



NSW Rural Fire Service

Canobolas Zone



2008/2009 Annual Report

"Where Risk Management is our Passion and Hazard Reduction is our Priority"

OUR VISION

The Canobolas Zone of the NSW Rural Fire Service will be a leader in support and innovation to our volunteers who will provide the highest standard of excellence in the protection of our community from fires and other emergencies.

Our leadership and management systems will equip our volunteers and brigades to be a leading and respected resource within the NSW Rural Fire Service.

OUR MISSION

To provide a cohesive, enthusiastic Volunteer Rural Fire Service trained and equipped to meet the needs of the community in an efficient, effective and professional manner.



Canobolas Fire Control Centre Opening

Executive Overview

The 2008-09 year again proved to be very busy for the Canobolas Zone (despite the fact that we had a reasonably quiet fire season locally) due to the Victorian fire assistance provided by NSW and a further record amount of hazard reduction completed within our Zone. We received a significant budget allocation of some \$6.7M which whilst lower than the previous year was still the highest in the State. Once again we produced the highest amount of hazard reduction in the State with a figure of 16.892 hectares completed.

A significant community education focus was taken after the Victorian fires to highlight the work within our community. This targeted our Council representatives and a feature publication was distributed to a circulation of 28,000 people across the Canobolas Zone.

The Canobolas Zone website has been enhanced and is updated on a daily basis to ensure that our volunteers and the community have access to the very latest information.

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The first year of occupation of the new Fire Control Centre has progressed with a series of significant visitors and opportunities to spread the influence of the way things are done in Canobolas Zone. We have hosted several delegations of Indian visitors keen to learn about our emergency management procedures as well as a visitor from Botswana who reported back to his Government.

The official opening by the Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon Tony Kelly was held on Saturday 29th November 2008.

The centre has hosted the Region West Incident Management Exercise, The Region West All Staff Conference and numerous training courses throughout the year.

Further significant inroads were made into the continued upgrading of our tanker fleet as well as a major water tank project, further development of the aviation infrastructure and the continuation of our very successful "Gum Tree Meeting" engagement program.



The Minister and Commissioner at the Canobolas Fire control Centre Opening with Cowra Mayor Bill West.

COMPLETED CANOBOLAS ZONE PROJECTS FOR 2008/2009.

1. The "Canobolas Project" was the winner of the State Government section of the NSW Emergency Management Australia awards.

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2. The “Canobolas Project” was a semi finalist in the NSW and ACT Regional Achievement and Community awards for 2009.
3. Canobolas Zone website upgraded and enhanced to provide the highest standard in modern communications to members and the community.
4. Completion and occupation of the new FCC and Training Centre.
5. Standards of Fire Cover fleet diesel powered.
6. Accept delivery of three new and nine refurbished Tankers.
7. Acquired a bus for volunteer transport.
8. Continued development and rollout Aerial Fire Fighting Infrastructure.
9. Hazard Reduction target of 9,471 hectares surpassed with 16,893 hectares completed.
10. Funding for trails and HR preparation work on private property.
11. “Gum Tree” consultation meetings successfully continued.
12. RPL process for Crew Leader for our Captains and Deputies.
13. Successfully completed our Risk Management Plan audit with the highest result (91.68%) ever achieved.
14. Received funding of \$6.69M from the Rural Fire Fighting Fund.
15. Community Education feature of 28,000 circulation in 5 local newspapers during April 2009.
16. Canobolas Zone provided significant support to the Victorian fires.
17. Hosted numerous State and Regional training activities.
18. Hosted overseas delegations from India and Botswana on emergency management.
19. Canobolas Staff contributions to State and Regional Hazard Mitigation Projects.
20. Operations Officer, Brett Bowden and Volunteer Errol Hockley were awarded their National Medals.

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EMA Award Presentation



BFMC Members at Parliament House for the Presentation

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Management



Staff

Permanent staff levels remained at 8 during the year. Increasing workload and higher outcomes in hazard reduction and hazard management have significantly increased work pressures on staff. This is illustrated with Canobolas Zone being some 1.5% of the State in terms of responsibility and having completed approximately 13.5% of the State hazard reduction works and some 16.6% of the hazard complaints.

