

Fire & Rescue News

September 2012

Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire – “a firefighter’s worst nightmare”

In the deep end – flood, mud and sandbags

Retained firefighting: finding a way forward

Mates in darkest times



**Fire &
Rescue NSW**



Contents

Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire “a firefighter’s worst nightmare”	2
Quakers hill – the aftermath	5
Health and safety act: what does it mean?	6
New PPC measures up	8
Change in the air – Deputy Commissioner retires	9
Women’s day breaks the ice	11
Retained firefighting: finding a way forward	12
Tumut trouts angle for success	13
Paper manufacturing fire at Tumut	14
Taking the plunge in chopper rescue	15
In the deep end – flood, mud and sandbags	16
Help shape our future	19
Future Directions survey – what you told us	20
Balancing the budget	21
Stations chime in for Smoke Alarm Battery campaign	22
Sydney mardi gras 2012 – don’t rain on my parade!	22
Spreading the word on prevention	23
Super store inferno	24
Mates in darkest times	27
Response opens gateway to the east	28
Geared up for disaster	29
ESCAD goes live	30
Training to the rescue	31
Chester hill gets heavy	32
When opportunity knocks	33
FRNSW all a-twitter	34
Smoke on the water	35
Rescuing large animals – a jumbo-sized task	36
Gloucester – bigger and better	37
Firefighters get top gong	38
Mountain men live up to legend	40
World Firefighter Games comes to Sydney	42
With gratitude for service to the people of nsw	43
Farewell and enjoy ‘you’ time	43
Riverina country – southern hospitality	44

The Commissioner writes



Welcome to another issue of Fire & Rescue News, which is now produced in a magazine format with a fresh new look.

Early last year, we were very busy with overseas deployments. We sent two FRNSW-led USAR Task Forces across the Tasman to help after an earthquake severely damaged large parts of the city of Christchurch. Hard on the heels of those assignments, we also led an Australian deployment to Japan in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami that battered the northeast of the country. In this issue of Fire & Rescue News, we report on the anniversaries of these two major natural disasters and reflect on the vital role we played in the international response to these incidents.

By contrast this year the focus moved to the home front. The colder wetter summer we experienced thanks to La Nina fortunately meant relatively little bushfire activity. However, the downside of all that rain was severe flooding over much of the State during February and March. I am proud of how FRNSW staff worked tirelessly throughout the long-running flood emergency in support of our SES colleagues together with personnel from other agencies. In this issue, we provide a brief snapshot of our role in the extensive flood response and recovery operations.

In this issue we discuss the recent NSW State budget with its requirement for all agencies to make efficiencies and savings. How FRNSW addresses this challenge has the potential to significantly impact on our operations. In coming years it is essential that FRNSW, unions and staff work together to find innovative solutions that that will minimise the impact on staff and on service delivery.

Other key articles in this issue are an update on the way forward for our retained firefighting system following last year's Retained Summit at Parliament House; and a report on FRNSW's response to the Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire and actions taken in the aftermath of this tragic incident. As we go to press, the NSW Government has just announced that it would make fire sprinklers mandatory in all aged care facilities - a very significant life-saving initiative in which we played a crucial role.

While this edition reflects on our many achievements and accomplishments, it also asks us to turn our minds to the future. I invite everyone to read our report on how FRNSW is enlisting the passion and commitment of its thousands of staff and volunteers to help shape the future direction of the organisation. We also outline the results of the recent online staff survey.

I'm sure you'll find this issue stimulating reading. If you want to comment on articles in this issue or submit stories for next issue, please send your ideas and feedback to:

frnews@fire.nsw.gov.au



Greg Mullins AFSM
Commissioner

Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire

“a firefighter’s worst nightmare”

At 0453 hours on Friday 18 November, 96 Schofields and 63 Blacktown were dispatched to what appeared to be a routine AFA at a nursing home in Hambledon Road at Quakers Hill. But soon after arrival, they quickly realised the seriousness of the incident they were confronting.

“This is a firefighter’s worst nightmare,” Commissioner Mullins told media at the scene. “Turning up to a nursing home with many frail elderly people who can’t get themselves out of harm’s way.”

A Red message for a 3rd Alarm was transmitted as the first arriving crews, wearing SCBA, extinguished one fire, then immediately swung into search and rescue mode when a second more serious fire was discovered in another wing. Upon his arrival Inspector Glenn Launt, realising the enormity of the situation, requested a 6th Alarm, bringing nearly 100 firefighters and 20 fire appliances to the scene. Despite thick black smoke, zero visibility, falling roof tiles, and an intense fire, all responding crews pressed on locating trapped residents and moving them to safety.

In all 88 residents were rescued by nursing home staff and firefighters with assistance from police. As observed by Inspector Launt, this was not an evacuation – it was a full-on rescue operation. Every resident had to be physically located, removed, then triaged.

Ambulance paramedics set up a triage area on the front lawn and in the driveway, with many residents suffering severe smoke inhalation and, in some cases, burns as well. Paramedics conveyed those most seriously injured to hospital as quickly as possible.



Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire
Images courtesy of Daily Telegraph

Firefighters who had completed search and rescue tasks worked together with neighbours, family members, nursing home staff, police and ambulance officers to tend injured and confused residents who did not require immediate transport. After the fire was contained, police and fire investigators worked together at the scene to investigate. A Coronial enquiry commenced and was still underway at the time of writing. Police have since charged a member of the nursing home staff over the incident.

