed. All novices except CL Captain
- > Full crew nearly, about 10 or 11 of us
- > Excitement plus. **Adrenaline going again**
- > Take off to the Gap
- > Patrol, meet other brigade
- > Only option at this stage – inform of possible evacuation local residents on Gap side of Hat Head
- > Police on hand, more brigades
- > CL off with other CL's
- > Survey land and situation
- > Wind dropping in our favour
- > Decide to do backburn from pole house western edge to track on eastern edge
- > Brigade crews in position, out with the McLeod Team, mineral earth firebreak in the dark on the side of a bloody big hill
- > Trail about 3kms long (probably shorter but seems that big)
- > 1st thoughts of training course all falling into place, thanks guys
- > It all seems disjointed but obviously it is all coming into place
- > Hose from truck too short have to join all then relay and drag up the bloody hill again
- > All ok, in position, word comes down – **Start to burn**
- > **More Adrenaline**
- > Up she goes! Paper Bark, Banksias, the lot pretty fierce but moving away up hill
- > Start dousing down knowing this is happening right along break
- > Things look pretty good
- > Burn successful, hard yards done
- > Patrol line black out hot spots. This done over until line is secure
- > Crews start standing down. Hat Head left to patrol clean up
- > Try to backburn previous fireground from Hungry Road – Gap Road. Goes out of own accord (something to be said for hazard reduction)
- > Last patrol
- > Engine drops us off at the eastern end of containment then goes to western end

- > Walk the "**bloody hill**" again check backburn line, all ok
- > Back to shed log off
- > Feeling second hand hard night dog tired
- > **No more Adrenaline I'm stuffed**
- > Home 0630 in the morning. Tired but feeling good, shower, bed
- > 1 hour sleep up for work 0830 or so I thought
- > Stopped at bridge, road closed to town, fire has second wind, off again
- > Talk to Sector Leader give lay of land and properties that could be at risk in park along the road
- > Back home. Into firefighting gear and start again
- > My crew, Hat Head, not active this time seconded to Clybucca at western edge of village
- > Hat Head crew now active, back on my crew
- > Set up stand pipe for filling tanks
- > Decision made to backburn on from Breakout Road, wind in our favour
- > Burn started, one small spot burn on south side put out, fire is away running north east along beach front.
- > Patrol fire line, contain, damp down again, and again, and again
- > Nearly lunch time getting hungry
- > Ladies from village offer to make sandwiches
- > No food yet, decide to buy hamburgers from local shop, at least 45 min wait "bugger"
- > Sandwiches and drinks from other source, somebody has organised it from other end of the fire zone, thanks guys
- > Hamburgers ready, that's 2 feeds
- > 1st group of ladies show up, that's 3 feeds
- > Overfed now, thanks all!
- > Two brigades sent with front-end loader to check road
- > Bloody desolation it's been a hot burn
- > Douse down put out electricity poles that are smouldering, getting closer to fire centre
- > Dense smoke then through to unburnt sectors. Turn around and back to Hat Head
- > Seconded to another crew back out to assess area to Sydenems
- > Escort duty, backwards and forwards escorting residents of village home who were stopped at Kinchelea School
- > Do it 2 or 3 times back to village
- > Hat Head Brigade continue patrol of burnt areas and containment line
- > Stood down at 1900 Thursday evening

### MY THOUGHTS AFTER THE EVENT:

- > Friday – 18 hours firefighting containing, patrolling
- > I feel pretty good, a sense of achievement of having helped when other people were threatened
- > Thankful that the training that I had all fell into place
- > Thanks guys, you know who you are
- > A small cog in a Bloody Big Wheel

Story by **John BF**  
Hat Head Brigade - Kempsey District





# THE NEW CODE

## Fast-Tracking Hazard Reduction Approval

A range of legislation exists to protect the environment from potential damage caused by a range of activities, including hazard reduction work. To fast track the environmental approval process for hazard reduction in bushfire prone areas, RFS staff now provide free environmental assessments. This helps private property owners in bushfire prone areas to do hazard reduction work and protect the environment at the same time. The aim is to make it easier to organise hazard reduction on the land that most needs it.

## LESS RED TAPE

The RFS has cut through the red tape involved in doing bushfire hazard reduction by producing the Bush Fire Environmental Assessment Code.

Hazard reduction clearing and burning is a useful way to mitigate bushfire risk. A range of environmental legislation already regulates how to do hazard reduction without damaging the environment.

Inquiries into bushfires found that hazard reduction was sometimes stifled by the complex process of getting environmental approval that can be particularly difficult for private citizens. Sometimes the process could take months.

The Code streamlines all these regulations for land in bushfire prone areas, fast tracking the process and making it easier to organise hazard reduction. It reduces paperwork.

## TRAINED STAFF USE THE CODE

The Code is a step-by-step process used by RFS, council and land management agency staff.

Staff in RFS fire control centres are now trained to use the Code to do environmental assessments for private property hazard reductions. Private landholders simply apply for a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate at their local RFS fire control centre. In some areas, councils provide this service and council staff do the paperwork.

## HOW ARE VOLUNTEERS AFFECTED?

Volunteers do not have to issue Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificates or do environmental assessments – RFS staff provide these services. But the Code may apply to land volunteers own or work on. So, Certificates may be needed to do hazard reduction that brigades are involved in. Some training activities are exempt, but some may require a Certificate. Simply ask district staff for advice.

## APPLY FOR A BUSH FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION CERTIFICATE

The RFS or council provides free environmental assessment and certification services for private property. Private landholders fill in an application for a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate and submit it to the local RFS fire control centre or council. The form and guidelines are available on the RFS website, [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au), at RFS fire control centres or councils.

The form asks for basic information on how, when and where the hazard reduction will take

place. A staff member goes through the application, determines if an environmental assessment is needed and does the assessment using the steps in the Code. Before the Code existed, private landholders may have spent months requesting approval and organising inspections and impact statements. If required, an assessment may be done and a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate may be issued to the landholder.