Financial

The Canobolas Zone received a total allocation from the Rural Fire Fighting Fund of \$6,699,533 for the 2008/2009 year.

Each Council received the following allocation:

Blayney	\$1,479,779
Cabonne	\$2,446,039
Cowra	\$1,523,730
Orange	\$1,269,985
Total	\$6,699,533

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Our Councils are responsible for contributing 13.3% to the total budget. All of our Councils agreed to extend their contributions above their budgets to take up additional tankers and significant funding for hazard reduction activities..

The actual Council contribution for the year was \$503,473 (compared to a budget of \$500,490) and was split between the Councils on the following basis:

Council	Estimated 13.3% October 2007	Actual Contribution
Blayney	\$121,808	\$107,059
Cabonne	\$177,866	\$188,744
Cowra	\$114,752	\$112,904
Orange	\$ 86,064	\$ 94,765



Drought Continues across Canobolas Zone in 2009 – Wyangala Dam

Brigade Consultation.

The program of Brigade (“Gum Tree”) Consultation meetings continued across the Zone this year. This concept is proving very successful and “Gum Tree” meeting brand is being picked up by other districts across the State and has been incorporated into the Region West Business Plan for use across the Region.

The objectives of these meetings are:

- ❖ To improve communication and understanding between our volunteers and staff.

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- ❖ To build lasting and long term relationships and alliances with our volunteers.
- ❖ To really engage with our volunteers by listening to their needs or concerns.
- ❖ The promotion of mutually beneficial results.
- ❖ Identify and build upon our common ground within the RFS.



Gum Tree Meeting at Newbridge and Kings Plains

The progress made from this strategy of actively communicating with our volunteers on a regular basis is working to build a strong rapport between our staff and volunteers. The continual message at each meeting from the volunteers is to keep these meeting going as they productive, enjoyable and a great thing.

During 2008/2009 these meetings identified many opportunities for hazard reduction on private land as well as on Forest NSW and NPWS tenure.



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Gum Tree Meeting 2008-2009

Canobolas Zone Website

The Canobolas Zone website has been upgraded with the assistance of Bruce Reynolds from Reynolds Communications. The site at <http://www.canobolas.rfs.nsw.gov.au/> is recommended to our community and volunteers as the latest information on fire management and prevention.

Operations

Fire Season 2008/09 continued on from the previous year with milder conditions and light pre summer rain assisting in lowering the fire danger for the majority of the Bush Fire Danger Period. There were no significant fire events during the year with all reported fire incidents being responded to in an effective manner to bring under control any potential threat in quick time

An increase in the number of Motor Vehicle Accident responses during the year kept the total incident figures similar to that of last year, whilst actual fire responses decreased slightly.

Out of Area assistance was provided to the Far South Coast RFS team with a S44 declared fire near Bega, a number of aviation specialist were tasked to this. Additionally there were over 80 Canobolas staff and volunteers sent to assist in Region West Strike Teams deployed into Victoria to assist with efforts at the Healesville and Alexandra area. This commitment lasted for three weeks during February 2009.



Canobolas Zone Volunteers – Healesville Area Vic February 2009

Incidents

Across the Zone our Brigades responded to a total of 351 Incidents during the 2008/09 reporting period. The table below details the type of responses by Council area.

Council	Fires	MVA's	Others Good intent & False Alarms	Totals 2008/09	2007/08	2006/07	2005/06
Blayney	28	11	8	47	46	78	56
Cabonne	89	51	15	155	139	230	196
Cowra	49	13	16	78	99	98	101
Orange	44	15	12	71	58	122	88
Totals	210	90	51	351	342	528	441

Total incidents have increased by 9 on the previous year but still down on the trend of previous year the moderate season that was experienced.

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Maintenance

All fire fighting vehicles were treated to either a Minor or Major service simultaneous with a roadworthy inspection and an inspection of the fire fighting apparatus. These works commenced from July 2008 and concluded during December 2008.

The Service centres for these works are decentralised to limit the amount of travelling required by volunteers, as well as constrain the fuel expenditure. These centres have all been selected for their capability and expertise in providing the required maintenance for heavy vehicles and have all gained the certification required to perform the RTA HVIS (Heavy Vehicle Inspection Scheme).