Many residents suffered severe smoke inhalation and, in some cases, burns as well.”

There was extensive media reporting of the fire, and much praise of FRNSW firefighters for the superb work they did under horrendous circumstances – the death and injury toll would have been higher but for their quick thinking, courage and skill.



Challenges

Fire crews responding to this fire were confronted with a range of very difficult and often competing challenges. These included the 88 aged, sick and frail residents needing to be physically rescued. Many were suffering dementia; many were connected to vital medical equipment; and some were confined to bed and unable to move without assistance.

- Some residents had suffered burns, smoke inhalation and other injuries.
- Fire conditions created dense smoke which extended down to around 50cm from floor level. This caused zero visibility which meant firefighters had to locate patients by touch and by sounds such as groans and cries from those trapped and injured as they moved down a 20 metre hallway toward the fire.
- Some of the mobile residents sought shelter under beds and behind furniture etc, making them difficult to locate. As Commissioner Mullins explained at the on-scene media conference, “Fire crews had to literally crawl on their hands and knees into every room in the complex, reach up under the beds, search cupboards, anywhere where someone may have crawled away.”
- There were two separate fires in separate wings, both of which required immediate intervention to protect and save lives.
- The fire alarm and the evacuation and warning information system sounded constantly, creating a relentless unnerving din for patients and rescuers alike and making communication difficult.
- As roof and ceiling materials failed, they collapsed onto patients and firefighters below, increasing the risk of injuries. The resulting debris also created obstacles for rescuers.
- Oxygen cylinders and medical supplies significantly increased the fire load and the resultant fire spread and intensity.
- Simultaneous mass rescue created inevitable congestion, particularly with the movement of beds. Unfortunately there was only one direction of egress available for beds in the wing where conditions were the worst.
- Limited resources in the initial stages meant that those rescued were unable to be given immediate attention. As the rescue continued, there were soon a large number of casualties and residents evacuated outside requiring ongoing comfort and care. Ambulance paramedics, care staff, Police, firefighters, neighbours and passers-by provided comfort and first aid.

Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire

“a firefighter’s worst nightmare”

...continued from page 3



Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire
Images courtesy of Daily Telegraph

Factors contributing to effectiveness

A major debrief following the incident identified a range of factors which contributed to the effectiveness of emergency services response to this tragic incident in limiting what could have easily been a far worse outcome. These factors included the following.

- The Station Officer from Schofields as initial Incident Controller upgraded the response based on his initial observations and information provided by care staff. This meant significant FRNSW resources were mobilised early.
- SO96 also showed strong situational awareness in ordering the full evacuation of the nursing home. This decision was based on the fact that all wings were interconnected; and that fire crews, who were already confronted with two separate fires, could not be sure if there were others.
- The smoke doors functioned properly to isolate the affected zones, protecting occupants of the unaffected zones and facilitating their evacuation. An installed hose-reel was used to rapidly extinguish the smaller of the two fires, allowing search and rescue efforts to be concentrated initially on the worst affected wing.
- Firefighters quickly determined that rescue was best achieved by wheeling patients out of wards in their beds wherever possible. However this was not possible in the fire-affected rooms.
- Firefighters successfully carried out search and rescue in a very hostile environment involving a major building fire where many lives were under threat. They were capably supported by nursing home staff, police officers, paramedics and spontaneous volunteers including neighbours, passers-by and off-duty care staff.
- FRNSW resources were located in a staging area which allowed unencumbered access and egress for ambulances, with ComCen operators advising responding FRNSW resources accordingly.
- As FRNSW had substantial resources on scene early, it was able to provide valuable medical assistance, such as oxygen therapy to those with smoke inhalation. Media and public information were expertly managed by the FRNSW media staff, in particular Superintendent Ian Krimmer.
- The Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner Jim Smith were used as FRNSW spokespeople, allowing the IMT to focus on other aspects of incident management.
- A rigorous program of critical incident debriefing was introduced at a very early stage. This was supplemented by ongoing peer support.

Overall, this was one of the most comprehensive and intensive fire rescue operations undertaken by FRNSW in recent years. The actions of FRNSW firefighters, ably assisted by nursing staff, police officers and paramedics, was instrumental in minimising deaths and injuries in this tragic incident. However, despite this, at least 18 people lost their lives as a result of this fire. FRNSW has focussed attention since the fire on lobbying for sprinklers to be made mandatory in all aged care facilities. The NSW Government announced on 16 August that it would do this via new Regulations.

Quakers Hill – the aftermath

FRNSW's duty of care did not end when the last of the 100 western Sydney firefighters who responded to the Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire wearily packed up their equipment and headed back to their stations. In fact, it was just the start.

"After the Childers Backpackers Hostel fire in Queensland in 2000, the Fire Investigation and Research Unit (FIRU) and the NSW Police Arson Team and Forensic Services took steps to ensure a similar event in NSW would be professionally and effectively investigated," FIRU Manager Superintendent Chris Lewis said.

"This involved cross-agency training and planning around which agency would perform what role during a major fire event. This cooperation was strengthened by the creation of the Inter Agency Arson Committee in 2001.