## 7 DAY PROCESSING, NOT MONTHS OF WAITING

The Certificate gives approval to undertake hazard reduction. It is valid for 12 months and may contain conditions to protect the environment. In most cases, the Certificate should be issued in seven days, unless further information or negotiation is needed. Without the Code, this process sometimes took months to complete.

Certificates may contain conditions that ensure protection for a particular area. Some examples are: giving neighbours 24 hours notice before burning, tree canopy separation distances, protecting vegetation near waterways, removing hazardous vegetation near cultural sites and using machinery to prevent erosion.

## ASK IF YOUR LAND NEEDS ENVIRONMENTAL APPROVAL TO DO HAZARD REDUCTION

Check with your RFS fire control centre or council. By applying for a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate you will be told whether your land requires an environmental assessment.

Forested coastal areas will be more likely to require an environmental assessment because there is a larger area of urban bushland interface in the east of the State. However, residents of western NSW should also check with their RFS fire control centre or council before undertaking hazard reduction work.

## AGRICULTURAL WORK DOES NOT NEED A CERTIFICATE

Agricultural activities are not covered by the Code. Farmers can continue to plough land or burn stubble and diseased crops for farming purposes. They do not need to apply for a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate to do this work. Farmers may apply for a Certificate only if they want to do hazard reduction work that requires an existing environmental approval.

## SEPARATE FIRE PERMITS ARE STILL NEEDED

A permit to light a fire may still be required if burning is the chosen method of hazard reduction. Permits are needed during the Bush Fire Danger Period which normally runs from October to March (unless the Bush Fire Danger Period is varied locally) or if the burning is likely to endanger a building.

## THIS IS MORE PAPERWORK THAT MEANS THE ENVIRONMENT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN PROTECTING LIVES!

This is actually less paperwork for private landholders because agency staff do the work for them and the Code streamlines what was a complex process. Everyone recognises that protection of life is the top priority. Consideration must be given to the environmental effects of the hazard reduction activities that help protect lives.

Hazard reduction work can progress without damaging the environment and the Code assists this. The environment is a form of property. It is an essential part of the economic health of NSW. It is an asset vital to industries such as tourism and agriculture. We also have an obligation to protect the environment for future generations.

## WILL NATIONAL PARKS AND COUNCILS DO MORE HAZARD REDUCTION WORK NOW?

Land management agencies can use the Code to assess their own hazard reduction activities. The Code makes the environmental assessment process quicker, cheaper and easier. In some cases hazard reductions may have been delayed by environmental assessments. Land management agencies can now use the Code to fast track this process for some of their land.

## CAN A CERTIFICATE ALWAYS BE ISSUED?

In the majority of cases, for genuine hazard reduction work, a Certificate can be issued. Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificates will only be issued for hazard reduction work consistent with local Bush Fire Risk Management Plans and on land mapped as a hazard.

## IN SOME CASES A CERTIFICATE CANNOT BE ISSUED

1. If the land is excluded from the Code. Significant environmental areas such as wetlands and rainforests are not covered by the Code. Because of their sensitivity a full environmental assessment is required. In most cases this will not affect private property.
2. If the Code does not apply to the land. If the land is not declared bushfire prone or there are no identified existing assets to be protected an alternative approval process is required. Contact council for advice.
3. The work is not covered by the Code. If the works are not specifically for hazard reduction, already have existing approvals (e.g. lawn mowing) or do not require environmental approval (agricultural activities) a certificate will not be issued.

## APPEALING CONDITIONS ON THE CERTIFICATE OR REFUSAL TO ISSUE A CERTIFICATE

A refusal to issue a certificate is not a refusal of hazard reduction work. It is merely a refusal of the streamlined process offered by the Code. The applicant can still use the existing legislation to gain approval. Contact council for advice on how to proceed.

## DO I CONTACT THE RFS OR COUNCIL?

The RFS does environmental assessment and certificate issuing for hazard reduction work across most of the State. Local governments has given this responsibility to the RFS. The RFS is the contact agency for all local government areas apart from:

Bankstown, Blue Mountains, Hunters Hill, Hurstville, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Manly, Mosman, Newcastle, Ryde, Sutherland and Willoughby. Contact the local council in these areas for assistance with environmental assessments and Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificates on bushfire prone land.

14

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## 1953 - 2003 YARRAHAPPINI - STUARTS POINT RFB



### Fiftieth Anniversaries Yarrahappini - Stuarts Point Rural Fire Brigade 1953 - 2003

The first Brigade in Kempsey to turn 50 celebrated with the publication of an impressive history book.

The Brigade formed with 17 people attending an inaugural meeting on 22 September 1953 in the old Stuarts Point Hall. The intention was to form a Brigade to protect banana plantations on Yarrahappini Mountain, the village of Stuarts Point and the surrounding district.

The Brigade's equipment was stored in a farm shed and consisted of several chipping hoes, a few leather beaters, 44 gallon drums and heavy Rega knapsacks.

#### MILESTONES:

- 1954** First pump and motor unit with a 100 gallon tank installed on skid poles in a banana packing shed ready for the first available truck. Barbers Lane land was donated for a fire shed, which still stands today.
- 1957** First shed at Barbers Lane built. The fibro, single bay structure was a popular rubbing post for local draught horses that broke several fibro sheets until a fence was installed.
- 1958** 13 fires attended. Working party for clearing firetrails in Forestry land organised.

**1961** Long-awaited Ford Blitz truck arrived for conversion to a tanker. The old pressure unit was strapped onto the wooden floor. It was too big for the shed and the doors couldn't be closed. Seven fires attended, the unit attended three.

**1966** An underground fuel tank was discovered in Kempsey and fitted to the Blitz with a bigger pump.

**1970** A new shed was built by the Shire. The double bay with roller doors and concrete floor was designed by local architect. Eungai Rail was included in the Brigade's zone. Boral's 'big mill' burnt down and spotted over the Pacific Highway and Stuarts Point Road. Thirty men contained the fire at Plummers Hill before reaching the swamp and heading for the village.