The approved service centres are

- Orange City Council Depot
- Blayney Council Depot
- Tracserv Trucks – Orange
- Tracserv Trucks – Cowra (Waugoola Station)
- Cowra Truck Wreckers
- Cabonne Council Depot - Cudal

Tanker Upgrading.

Funding of \$1,416,2642 was allocated for tankers during 2008/2009.

A total of 25 Fire Fighting Tanker resources and support vehicle movements have been made across the Zone as a result of this funding during the year.

The major focus has been on the removal of all petrol powered vehicles from service and with the finalisation of the movements tabled below there will be a total of one petrol vehicles remaining in service, with an expectation that that remaining petrol heavy tanker will be redundant during 2009/10.

The Tankers received have included

- 6 new tankers (4 Cat x 1's, 1 x Cat 7 & 1 Cat 9)
- 9 refurbished tankers (1 x Cat 2 and 8 Cat 7's)
- 10 Internal transfers of various categories.

COUNCIL	BRIGADE	TANKER
Cabonne	Molong	New Cat 1
	Boomey	New Cat 1
	Yeoval	Cat 1
	Baldry	Cat 1
	Orange Molong Road	Cat 7
	Mogong	Cat 1
	Cumnock	Cat 9 + Cat 7
	Moorbel	Cat 7
	Gregra	Cat 7
Blayney	Neville	New Cat 1
	Kings Palins	Cat 7
Cowra	Waugoola	New Cat 7
	Wattamodara	Cat 1
	Neila	Cat 1
	Milburn Creek	Cat 1
	Gap	Cat 7

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	Darbys Falls	Cat 1 + Cat 7
Orange	Lucknow	New Cat 1
	Clifton Grove / Ophir	New Cat 9
	Clifton Grove / Ophir	Cat 7 x 2
	Orange	Cat 2
	Support	Cat 2



Community Safety

Hazard Reduction

The hazard reduction component of Rural Fire Service activities is now undertaken expressly by the Canobolas Zone on behalf of the Councils and entails four separate areas

1. Issue of Fire Permits
2. Issue of Hazard Reduction Certificates
3. Management of Hazard Complaints
4. Advice on Compliance to "Planning for Bushfire Protection" in regard to Development Applications.

Since 1 July 2008 and up to 30 June 2009 the Community Safety Staff of Canobolas Zone carried out the following works.

	Blayney	Cabonne	Cowra	Orange
Development Applications 79BA / 100B	0	10	0	0

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Permits Section 87 & 88	38	218	98	37
Hazard Reduction Complaints	53	45	116	289

Hazard Reduction Activities

The Canobolas Zone Risk Management Plan seeks to treat 9,471 hectares annually across all land tenures. During this year the Canobolas Zone had access to significant funding which allowed us to complete additional works on private property.

Our Councils also received \$300,000 which has allowed for a significant increase in the area that has been completed.

The Canobolas Zone Bush Fire Management Committee that covers the four Council areas has plans to increase the works program to 24,781 hectares in 2009/2010 to ensure the targets that are set in the Risk Management Plan are achieved.

CANOBOLAS ZONE HAZARD REDUCTION ROLLING RECONCILIATION 2004 - 2009

	Annual Benchmark	Completed 2004/2005	Completed 2005/2006	Completed 2006/2007	Completed 2007/2008	4 Year Target	Completed	Works Completed 2008/2009	Completed 5 YR Total	5 Year Target	Surplus / Shortfall	% Completed
Private	4,709	3,859	9	3,494	5,040	18,836	12,402	5,222	17,624	23,545	-5,921	74.85
Crown	1,227	2,385	2,273	2,273	5,199	4,908	12,130	10,242	22,372	6,135	16,237	364.66
NPWS	2,278	2,485	20	711	822	9,112	4,038	944	4,982	11,390	-6,408	43.74
FNSW	1,257	2,204	300	422	347	5,028	3,273	485	3,758	6,285	-2,527	59.80
Totals	9,471	10,933	2,602	6,900	11,408	37,884	31,843	16,893	48,736	47,355	1,381	102.92

The Canobolas Zone BFMC maintains a rolling average to meet our hazard reduction targets. In summary:

**The total target at the end of year five was – 47,355 hectares.
Works completed for this period – 48,736 hectares.**

NB. NPWS have completed (to 30th June 2008) an additional 6,336 ha of hazard reduction burning to the immediate west of the Canobolas Zone in the Mid Lachlan Valley Team BFMC area. Even though this is not recorded within Canobolas Zone it has a substantial positive impact on our plan and the benefits are reflected in the Canobolas Zone “How we are going Map” on the Annual model update. Strategically these works were a higher priority than completing actual NPWS works in Canobolas Zone.