"The FIRU also established research partnerships with various NSW universities to ensure necessary fire research skills were available either via trained uniform FIRU officers or by tapping into high-level academic research."

In the aftermath of the Quakers Hill nursing home fire all the preparation and hard-forged inter-agency protocols and relationships paid off.

On the morning of 18 November 2011, the FIRU on-shift investigator immediately responded to the incident scene, followed shortly after by a team of FIRU investigators led by Inspector Bob Alexander.

"The on-scene examination lasted several days and involved nearly all of the FIRU team working long hours in very trying conditions," Superintendent Lewis said. "While this operation was coordinated by NSW Police, the expertise of FIRU investigators was fully recognised and used. The FIRU worked alongside NSW Police forensic officers, arson detectives and homicide detectives."

The investigators decided to conduct a series of fire-research burns which would duplicate conditions in the two main rooms impacted by the fire.

These burns had to be done accurately and quickly to ensure any evidence gathered could be submitted in any court proceedings.

On 17 January, the FIRU conducted a series of four fire research burns at Londonderry.

"While the FIRU had undertaken reconstruction burns previously, the scope and size of these particular research burns required additional technical equipment and specialised knowledge beyond our previous experience," Superintendent Lewis said.

"There were two main objectives in reconstructing these tragic events. The Police homicide team wished to test various hypotheses around the events of that day and FRNSW's Community Safety Directorate wanted to test what impact sprinklers would have had on the fire if they had been installed."

Four rooms were constructed and furnished as exact duplicates of the rooms involved. They were fitted with thermocouples and, in one instance, with sprinklers. Hazmat technicians undertook air sampling and an Operational Training crew provided suppression and safety officer duties. The University of NSW's Professor Guan Yeoh assisted with data collection for computer fire-modelling.

More than 60 people attended the burns. Among them were representatives from various government departments, Blacktown Council, insurance agencies, the fire industry, and the NSW Police homicide, arson and forensic teams.

"While the collected data is still being analysed, observed data on the day showed the unsprinklered room achieved a maximum temperature at ceiling height of 1167°C and went to flashover in about 22 minutes," Superintendent Lewis said.



Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire
Images courtesy of Daily Telegraph

"This resulted in the major destruction of the room and its contents. The duplicate room with sprinklers achieved a maximum temperature of 75°C and the sprinkler activated at four minutes 40 seconds. There was minor fire damage to the bed where the fire originated and water damage to the room.

"The findings from these research burns and the data collected will provide valuable evidence for community safety policy improvements for many years," Superintendent Lewis said.

"We are also continuing to work with the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure to look at some of the learnings from those burns."

According to Commissioner Mullins, the results of the research have influenced key stakeholders. "The video of the test burn showing the sprinklered and non-sprinklered rooms is compelling – it has silenced a lot of ill-informed people who had previously asserted that sprinklers are necessary and was a major factor in the government's recent decision to mandate sprinklers."



Firefighters wearing BA and spillage suits

Health and Safety Act: what does it mean?

Fire & Rescue News asked Supt Kim Reeson, Manager Safety, Health and Safety Branch about the new work health and safety legislation which was introduced in January 2012.

1. How was the new Work Health and Safety Act developed? Did FRNSW have any input?

In 2008 the Federal Government established a National Review Panel. The purpose of the Panel was to make recommendations on the best structure and content of model occupational health and safety legislation. In 2010 draft Work Health and Safety Regulations were released for public comment. Twelve Codes of Practice were also released. FRNSW commented on those areas of the draft legislation likely to impact on it via WorkCover NSW and AFAC. The NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011 is based on the model legislation developed by the Federal Government, and took effect 1 January this year.

The Act sets out work health and safety responsibilities. The Regulations expand on the requirements of the Act, with details of how certain sections of the Act are implemented, and specific direction on how to meet those obligations. The Codes of Practice provide detailed information on particular areas of an Act or Regulation, and outline activities, actions, technical requirements, responsibilities, and responses to events or conditions within a workplace.

2. Why was the new Act developed, and what does it cover?

In the past, organisations operating nationally had to contend with each state's interpretation of occupational health and safety laws.

The model legislation was designed to create uniformity throughout Australia in order to provide certainty, to reduce costs associated with compliance, and to achieve the same rights and protection for workers regardless of the state in which they worked.

The new legislation focuses on four key issues: hazard identification, risk assessment, risk control, and audit and review.

3. What changes does the new Act introduce?

Under the new Act, employers including FRNSW will become known as a 'person conducting a business or undertaking' (PCBU). Staff and volunteers, including CFU members, will be included as workers. The new Act has expanded the duties for PCBUs, requiring them to act proactively to reduce the risk of harm to workers and others within their workplace. This positive duty is expressed in the need for 'officers' to show due diligence in particular areas of their organisation's operations. These can be in relation to their knowledge of safety matters, ensuring there are appropriate processes for receiving and considering information regarding incidents, hazards and risks and responding in a timely way. The benefits of the new Act are that it will achieve a greater focus on safety and will embed risk management into our workplaces in a more formal way.

4. How will the new Act affect FRNSW operations and its staff?

With the expansion of who is a 'worker' is and who is classified as an 'other', FRNSW will have a broader responsibility to safety than before. The fact that we share that responsibility with other PCBUs will ensure that we have a stronger commitment to consultation, both with other PCBUs and our workers.