**1973** The Blitz was out of action coming into the fire season. The Shire ordered four 6x6WD Studebakers and one became the Brigade's number one tanker in October.

**1975** All hands turned out to save Stuarts Point from a large fire from Clybucca swamp. Another fire came out of the Yarrahappini swamp.

**1978** Strenuous hazard reduction, totalling 515 man hours to burn 414 ha, took place in August. Both vehicles had flashing red lights, sirens and radios.

**1978** A big fire at Eungai Rail roared eastward and stopped after several days of hard firefighting saved Stuarts Point. Another fire threatened property and banana plantations out of Way Way State Forest towards Middle and Scotts Head. No hazard reduction work done due to dry conditions. An ex-Forestry tanker arrived at a cost of \$2000 and the Studebaker.

**1981** No damage to property in Stuarts Point during the height of the '80 inferno was a tribute to the Brigade.

**1983** Tanker trailer and International Acco added to the fleet. \$100 donated to Victorian Bushfire Appeal for Ash Wednesday.

**1984** Village Water Supply Scheme required training in use of hydrants and high pressure canvas hose for house fires. Fishermans Reach shed built on Council land. The Brigade saved a Fishermans Reach Road home from total destruction.

**1985** Farewell to the Blitz, replaced by an Inter D1610 called 'The Beast'. The Acco was transferred to Fishermans Reach.

**1986** Toyota Landcruiser striker unit purchased and members took advantage of Class 3 licence training.

**1987** Basic training questionnaires were distributed. An automatic M Series Bedford moved to Stuarts Point shed with the Landcruiser moving to Fishermans Reach and the Acco to Barbers Lane.

**1989** Rivalry almost resulted in the formation of a separate Brigade at Yarrahappini, however, the motion was lost.

**1990** The Brigade formed its first crew to work out of area. The crew took the Automatic Bedford to the Moonbi Ranges for three days during a state of emergency in Tamworth between Christmas and New Year.

**1992** Quarterly meetings began.

**1994** The Brigade's first Group Leader became certified.

**1995** Discussion of personal safety followed the deaths of several firefighters. The Brigade decided to have all members basically trained and all field officers undergo Crew Leader training. Work began on a constitution.

**1996** First 10 Village Firefighters certified. Members must now complete four hours training each month. The first brand new Isuzu tanker was presented on November 4 and the Acco traded out.

**1998** In line with the governing body's name change the Brigade became a Rural Fire Brigade. A successful 'adopt a hydrant' scheme was initiated. Blue flashing lights were mounted on the Bedford and Landcruiser. Brigade attended 21 incidents.

**1999** A wet summer with no fires but battles with council for shed extensions were finally won. The Brigade attended its most unusual job, offloading fuel from a boat full of illegal immigrants aground at Scotts Head beach. PMR radios were reprogrammed for communication with neighbouring shires. Attended 22 incidents.

**2000** A spate of spring fires caused the Brigade to attend 22 incidents by October. A mammoth effort by local and out of area crews finally contained a blaze that affected Fishermans Reach.

**2001** Stuarts Point shed extensions completed. Flood relief work was conducted in March. Two GPS units were purchased. The Fire Danger Period was brought forward and the Brigade registered a record number of hours fighting fires outside its area. The Brigade spent its first Christmas fighting fires at South West Rocks and then responded to Crescent Head until mid January. Attended 36 incidents with a total of 2,002 man hours.

**2002** Crew members attended fires in Grafton and four days straight working on blazes from Crescent Head to South West Rocks then the Moonbi Ranges. Attended 55 incidents with a total of 3182 man hours.

**2003** Another first for the Brigade with four members flown to the Canberra fires. A new tanker was acquired - and shed extensions needed at Barbers Lane.



# CLARENCE VALLEY - SNOWY SEC 44 FIRES



*Clarence Valley volunteer fire fighters faced extreme weather conditions in the snowy fires.*

Taskforces from across NSW swarmed to the State's southeast to support RFS crews after lightning strikes caused dozens of fires in mountainous country.

On Sunday 26 January 2003, the Clarence Valley's Taskforce Charlie, under the control of Taskforce Commander John Harvey, was deployed to the village of Guthega for property protection.

The village had been evacuated due to expected 40 to 50 kph winds and temperatures in the high 30s.

Within half an hour after arriving the crews were chasing spotfires in 50km winds gusting to 70km

The Clarence Valley Taskforce consisted of two Cat 9's, two Cat 7's, one Cat 1 and a command vehicle. Hornsby 1 and North Rocks 1 were also deployed under the Clarence Valley Taskforce for day duties.

Within half an hour after arriving at Guthega village, the crews were chasing spotfires in 50km winds gusting to 70km.



At 1300hrs the taskforce was responded to give assistance to firefighters on the Barry Way, where the fires were threatening life and property.

Upon arrival we were confronted with kilometres of fire burning in open grassland threatening houses. Temperatures were in the very high 30s, relative humidity 11 percent and winds from the northwest at an average of 40km. The fire was spotting well in front of the main fire.

The crews worked hard and by 1900hrs had contained the main fire and the immediate threat to life and property had been eased. The night crews concentrated on a backburning operation to round up the remaining spot fires, which had the potential to impact on the township of Jindabyne.

The following morning the Taskforce was deployed to mop-up and blackout from the backburning operations the previous night, it was a chilly start to the day but no-one would have thought that there could be such a big change in weather conditions.



We were deployed to the highlands east of Jindabyne and the only fire that the crews saw all day was the camp fire they lit to keep warm and boil the Billy; with temperatures going to the other extreme from the day prior; at 1300hrs 27 January, weather readings were - temperature of 12 degrees, relative humidity of 97 percent, wind 3-7km and visibility of less than 50m.