Hazard Reduction 2009



Hazard Reduction 2009

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Cadets.

Canobolas Zone has undertaken Cadet courses during the year at Canowindra High School (13 students), Blayney High School (10 students) and Cowra High School (20 students).

A number of students have indicated that following this Cadet training they are interested in continuing and involvement and will look to join a Rural Fire Brigade.

A keen group of staff have been supported by a team of enthusiastic volunteers from Orange, North West, Springside and Waugoola brigades. Without doubt it is the dedication of these volunteers that have made this program so successful.





Canobolas Cadets in action 2009.

Learning and Development

Another successful year of training was conducted within the Zone, by our staff and volunteers. During 2008 a total of 259 members nominated for courses with 316 persons deemed competent in 14 various RFS qualifications.

During this year the incumbent Learning and Development Officer was seconded to the Hunter Valley for 3 months and during this time 3 courses were cancelled. Also during this time a Canobolas Zone Volunteer, David Jones, was employed for 10 weeks to undertake the Crew Leader (CL) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) project.

Canobolas was instrumental in developing an assessment process for our Captains and Deputies to be assessed by RPL and RCC for their CL qualifications. This was tested on 11 volunteers last year and was extended to all volunteer Field Officers this year. The project coordinated by David Jones had 87 persons completing this process with all but 3 persons being deemed competent in at least one of the CL series. Although the project was for 10 weeks it will still be available to field officers for as long as it is required.

The Region West Exercise provided another opportunity for personnel to obtain the CL qualification with 3 personnel utilising this exercise to achieve it.

The Canobolas Zone hosted the Region West IMX and IMW in June 2009 to test the operation of the new Fire Control Centre (FCC) in a mock Section 44. The FCC performed well with all the latest technologies available and utilised.

Another regionally organised activity was the Fireline Tree Felling course in which we had 5 volunteers and 1 staff member attend. This course provided the members a recertification, refresher and learning experience with very large and difficult trees to fall. These trees were identified by State Forests as dangerous to the public and had to be felled or the area restricted from public access. It afforded a win-win situation for all concerned, our volunteers received valuable experience while State forest had a hazard controlled and the public can now enter this area knowing it is safe.

The following training has been attended by the Zone's volunteers or staff:

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- Aviation Operations
- Air Observer
- Rural Fire Driving
- Bush Firefighter
- Village Firefighter
- Advanced Firefighter
- Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus
- Crew Leader
- Senior First Aid
- Incident Management Workshop
- Incident Management Exercise
- Rural Fire Instructor
- Combined Agency Exercises (NSWFB, Cadia Mines Rescue)
- Bush Fire Awareness
- Chainsaw Operations
- Group Leader
- Community Liaison Officer
- Structural Fire Investigation
- Permit Officer Workshop



Training exercise house burn Springside 2009 (photo L.Daly).

The Zone is working towards meeting Service Standard 6.1.2 which provides details on the required qualifications for all levels of the organisation, volunteer or staff. Over the next two years the focus will be on the Bush Firefighter (BF) qualification.

Training is still being taken out to the brigades as requested or held close to where the majority of the participants, on a particular course, reside.

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HR Exercise Wyangala 2009.

During this years hazard reduction season we took the opportunity to assess personnel in Prescribed Burning Supervisor and Group Leader. This was welcomed by the volunteers who took advantage of the opportunity.

This year we had 2 significant injuries to firefighters during training activities. Both injuries occurred through simple processes of tripping over and stepping on a hose. They both seemed insignificant at the time, a twisted ankle and sore knee with rest and ice applied straight after each occurrence. Both incidents resulted in operations to personnel and time off from their normal employment.