The new Act increases the obligations on all staff members (workers) to ensure the safety of themselves and others, including members of the public, when undertaking work or by their acts or omission. Workers must also comply with reasonable instruction and co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedure. The level of responsibility to safety increases the need to apply risk management principles to operations at incidents as well as to everyday workplace activities.

5. Where can staff get more information on the new Act?

FAQs on the 'Be Safe' Program site on the FRNSW Intranet

- **Safe Work Australia**
www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au
- **WorkCover Authority of NSW**
www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

New PPC measures up

FRNSW has introduced new and improved Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) which is being rolled out to firefighters across the State following fittings that were held across NSW earlier in the year.

“FRNSW developed this new generation of PPC by adopting the best in design and materials on offer,” said Chief Superintendent Gerry Byrne. “This will take our organisation and the safety of our firefighters forward over the next eight to 10 years.”

The design of the new PPC was based on research on the existing design and best practice. “The Equipment Development Unit reviewed the existing design and, together with input from frontline personnel, developed a new specification which reflected best practice both nationally and internationally,” Chief Superintendent Byrne said.

In 2009, the Australian and New Zealand standard for protective clothing for firefighters (AS/NZS 4967) was revised, reflecting progress in science, technology and systems. This revision gave FRNSW the opportunity to improve its current PPC which had been worn by firefighters for the last 10 years.

The main change to the Standard that affected FRNSW was the requirement for the structural coat and trousers to be stand-alone garments. This meant that the layered approach to PPC was no longer acceptable.



City of Sydney firefighters turn out wearing new PPC

“The new PPC consist of three separate layers, the outer shell, the liner and the moisture barrier. The outer shell is made of a material called Titan, this material consists of a blend of Nomex and Kevlar. Nomex provides thermal protection while Kevlar provides tear resistance. This combination makes the garments both protective and durable. Titan is currently the material of choice of the London Fire Brigade,” Chief Superintendent Byrne explained.

A further significant change in the new PPC is the introduction of a moisture barrier which previously has not been used by FRNSW. The new moisture barrier will protect firefighters by preventing superheated steam penetrating the garment while they are firefighting.

“We only included the moisture barrier after a comprehensive risk assessment facilitated by an external consultant who engaged a wide cross-section of firefighters and other stakeholders,” said Chief Superintendent Byrne.

The new PPC provides greater protection for firefighters as it offers increased resistance to elevated temperatures, increased protection from water penetration, improved durability and tear strength, as well as significant design improvements that will protect firefighters in hostile environments. The new PPC is a world class garment which will serve FRNSW well over the next decade. The NSW Government supported the change by providing funding of \$18 million to enable every FRNSW firefighter to receive two sets of the new PPC.





Deputy Commissioner John Benson inspects the parade during a recruit graduation ceremony

Change in the air – Deputy Commissioner retires

In July 2012, FRNSW farewelled Deputy Commissioner John Benson. In a career spanning almost four decades, Deputy Commissioner Benson has seen many changes in the organisation and has high hopes for its future.

In 1973, after completing 18 months of compulsory military service, John Benson joined the NSW Fire Brigades as a recruit firefighter. The six-week training program was tough and challenging, so it was with great excitement and anticipation that he took up his first post at Redfern Fire Station.

Things were more than a little different then – Deputy Commissioner Benson recalls his first memory of attending an incident.

“I was based at Redfern at the time, and the incident was at Circular Quay. We travelled there on an open-back Rolls Royce fire truck that didn’t have seatbelts. We’ve come a long way since then, with a world class fleet of fire engines and aerial appliances today.”

Since then it has been onwards and upwards for John Benson, who has served at every rank in the organisation, including acting as the Commissioner on a number of occasions.

Deputy Commissioner Benson said one of the best experiences during his career was the two years he spent in Albury.

“I was one of the first permanent firefighters to serve at a country fire station. It was a great experience. I worked side-by-side with my retained firefighter colleagues and gained a deep appreciation for the dedication and commitment that retained firefighters have for their job and also their firefighting expertise. I think it’s an experience that more permanent firefighters should have today.”



Among Deputy Commissioner Benson’s many achievements during his time at FRNSW, Commissioner Greg Mullins points to two in particular.

Change in the air – Deputy Commissioner retires

...continued from page 9



John Benson and then Deputy Commissioner Ross Freeman discuss a major operation in the 1990s

“John was the Examinations Officer at the Training College for some years and did a lot of work revamping the promotional programs. He was among the first people in the organisation to work on the Station Officer and Inspector promotional programs together with now retired Superintendent Mick Ryan.

“John has also been a driving force behind the preparations for our international urban search and rescue (USAR) classification with the United Nations. His hard work and commitment to developing our USAR capability will no doubt contribute to the success of the classification exercise, which takes place in September this year.”

Reflecting on the changes he has seen in the organisation over the past 39 years, Deputy Commissioner Benson points to the areas of culture

and safety as two of the biggest areas of reform.

“When I joined the job, hardly anyone wore breathing apparatus on the incident ground. Today, we have state-of-the-art equipment and procedures and guidelines in place to ensure the safety of our firefighters. As an employer, FRNSW has an obligation to ensure that health and safety of all of its employees, and this will continue to be a key area of development for the organisation going forward.