The taskforce was stood down at 1800hrs and were glad to get back to their rooms for a hot shower and warm clothes. The conversation over dinner was centred on the extremely opposite weather conditions experienced in the Snowy Mountains.

*Wayne Hadaway  
Ulmarra Rural Fire Brigade*

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# UPDATE



## REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE BY THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

As a result of the firestorm that devastated the Australian Capital Territory on Saturday 18 January 2003, the Australian Federal Police have established a Coronial Investigations Team. On the 29 January 2003, members of this Team attended a briefing at the Queanbeyan/Yarrowlumlumla Fire Control Centre along with members of the NSW Rural Fire Service's Fire Investigation Unit, NSW Police Strike Force Tronto and members of the NSW Police Force Forensic Services Group (FSG).

It was identified at this meeting, that the Australian Federal Police's Forensic Team did not have the capability to investigate the cause and origin of fires so a formal approach was made to Commissioner Koperberg to have the NSW Rural Fire Service's Fire Investigation Unit carry out the investigations into their cause and origin. During the field investigations, Sergeant Therese Barnicoat of the AFP worked closely with the Manager Fire Investigation and was of enormous assistance to our Investigators.

As this is a critical avenue of inquiry for the Australian Federal Police and Strike Force Tronto, it is quite a coup for the Rural Fire Service to have the Fire Investigation Unit's expertise and qualifications in the field of wildfire investigation, formally recognised.

**Sergeant Therese Barnicoat of the AFP was of enormous assistance to our Investigators.**

To date, Inspector Ken Lucas (Dubbo) and Inspector Steve Walker (Wentworth) have carried out extensive field investigations into the McIntyre's Hut, Bendora, Mt Gingera, Mt Morgan and Stockyard Spur fires with Supt Joe Knox and Insp Jason Heffernan (Wagga) investigating the Broken Cart fire.

The Fire Investigation Unit continues to work closely with members of the NSW Police Service's Strike Force Tronto and the Forensic Services Group to assist them with the Coronial Brief and the gathering of evidence on the 2002/2003 fires. The Coronial Inquiry into these fires commenced in Canberra on 7 March 2003 with a preliminary hearing. The NSW Coronial Hearing into the fires in the Yarrowlumlumla District commences in Queanbeyan on Monday 25 August.

*Story by Richard Woods*



**ABOVE:**  
*Insp. Steve Walker investigating the McIntyre's Hut fire – January 2003*

**LEFT:**  
*Fire Investigators and Forensic Services Police in Duffy, ACT*

*Photos by Richard Woods and Ken Lucas*



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# PRIMEX FIELD DAY DISPLAY

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION DISPLAY IN CASINO

Region North has undertaken a Community Education display at the Primex field days in Casino (12 – 14 June), supported by an active fire demonstration held every hour during the busy periods of the day. More than 45,000 people attended Primex over the three days.

The static education display focused on ember attack, evacuation and property preparation. Big Ed's computers received a significant workout from the many school children visiting the site on Thursday and Friday, and general public on Saturday.

The Service 'Showbags' proved to be very popular with 1500 being distributed over the three days. On Saturday Julie Ellis (Ballina) and Sonya Marks (Richmond Valley) had at one stage over 30 children demonstrating how to Stop, Drop and Roll in the marquee attached to Big Ed. Children and adults were also asked what number to ring in an emergency, the type of information they would need to provide and how to 'Get down Low and GO, GO, GO' to earn a showbag.

### The Service 'Showbags' proved to be very popular with 1500 being distributed over the three days

The live fire demonstration this year focused on how to extinguish a stovetop fire and a fuel fire. In addition, Lismore Rural Fire Districts training prop was used to simulate an attack on a car fire. The display of firefighting proved to be very popular with the crowds, with some of the demonstrations attracting over 200 spectators.

Special thanks to Quell (Lismore) for donating the fire blankets and extinguishers used during the demonstrations, and Lismore Rural Fire District for placing "Paw Paw" the 1940 Ford Blitz on display.

**TOP:**  
Crew attacking the car fire.

**MIDDLE:**  
Big Ed's computer games were used extensively and the display was visited throughout the three days.

**BOTTOM:**  
The live fire demonstration crew who worked non stop during the three days and provided the facilitators with support.

*Story and photos Chris Wallbridge  
Community Safety Officer, Region North*



## THE COMMISSIONER'S VISIT TO OBERON

Commissioner Phil Koperberg's recent visit to Oberon to open the 103rd annual Oberon Show brought back some painful childhood memories.

In his opening address, Mr Koperberg revealed that he had a longer association with the small timber town just over the Blue Mountains than most people were aware. He said that he had spent many school holidays there picking peas with his uncle. "I've really never forgiven him for all that", he said. "It was backbreaking work." Mr Koperberg also paid tribute to the NSW Rural Firefighters. He said this summer's bushfire season had begun last July on the Queensland border, and only ended with the extinguishing of the Snowy Mountains fires in February.

Mr Koperberg lunched with the Oberon Showgirl, Amanda McCarthy, and show officials, and also visited the show display staged by volunteers from the Oberon and neighbouring brigades, led by Oberon Fire Control Officer, Eddie Gibbons.

*Story by Bob Wilson*





## MEMORANDUM



**From:** Commissioner, NSW Rural Fire Service  
Director General, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

**Subject:** JOINT MEMORANDUM – HAZARD REDUCTION

**Date:**

**File No.**

The NSW RFS and NPWS are unequivocally committed to employing hazard reduction by prescribed burning or other means as an integral part of wildfire management.

Both Services recognise the strategic value of fuel management in the modification of fire behaviour, particularly in relative proximity to community assets.

*Having said this, both Services also recognise the need for extensive burning in strategic wildfire suppression zones.*

As a matter of principle both Services subscribe to the philosophy that hazard reduction by prescribed burning is both a fire mitigation and environmental management tool.

Senior officers from the NSW Rural Fire Service and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service are co-ordinating plans to ensure hazard reduction programs for both agencies are aggressively pursued again this season.

To maximise resources to ensure hazard reduction program targets are met both Services have agreed to the following:

1. District Officers of both Services must complete all Reviews of Environmental Factors and burn plans by Friday July 25.
2. District Managers must consult and plan on the issue of shared resources before July 25 to optimise resources.
3. NPWS prescribed burn organisers should involve RFS personnel in park-based operations wherever possible.
4. RFS prescribed burns on land tenures other than National Parks, should, where necessary, involve NPWS resources.
5. Where resources from outside the district are required to fulfil a burn plan Regional Managers of both Services are to act as central co-ordinators.
6. Where prescribed burns in priority urban interface/private property zones cannot be completed due to inclement weather other methods of hazard reduction must be actively implemented.
7. All burn plans must address OH&S guidelines.

Brian Gilligan  
Director General  
NPWS

Phil Koperberg  
Commissioner  
RFS



# THE GREAT AUSSIE MUSTER



The 2003 Sydney Royal Easter Show was once again a huge success for the Service, receiving our sixth award in as many years. This year the Service was awarded the Silver Prize for best use of space over 52 square metres.

Our appearance at the Show each year is not all about winning awards but one of educating the general public on fire safety/awareness and how they can best prepare themselves against fire, as well as promoting the Service to the wider community. Following on from two very hectic fire seasons, the high profile of the Service was very evident with a

record 400,000 people visiting the stand over the 14 days. The proof in the pudding came from the hundreds of positive comments received, both written and verbal on the display.

This year the main theme of the display was 'Ember Attack' showing how houses/properties are vulnerable before, during and after a fire. There were also static displays on the 'SWS' (static water supply) and 'EWSS' (external water supply system) programs along with an 'Urban Bushland Interface Model' computer and interactive games for the kids.

As in the past we had crews representing their Districts/Zones drawn from Hastings, Coffs Harbour/Bellingen, South West Group, Queanbeyan/Yarrowlumla, Central West Alliance, Cowra, Warringah/Pittwater, Hornsby/Ku Ring Gai and Gosford. The crews greatly enjoyed their tour of duty at the Show, with a number attending for the very first time.

The Service could not have achieved the results it has, not only this year, but in previous years without the assistance of all the dedicated volunteers who continually keep putting up their hands to undertake Community Education projects, along with, Floorex Promotions, The Garden Path, Google and Lots of Watts adding their expertise to the display.

*Story by Mark Fullagar, Photos by Tony Longa*



# MOREE HIGH SCHOOL FIREFIGHTING CLASS

High school students in Moree are now better equipped for community life after completing a Bush Firefighter course through Moree Plains Fire Control Centre.

Students aged 14 to 16 from Moree Secondary College started the 18-week course in February and were assessed in June.

"The aim of the training was to foster initiative, discipline and loyalty, as well as stimulate interest in the RFS," Moree Plains Fire Control Officer, Supt Stephen Basham said.

"Our specific aims were to promote community service within the student body, develop basic skills in emergency services and enhance links between the school and the community."

RFS personnel provided training on the Bush Firefighter modules of basic safety, fire behaviour, hand tools and knapsacks, bushfire suppression, fighting fire with water, hazard reduction, basic communication and casualty assistance.

"The students were so enthused and interested," RFS Moree Community Education Officer Rhonda Gallagher said.

"We have watched the students develop better self-esteem and more community awareness. They gained so much from the course and the Moree community will gain a lot as well because the students can contribute so much more. We're extremely proud."

The input of personnel from other local emergency services was a creative initiative included in the training package.

"We were fortunate to have guest speakers from the police highway patrol and ambulance service to foster links between students and emergency service personnel," Mrs Gallagher said.

"The students gained a better understanding of our distress when attending motor vehicle accidents involving speed, drink driving, drugs, fatigue and young adults.

"As well as learning emergency service skills they learned some life lessons, such as staying safe while driving."

The program is one of the first to target fire safety awareness through the presentation of bush firefighter training within schools. Yallaroi Fire Control Centre ran a similar course last year. Moree adopted and enhanced the program.

"Many rural fire districts are contacting us to obtain a copy of the program, which was presented at the RFS Community Education Conference this year, and the South Australian Country Fire Service has also requested a copy," Supt Basham said.

**To obtain a copy of the program, contact Moree Plains Fire Control Centre on 67573300.**

*Photos by Kim Hurlle and Superintendent Steve Basham*



Rural Fire  
Service Approved

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Large Kit Bag <small>(3 external zip pockets, boot pocket and "wef" pocket)</small> <small>Individual name OR Brigade name</small> <small>Individual name AND Brigade name</small>	\$45.00 ADD \$5.00 ADD \$8.00		Navy	Length 73cm Height 33cm Width 31cm	
Medium Kit Bag <small>(3 external zip pockets)</small> <small>Individual name OR Brigade name</small> <small>Individual name AND Brigade name</small>	\$35.00 ADD \$5.00 ADD \$8.00		Navy	Length 50cm Height 30cm Width 20cm	
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# CAMDEN AND CAMPBELLTOWN PRESENTATION



On Saturday 26 October 2002, volunteer firefighters from Camden and Campbelltown Rural Fire Districts were awarded their National Medals and Long Service Awards by Assistant Commissioner Mark Crossweller.

Also in attendance were dignitaries from local government areas of Camden and Campbelltown.

Members receiving awards from the Camden District were – Deputy Group Captain Colin Spinks and Captain Ron Smith who both received their National Medal for 15 years of continuous service.

## The day kicked off with a mystery car rally.

From the Campbelltown District volunteers receiving their National Medal and 15 Year Long Service Awards were Sharon Markut, Jeffrey Wood, Robert Etchells, Kevin Cooper and Peter Woodmore.

Volunteers from Campbelltown who received their 1st Clasp and 25 Year Long Service Awards were John (Ted) Noble and Philip Markut.

Inspector Lido Turrin AFSM from Campbelltown received the National Medal 3rd Clasp and 45 Year Long Service Award.