“The other area in which I have seen the greatest change is in the culture of the organisation.

“I was one of the first permanent firefighters to serve at a country fire station.”

In 1973, the organisation had a very military structure and, of course, firefighting was exclusively a male-dominated profession. Today, driven by the expectations of the community and the diversity of the roles the organisation performs, we have seen the organisation develop into one that is more respectful of people both within the organisation and in the broader community. We’ve seen female firefighters join the service, as well as people from ethnic and other diverse backgrounds. My only disappointment is that we don’t yet have a female firefighter in the senior officer ranks. But it will happen and I think it is vital that the organisation maintains its focus on building diversity in the workforce.”

Rosemary Milkins, Deputy Chief Executive said Deputy Commissioner Benson had brought a real personal strength to FRNSW.

“John is extremely hard working and committed to the service. He has given a life’s work to FRNSW and that is a marvellous gift.” So, what does retirement hold for Deputy Commissioner Benson?

“I’ll be completing my studies in Political Science and Advanced Psychology, and my wife and I will be exploring some small business opportunities. We are looking forward to spending more time with our family and doing some travel. And I’ll be able to work on getting my handicap down on the golf course!”

New Deputy Commissioner, Emergency Management

After an exhaustive recruitment process which attracted expressions of interest from within FRNSW, around Australia and overseas, Jim Smith AFSM was selected to take on this role. Jim brings extensive experience and knowledge to the position, having worked as Director Regional Operations; Director Community Safety; Area Commander for Newcastle, the Hunter and Central Coast, Zone Commander in the Illawarra, and Manager of the Bushfire/Natural Hazards Section. He also holds Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts and Executive Master of Public Administration Degrees, and is a Member of the Institution of Fire Engineers. He is currently studying Law.

Memorable incidents

1974 – major oil refinery fire, Bankstown

“I had only been a firefighter for about four months when I attended this fire and it was a confronting experience for an inexperienced firefighter. When we arrived on scene with the foam pumper from 10 Redfern, there were fires in all the bunded areas surrounding the 200 000 litre fuel storage tanks. The fire was extremely intense, and there was huge potential for a devastating explosion and loss of life. But the professionalism demonstrated by senior firefighting staff, and all of the firefighters on scene, prevented the fire from developing into something much worse.”

1981 – Rembrandt Apartments Hostel Fire, Kings Cross

“I was the driver/pump operator of the ‘2nd call’ pumper from Headquarters with 15 appliances on scene. The complexity and scope of the firefighting operations at this fire was staggering. The fire occurred in the middle of the night, many of the clients were intoxicated, and it involved a large number of evacuations and, sadly, significant loss of life (nine people died in the fire).”

1984 – St Peters Wool Store fire

“This was another difficult firefighting operation. The Wool Store warehouse was very dry timber, the structure was impregnated with oil and there was only a small distance between the warehouses. The fire spread rapidly and intensely, and we were hampered by a lack of water supply, which required relay pumping and drafting.”

January 1994 – Sydney bushfires

“The summer of 1993/94 was a terrible one for bushfires. Fires had been burning up and down the coast of NSW since Christmas 1993. More than 800 fires started between 27 December 1993 and 16 January 1994. 204 significant bushfires were burning at the height of the crisis. Worst-affected areas were the Hunter, Blue Mountains and Sydney regions. More than 200 homes and four lives, including two firefighters, were lost and around 800,000 hectares were burnt out.”



Rachael Robertson in Antarctica

On 7 March, more than 100 FRNSW staff gathered at the City of Sydney Fire Station to celebrate International Women's Day which commemorates the economic, political and social achievements of women around the world.

“International Women's Day is very important to me and to FRNSW,” Commissioner Greg Mullins said. “It provides us with the opportunity to reflect on how far our organisation has come in offering equal opportunities to all, but also on how far we still have to travel.”

This year's event included guest speaker Rachael Robertson, who successfully led the 58th Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition to Davis Station. As Station Leader in Antarctica for a year, she was responsible for everything from the safety and welfare of over 80 expeditioners, to managing highly complex operations with the added pressure of isolation and extreme risk to life.

“As the first woman ever to lead the expedition, I was faced with the challenge of being a female working in a very male-dominated environment,” Rachael said.

In addition to Rachael's story, several female firefighters shared their experiences working at FRNSW, including SO Kate Barnes from

Alexandria Fire Station, Capt Teresa Johnson from Brewarrina Fire Station and QF Emma Drew from City of Sydney Fire Station.

“International Women's Day is the perfect way to acknowledge – and celebrate – the contributions and hard work of our female firefighters,” said Commissioner Mullins. “Women play a vital role in FRNSW and the organisation actively promotes careers for women as firefighters and as admin and trades staff alike. Careers at FRNSW are both challenging and rewarding, and offer a diverse range of choices for women.”

FRNSW has made concerted efforts to encourage women to pursue careers as firefighters, and each year there has been a notable boost in the number of female applicants and recruits.

In 2010, the Women's Development Action Plan was launched to encourage more women to consider a career at FRNSW. This plan seeks to remove barriers to progression through the ranks for both men and women, and to help employees at FRNSW to achieve their career goals.

Retained firefighting: finding a way forward

In November last year the Commissioner convened a Summit at Parliament House in Sydney to discuss the challenges facing the retained firefighting system. A cross-section of about 200 staff and stakeholder representatives attended, including permanent and retained firefighters from both city and country, area and zone command staff, administration and trades staff, FBEU officials, and representatives from the SES, RFS and the Minister's Office.

Areas identified at the Summit as needing change included recruitment and selection processes, fitness and medical requirements, property and infrastructure issues, availability and crewing requirements, workforce diversity, training, response arrangements and policies, workplace flexibility and remuneration.

As a result of the Summit, a comprehensive discussion paper was prepared and posted on the Intranet summing up the issues and inviting debate from staff. Other consultation carried out included a pre-summit survey, a joint FRNSW/FBEU Retained Working Party and a discussion forum on the Intranet. Thanks to all staff who used these opportunities to provide feedback; this input is assisting FRNSW as it develops a Retained Firefighter Strategy.

"Our response to the challenges facing the retained system will happen in several phases," said Deputy Commissioner Jim Smith. "The immediate pressing need is to focus on recruitment as well as possibly considering a name change for retained firefighters. Medium term, we will be negotiating with the FBEU about a new retained award. While in the longer term, we will be making structural changes to the retained system to make it sustainable for the future."

Currently retained vacancy levels are at an all-time high of around 450 positions. "We're working hard right now to address the need for more retained staff in many areas of the State," said Deputy Commissioner Smith. "We've introduced a raft of measures to tackle retained recruitment, and these are already starting to bear fruit."

Some of the key measures implemented so far include the following.

- Engagement of recruitment consultant Ashley Johnson who is focussing on the hardest-to-recruit stations. Ashley has carried out recruitment campaigns at Peak Hill, Murrurundi, Merriwa, and Dungog, and has attracted a large number of applicants at each station. He is working closely with station and zone staff so that all benefit from the process.

- Jennifer Dunne from the Recruitment Section has been allocated to Operations Command to be a fulltime resource for retained recruitment. Jennifer is assisting zones in the recruitment process and is providing a key link from the zones back to Operations Command and Recruitment.
- Superintendent Dave Lewis is working on streamlining of the retained recruitment process.
- Production of a toolkit of materials to assist zones carrying out retained recruitment; these materials will range from radio and TV commercials for local media through to printed items such as posters.

"While the retained system has served us well in the past protecting over 200 communities around the State, we need to reshape it to address the changes and challenges facing us," said Deputy Commissioner Smith. "We need to find a flexible system that works more effectively and is sustainable in the long term. And that won't be a 'one size fits all' approach – we need to find different solutions for different local needs."

Retained firefighter at an incident





Captain Mick Ivill and the retained crew from Tumut

Tumut Trouts angle for success

The town of Tumut is nestled in the foothills of the beautiful Snowy Mountains 423 kilometres from Sydney and 180 kilometres from Canberra. Tumut is home to 467 Station, a Secondary Rescue Station staffed by Captain Mick Ivill and 14 retained crew members. Captain Ivill maintains that successful running of a retained fire station depends on a strong team effort; and his crew, he says, are great.

"I believe in delegation," he said. "It's not my station, it belongs to FRNSW. We are all part of a team, we all take ownership and everyone contributes. Sometimes our team might need a little fine tuning, but I trust the crew completely."

Captain Ivill joined FRNSW 11 years ago and is the longest serving member of the Tumut Fire Brigade. "There is not a big turnover of crew," he said. "Our latest recruit joined 12 months ago. He came from South Africa with his family to work at the paper mill. Not long after he arrived, there was a fire in his house, and we responded and put it out. He was so impressed that he put his name on the waiting list to join."

Captain Ivill said that it wasn't only the firefighting skills that motivated the station's newest recruit to join FRNSW. "He was inspired by the community spirit, the compassion and the friendship demonstrated by the crew," he said.

Tumut firefighters have diverse employment backgrounds including teaching, management, government,

Ambulance NSW, the NSW Police Force, and National Parks and Wildlife Service. Some are self-employed. Captain Ivill said that although they perform varying roles outside the station, they all joined FRNSW for the same reason. "The retained firefighters are motivated by community involvement and the contribution they can make," he said. "And they are an enthusiastic lot!"

The firefighters attend a drill conducted every two weeks, plus additional training and joint exercises (either live or desktop) with regional rescue agencies. "We have an excellent relationship with other emergency services," said Captain Ivill. "Members of the SES, RFS, Ambulance and Police are all locals – we know how it works and we all work well together," he said.



Tumut firefighters at a community education event

Paper manufacturing fire at Tumut

“At 0542 hours on 16 January 2011 Wollongong Communications received a 000 call to paper rolls alight at the Visy Paper site, 14 kms southwest of Tumut. 467 Tumut, 218 Batlow and RFS responded. On arrival, firefighters were confronted with paper reels 100m x 20m x 3m external to the main building well alight.

The incident was upgraded to a 2nd Alarm and due to the size of the incident, Duty Commander Riverina was responded. Over the following 2 ½ days crews worked alongside each other and with Visy staff to bring the incident under control. Ground monitors from Albury and Turvey Park were brought in to assist crews who had improvised in making their own ground monitors using lines of 70mm and pocket lines. As the incident was brought under control, heavy machinery was used to separate the paper rolls.