The day kicked off with a mystery car rally, with drivers and crews having to find a number of objects along the way, ranging from a lolly pop wrapper to a feather, not attached to any birds, as was the case last year. Crews also had trivia questions to answer and points decided the winners. Lisa and Val Turrin won the trophy for the most points.

Following the presentations there was a challenge softball match between Camden and Campbelltown, C91.3 were the major sponsor of this donating an impressive trophy. Camden were clear winners, we have been told that this was because a majority of Campbelltown volunteers had to leave the field to attend fires. Campbelltown has vowed to avenge the trophy next year.

The day was advertised as a family day and this gave partners and kids the opportunity to mix and get to know one another. Favourable weather allowed firefighters to take time off from fire duties that are predominate this time of year.

The organisers would like to thank the Balloon Shop in Campbelltown, Paul Wakeling Motors, Chain Towing & Tilt Tray, ELM Engineering Services, Nestles, Campbelltown City Council, C91.3 and Streets Ice Cream.

# MUDGEE'S MULTI-AGENCY SAFETY DAY

**Cainbil/Bungaba Rural Fire Brigade (RFB)** combined firefighter training with safety messages for the community during a multi-agency emergency workshop and family day in June.

More than 60 people attended the day-long event, a first for the Mudgee Rural Fire District.

Members of six RFBs from three shires were involved. Cainbil/Bungaba hosted the day and was joined by Mudgee brigades from Gulgong, Lawson and Mullamuddy, Uarbry from Coolah Shire and Turill from Merriwa Shire.

Representatives of the Volunteer Rescue Association (VRA), Country Energy and a physiotherapist attended.

## More than 60 people attended the day-long event, a first for the Mudgee Rural Fire District

Firefighters went through practical training, including extinguishing a motor vehicle fire, while community members learned about fire prevention, hazard reduction, electrical safety and what to do if fire threatens.

Children had the opportunity to crawl through smoke-filled rooms to demonstrate how to stay low and escape a house fire as well as put out flames on their clothes by doing 'stop, drop and roll'.

Adults practiced using fire extinguishers, got pointers on protecting their homes from fire, learned how to avoid electrical hazards from power lines and watched firefighters practice responding to a house fire.

### BELOW:

Under the watchful gaze of Cainbil-Bungaba residents, volunteers from brigades in three shires learn how to put out a motor vehicle fire. The brigade training was combined with a Village Safety Workshop in an extremely successful all-day session that broke new ground for Mudgee RFS District.

"RFS volunteers took the opportunity to learn from their VRA colleagues and work with other brigades," said Ian Haynes, Deputy Captain of Cainbil/Bungaba RFB, who organised the event.

"One of the key outcomes was to let Cainbil/Bungaba Brigade members train with volunteers from the closest neighbouring brigades in Coolah and Merriwa Districts," Mr Haynes said.

"The VRA particularly opened a lot of eyes for RFS volunteers about who should do what at a motor vehicle accident."

"It was a fantastic exercise," Mudgee Fire Control Officer Kevin Johnson said.

"This was a large scale event that covered a wide range of important areas and the Cainbil/Bungaba Brigade did an excellent job.

The District hopes to hold similar sessions in several other brigade areas before the next fire season.

### Story and photos by Ed De Long



### ABOVE:

Andrew Sutherland, president of the Gulgong-Deadmans Creek Brigade, shows youngsters through the Mudgee RFS communications bus during the Cainbil-Bungaba Brigade Village Safety Workshop. While their parents learned about FireWise safety at home and on the farm, the young ones practiced "stop-drop-and-roll" and inspected fire appliances ranging from a brand new Cat 2 to the comms bus and a veteran Cat 7.





# DOES YOUR PPE

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** is vital for your safety at an incident. PPE provides you protection during routine operations and is also your last line of defence in the worst case situation.

As an active volunteer you should be issued with correct fitting and serviceable PPE that includes **ALL** of the items shown in the picture below. All districts are required to meet the requirements of Service Standard 5.1.5 Protective Clothing (available from the RFS web page to download) before 1 October 2004.

**Bushfire Helmet** manufactured to meet Australian Standards 1801 Type 3 helmet. Helmet to be used for bushfire and defensive firefighting.

Shell should be free of damage such as splits, cracks, discolouration, heat damage, deterioration of outer shell or weathering. The helmet should be replaced if any of these faults occur. The shell should not be painted and holes must never be drilled in the helmet.

**Two Piece Jacket and Trousers** (Improved Design). Suitable for Bush/Grass and Non High Hazard Firefighting. Manufactured to meet ISO 15384 and Australian Standard AS 4824 (Int) 2001.

It provides the maximum operational and dressing flexibility to handle the various tasks that are required by the Service. The trousers also act as the under-garment for the overtrousers in Offensive Structural firefighting.

The two piece also assists in "down" dressing to an appropriate undershirt or other shirt when firefighters are away from the "active" fireground.

Jacket and trousers should be free of tears and holes.

**Overalls** are still being supplied but are not encouraged by the Service as their design does not enhance ventilation. The overalls are not as flexible in wearing options as the two-piece. Because some firefighters prefer overalls to two-piece suits, overalls will continue to be available subject to the results of ongoing testing of differences between overalls and two-piece. Overalls **MUST NOT** be worn under the Offensive Structural Jacket due to the potential for heat stress.

### Overalls **MUST NOT**

be worn under the Offensive Structural Jacket due to the potential for heat stress.