Seventeen stations from Zones RS1, RS2 and RS3 attended as well as Duty Commander Riverina, and Duty Commander and Zone Commander Southern Highlands. FRNSW withdrew after 2 ½ days, leaving the incident with the RFS who maintained skeleton crews over the following 16 days. The professionalism, resourcefulness and patience of attending crews brought this incident to a safe close, averting potentially catastrophic consequences for both Visy and the Tumut community.”

From Commish’s Corner No. 505

There are substantial potentially hazardous industries around Tumut including the paper mill (set on 1100ha), silos and logging trucks. Timber, building materials and cardboard are transported in and out of the district by road and firefighters respond to a significant number of truck incidents. “We attended three large protracted fires at the paper mill,” said Captain Ivill. “These incidents are a great opportunity to learn as well as put our skills and training to good use. We are certainly becoming more proficient.”

The firefighters were looking forward recently to demonstrating their proficiency at the Firefighting Championships, but the games were cancelled due to severe storms and flooding. Instead their skills were used to assist the lead agency SES with flood rescue and evacuating people from flood-prone areas. 467 Station was upgraded to a Primary Rescue Station as the SES was inundated with calls for assistance. Low-lying houses in the Tumut area were flooded and farmers lost stock, but the greatest damage occurred further downriver where the Tumut River feeds into the Murrumbidgee River. FRNSW Strike Teams were initially situated at Tumut but relocated downriver to assist with flood operations.

Tumut retained firefighters are very involved with community fire safety

and regularly conduct FireEd and PreEd presentations as well as demonstrating the kitchen fat fire simulator at community events and school fetes. During the Easter break when holidaymakers arrive, firefighters take the truck to the local caravan park and discuss fire prevention with children and adults. “This is a great opportunity to remind everyone about changing their smoke alarm batteries when they turn back their clocks,” said Captain Ivill.

Firefighters also hit the airwaves at the local community radio station once a month. “As we are already into autumn, the focus will be on preparing your house for winter,” said Captain Ivill. “We’ll include topics like clearing chimneys and storing barbecues. This will also be aligned with the SABRE program.”

The annual Falling Leaf Festival held in late April attracts thousands of visitors. Tumut firefighters not only use the festival to spread the fire safety message, they proudly participate in the parade as well! Captain Ivill recognises that involvement in community activities requires time and effort but says that the activities are shared among the crew. “I know that these things all take time,” said Captain Ivill, “but we have very enthusiastic crew members, and one or two days a year spread over 15 people isn’t too difficult to manage.”



Taking the plunge in chopper rescue

Story by Relief Aviation Officer Senior Firefighter Shannon Crofton who was recently presented with the prestigious Higgins and Langley Memorial Award for Outstanding Achievement in Swiftwater Rescue for the work he has undertaken as a volunteer in swiftwater rescue training and development with the SES. This is the first time the award has been presented to someone outside the USA.

I am currently acting as a relieving Aviation Officer within FRNSW. In addition, as a volunteer with the NSW SES, I have studied swiftwater and flood rescue techniques. However, within Australia, there is no specific training in the aviation field for flood rescues even though helicopters are often called upon.

For these reasons, and in light of recent devastating floods throughout Australia, I applied for and was successful in gaining a Churchill Fellowship to research the use of helicopters for flood rescue and reconnaissance.

In June I am travelling to the USA and Canada for over 5 weeks to study, work, live, train with and also photograph organisations and agencies which have been using helicopters for flood and swiftwater rescues for more than 20 years. This will include the Los Angeles County Fire Department which was instrumental in developing policies and procedures for the safe and effective use of helicopters. I am also visiting and learning from the US Coast Guard and their Rescue Swimmer program.

In one single flood event, Hurricane Katrina, they performed over 30,000 rescues

Their experience and the lessons they learned will be invaluable to Australian rescue agencies.

Other agencies I am visiting are the Los Angeles City Fire Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff, Fresno Sheriff, Carolina HART (Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team), San Diego Sheriff, Texas STAR Flight, the Canadian Air Force and private training providers. My journey will take me throughout California, Carolina, Texas and Canada.

I have also been asked to present on flood rescue at the National Association for Search and Rescue in Lake Tahoe. This is a very humbling offer as this event attracts over 6,000 people annually.

My aim is to bring back information, skills, knowledge and techniques that will enable Australia rescue agencies to achieve world best practice in this field. We have already seen how helicopters can be used to rapidly save many lives in emergency situations. Imparting knowledge of floods and hydrology to operators, aircrew, pilots and rescue swimmers will increase their own safety as well as helping to save the lives of those needing rescue.

For FRNSW, this will directly improve safety for its aviation personnel, as well as using Fire Air 1 in the most efficient and effective manner during emergencies. Air crews who understand water, hydrology, search techniques and aircraft positioning are able to identify and minimise risks when performing rescues. They learn when to go; and more importantly, when not to go. They are also aware of the dangers associated with flooded houses, vehicles and dams, and know how to rescue people from these locations while moving.

A key learning from world experts has been that no one agency can efficiently and effectively carry out flood or swiftwater rescues. The number one motto in the University of Lancashire's Management of Flood and Water Incidents course is "Flood rescues are multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional events".

Read more about the Churchill Fellowship on page 33.