# MEASURE UP?

## IS VITAL FOR SAFETY WHEN FIREFIGHTING

For all activities undertaken by NSW Rural Fire Service firefighters (except for high hazard work such as Offensive Structural Firefighting), the following accessories are to be issued to all:

- > Bushfire Two-Piece or Overalls
- > Bushfire Gloves
- > Disposable Smoke Mask
- > Emergency Entrapment Hood
- > Bushfire Helmet
- > Bushfire Goggles
- > Bushfire Boots

If you are missing any required items of PPE you should contact your local Fire Control Centre. ***If you have any problems with receiving your proper entitlement of PPE you should contact your Regional Office.***

### **Bush/Grass Firefighting Emergency Entrapment Hood**

(NOT PICTURED) To be carried (in the pocket of their PPE) by operational firefighters on the fireground. It MUST NOT be donned (or worn around the neck) unless it is required to improve thermal protection to the face as a result of a grass/bush fire entrapment of a firefighter. It MUST NOT be worn (or worn around the neck) during "normal" firefighting operations due to the effects of extreme heat stress which may develop.

**Note:** This item will only provide protection to the face for limited fire overrun situations. Under no circumstances should it be construed that the availability and use of these hoods will increase the chance of surviving a serious fire entrapment. Their availability must not encourage firefighters to deliberately place themselves or others into a situation where it might reasonably be predicted that they could be over-run by a fire. Normally accepted appreciation and size up of every fire situation must continue in a bid to ensure that fire over-run situations are avoided

**Bushfire Gloves** manufactured to meet ISO 15383 Type 1 (AS/NZS 2161.6 (Int) 2001). Designed to be used for bushfire fighting and defensive firefighting.

The gloves should be correctly fitted for best operational use and maximum protection. The gloves should be donned and the sleeves of the bushfire jacket or overall pulled either under or over the glove depending on the use and circumstances. Gloves must be allowed time to wear into the wearers hand to achieve the most comfortable fit. Gloves should be free of tears, cuts, holes and loose or open seams, and replaced as required.

**Bushfire Boots** must meet AS/NZS:4821 (Int) 2001. Safety footwear meeting this standard is compulsory on the fireground except in the most exceptional circumstances.

Gloves should be free of tears, cuts, holes and loose or open seams, and **REPLACED** as required.



## MULWAREE RURAL FIRE SERVICE CADETS



Windellama branch of the Cadets commenced operation on the 24 April 1999 with three cadets and two leaders.

The unit prospered for several months and so did the main brigade with a lot of new members prepared to under go training. The brigade members earned themselves high praise at incidents such as Autumn Storm, Armidale Fires and locally were well respected by other brigades.

The cadets commenced operation in a privately owned garage, which was kindly donated for their use for approximately two years.

When I returned from Queensland within three weeks we had raised \$3,000 towards our own bus and with this show of determination the unit now has 33 juniors and 15 senior leaders.

All of our Cadets are boys and girls between the ages of 6- 16

Bob Wright gave us the F250 and the photos show what was built with this unit, the Mulwaree FCO has allowed our unit to care for the old Bungonia tanker which is the Shires spare truck and we are proud of this unit and it makes our training very enjoyable.



We live in an excellent area with lots of hobby farms and we can do as many small hazard reductions as we can handle. It is good training and makes people happy to have two very effective fire units standing by, we have even performed mop up work with the cadets and their performance was excellent in this boring task.

We have solid support from the people who support our fundraising.

With our bus we can visit anywhere.

We are invited to all the group training days, we supply transport for training and first aid, our training and public service is limited only by our imagination. Our Cadets have completed in the Shire competition for the last two years and ran 3rd overall.

We hope over the next few years to get an area for the cadets and set up a training complex where they will be safe and happy forever.



I hope you enjoy the photos and forgive the rambling of one very proud old firefighter.

Story and photos by Len Ryan

## ORIGIN ENERGY GPS HUGE RESPONSE

### Origin THE WINNING BRIGADES

- > **Ilford-Running Stream** (Rylstone RFD)
- > **Orange Molong Road** (Canobolas Zone)
- > **Baradine** (Castlereagh RFD)
- > **Yeerinan** (Castlereagh RFD)
- > **Bogan Gate** (Parkes RFD)
- > **Wallarobba** (Dungog RFD)
- > **Willigobung** (Riverina/Highlands Zone)
- > **Bungarby** (Bombala RFD)
- > **Colo Heights** (Hawkesbury RFD)
- > **Yooroobla** (Jerilderie RFD)
- > **Wampralea** (Bourke RFD)
- > **Headquarters** (Coffs Harbour RFD)
- > **Cobbora** (Dunedoo RFD)
- > **Back Creek/Group 2** (Yass RFD)
- > **Jeir/Marchmont** (Yass RFD)
- > **Bungonia** (Mulwaree RFD)
- > **Cathcart** (Bombala RFD)
- > **Tyrie** (Narromine RFD)
- > **Fresh Water** (Balranald RFD)
- > **Napier Lane**
- > **Burringbar** (Region North)
- > **Nangus** (Gundagai RFD)
- > **Mogong** (Cabonne RFD)
- > **Rookhurst** (Gloucester RFD)
- > **Ando** (Bombala RFD)
- > **Brewarrina** (Brewarrina RFD)
- > **Jindabyne** (Snowy River RFD)
- > **Duns Creek** (Port Stephens RFD)
- > **Muttama** (Region South)
- > **Creewan** (Bombala RFD)
- > **Booroobanilly** (Jerilderie RFD)
- > **Garra** (Canobolas Zone)
- > **Monteagle** (South West Group)

More than 400 brigades entered a competition to win one 33 Garmin 12XL GPS units donated by Origin Energy in recognition of the Service's contribution in the most recent NSW bushfires.

Committed to providing a total energy service, Origin Energy supplied natural gas, electricity and LP gas to more than two million business and residential; customers in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

Brigades were invited to state in 50 words or less why they deserved one of the units.

The number of entries was far greater than anticipated and the winners were selected by ballot carried out by Corporate Communications staff at Head Office with the whole process being videotaped to ensure fairness. The ingenuity and creativity of many of the entries was outstanding and there is no doubt that we have some very persuasive writers in the Service!



# VOLUNTEER RELATIONS

# THE MANUAL

## THE BRIGADE REFERENCE GUIDE

As last reported in the Bushfire Bulletin, the Rural Fire Service has embarked on a new project called the Brigade Reference Guide, previously the Brigade Administration Manual.

The aim of the Brigade Reference Guide is to provide brigade members with quick and easy access to information relevant to brigade management.

The Guide will be in easy to read format, which enables brigades to readily access existing documentation, as well as providing instruction on how to obtain more in-depth information, for example the reference number of a Service Standard, the web address etc.

Some of the information contained in this Guide will be; Service Standards, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's), Brigade Recruitment, management of brigade funds, and volunteer insurance information. Also included will be samples of vehicle fault report forms, spreadsheets for brigade finance management, as well as samples of other forms relevant to the information

being sourced.

At present we are sourcing information that is available out in the districts, so if you have any that you think would be of value to other brigades, or you think there is a particular item that is needed for other brigades, and would like to see it included in this Guide, please contact Volunteer Relations and speak to either the Project Officer, Vikki Scanlon on 02 8845 3601, or Manager Volunteer Relations, Martin Surrey on 02 8845 3743. If you would prefer to email us, you can do so at these addresses,

**Vikki.Scanlon@rfs.nsw.gov.au** or **Martin.Surrey@rfs.nsw.gov.au**,

alternatively you can write to,

**Manager - Volunteer Relations  
NSW Rural Fire Service, Locked Mail Bag 17,  
Granville NSW 2142.**

*Remember, if it works for your brigade, then we want to hear about it.*

*Photo by Chris Wallbridge*



## LOCAL RURAL FIRE SERVICE VOLUNTEERS RECOGNISED FOR LONG SERVICE

Nineteen members of the Warringah Pittwater Rural Fire District were honoured at a special medal presentation ceremony held on **Wednesday 12th March 2003** at Warringah Council Chambers.

The awards included one 45-year clasp, and two 25-year clasps to the National Medal, and six National Medals. One 35, two 25 and fourteen 15 year Long Service Awards.

### THE NATIONAL MEDAL

The National Medal is awarded to recognise 15 years diligent service by members of the Defence Force, an Australian Police Force, Australian Fire Service or Australian Ambulance Service. A clasp to the Medal is given for each 10 years' additional service.

### NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE LONG SERVICE BADGE

The NSW Rural Fire Service Long Service Badge is awarded to recognise the commitment and dedication of individual members of the NSW Rural Fire Service. The Organisation first awarded a badge for long service in the early 1970's. It was given in recognition of service to those members who have contributed to 15 years, 25 years, 35 years and 50 years respectively.

Only service as a member of the NSW RFS is recognised for these various badges. A certificate bearing the signature of the Minister for Emergency Services and the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service accompanies the Badge.

The following Members received these awards:

#### NATIONAL MEDAL CLASP 45 YEARS SERVICE

Jack Mullins

#### NATIONAL MEDAL CLASP 25 YEARS SERVICE

Tim MacGregor, Peter Plain

#### NATIONAL MEDAL

Andrew Dale, Neil Morrison, Brad Samuel, Craig Samuel, Osric Van Aggele, Peter Plain

#### RURAL FIRE SERVICE 35 YEAR LONG SERVICE MEDAL

Jeff Cree

#### RURAL FIRE SERVICE 25 YR LONG SERVICE MEDAL

Tim MacGregor, Alison Kemp, Judith MacGregor,

#### RURAL FIRE SERVICE 15 YR LONG SERVICE MEDAL

Andrew Dale, Neil Morrison, Brad Samuel, Craig Samuel, Osric Van Aggele, Ross Barnett, Michael Chanell, Di Cree, Warren Cree, Rick Dunstan, John Figures, Lisa Kekwick, Sandra Monson, Daniel VanDer Kley

## VOLUNTEER RELATIONS

The Service has a new handout '**Information About Volunteering**', to aid in volunteer recruitment within your brigade. This follows the '**Recruiting Now**' card. Both handouts can be used in letterbox drops, face to face recruiting and mail out. There is provision for the brigade name and contact details on the reverse of the handouts.

Volunteer Relations also has a supply of '**Volunteer Friendly Employer**' stickers for display at your workplace, please contact your Fire Control Centre to place your orders.

A reminder that Volunteer Relations offers members a contact to the RFS Head Office, for advice or information on projects or issues affecting you or your brigade please feel free to contact **Martin Surrey on 02 8845 3743**

*Photo by Karen Gorrie*





# BUSHFIRE BULLETIN ADVERTISING RATES AND SPECIFICATIONS



### ADVERTISING RATES per issue (includes GST)

1/6page	1/3page	1/2page	Full Page	Inside Cover
Casual rate Full colour				
475	675	850	1275	1800
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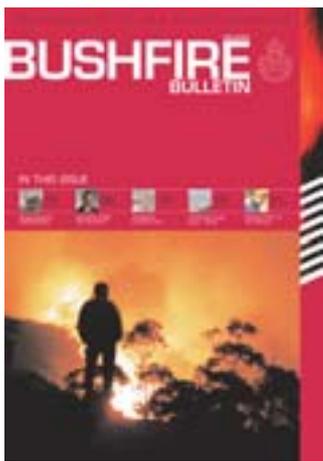
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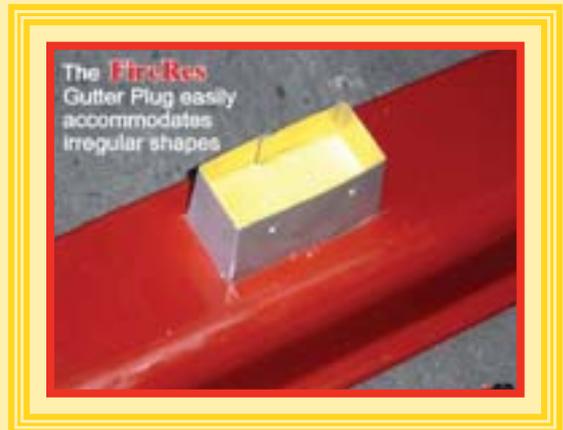


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