In the deep end – flood, mud and sandbags

Earlier this year, more than 75% of the State – equivalent to an area the size of Spain – was affected by flooding, with March 2012 the wettest on record in NSW since 1956. FRNSW played a vital role during late February and March assisting SES in flood operations across the State.

March this year was a busy one for all of the State's emergency service organisations – and particularly the SES – with consistent rain causing widespread flooding across NSW.

As floodwaters rose, FRNSW firefighters responded to hundreds of calls, assisting residents, local communities and the SES by filling sandbags, carrying out salvage operations, helping with evacuations, and clearing debris and blocked drains.

The rain started in late February and did not let up for weeks. At the height of the flood emergency approximately 20,000 people were subject to Evacuation Orders in places like Wagga Wagga, Forbes, Gundagai, Yenda, Urana, Barellan, Hay, Darlington Point as well as rural communities along the Hawkesbury River in Sydney's north-western outskirts.

On 28-29 February, firefighters from 263 Cooma worked with the SES and other emergency services to fill 1,700 sandbags to protect homes and businesses from floodwaters. Firefighters from 394 Mulwalla had a busy day on 1 March evacuating staff and children from a local day care centre and assisting the SES and local residents fill sandbags. A Strike Team made up of crews from Bowral, Yass, Crookwell and Goulburn was put on standby when flood waters threatened Goulburn. At the same time, crews from the Blue Mountains were deployed to North Richmond to provide fire and emergency protection to residents who were in danger of being cut off by the rising Nepean River.



When the Murrumbidgee River flooded, FRNSW crews assisted with evacuation and recovery operations

“Inspector Stubbs was awestruck by the community spirit in the community of Wagga Wagga during the flood crisis.”

In Wagga Wagga, one of the worst affected areas, firefighters from 480 Wagga Wagga and 472 Turvey Park assisted with the preparation, evacuation and recovery operations during major flooding in the city, which saw the Murrumbidgee River peak at 10.6m on Tuesday 7 March, 0.3m below the expected peak of 10.9m. 480 Wagga Wagga was in the evacuation zone, so firefighters quickly relocated to Turvey Park Fire

Station, and then assisted police in doorknocking to evacuate 8,000 residents in the CBD. It took three days for floodwaters to begin to recede and several more days before residents could return to their homes.

FRNSW crews from 472 Turvey Park and 480 Wagga Wagga were joined by crews from Gundagai, Albury and Corowa. For five days, these firefighters worked alongside the military, RFS, SES, the local council and residents to get the city back on its feet, pumping out water, washing away mud and attending minor hazmat incidents.

Inspector Jeremy Stubbs, Duty Commander Regional South 1, said he

was awestruck by the community spirit in the community of Wagga Wagga during the flood crisis.

“I witnessed 200 people fill sandbags from midnight until noon the next day. When the council supply of sand was exhausted, private companies began depositing their final supplies. At some point they began digging up the earth to fill sandbags. I saw people visit evacuation centres and offer their homes to young families rather than have them tough it out at the centres. And the camaraderie that was shown by all of the agencies in the Emergency Operation Centre and operations was outstanding, ensuring that we could restore essential services to the town quickly.”

In the deep end – flood, mud and sandbags *...continued from page 17*



FRNSW mop up after the floods

Upstream, the town of Lockhart was inundated by floodwaters in the early hours of Sunday 4 March. The fire station and 100 homes were impacted, so retained firefighters worked through the night moving local residents, and the truck and equipment from the fire station, to higher ground. Once the flood waters receded, FRNSW crews from Lockhart, Turvey Park and Wagga Wagga worked with local RFS volunteers and the community to clean up the town.

In Forbes, two strike teams, made up of crews from Forbes, Young, Cowra, Cootamundra, Delroy and Warren were formed to assist the SES as the Lachlan River rose.

Meanwhile, the towns of Yenda and Griffith were experiencing a 1-in-160 years flood. The combination of heavy and persistent rains flowing into the irrigation channels around the towns meant the usually tiny Mirool Creek suddenly covered a vast tract of land and inundated towns and homes, including the newly renovated Yenda Fire Station. The scale of this flood shocked the people of Yenda and Griffith, and resulted in the evacuation of hundreds of residents. Firefighters from 311 Griffith and 512 Yenda worked tirelessly for days assisting the SES with evacuations and then with clean-up operations as the floodwaters receded.

FRNSW crews were also involved in a number of flood rescues. On 28 February, firefighters from Broken Hill rescued a couple and their baby who were trapped in their car by raising floodwaters, while the crew from 236 Braidwood rescued a person in the small village of Araluen, about 25km from Braidwood. A ute had been washed off a crossing and with the waters raising quickly, firefighters arrived to find a person in a tree, too scared to leave. The crew found a large tree to use as an anchor and hooked up a belay, using a safety line and a thrown line. Once the person was securely in a chest harness, firefighters were able to talk them down from the tree and into the water and pulled them safely to the bank.

“I witnessed 200 people fill sandbags from midnight until noon the next day.”

In the midst of all of the flooding in regional NSW, a shortlived but fierce east coast low hit the NSW south coast and Sydney on 8-9 March. The heavy rain caused minor flooding under buildings, homes and shops, and flooded roadways right across Sydney, with FRNSW working closely with the SES to respond to a range of incidents.

Between 5am and midday on 8 March, FRNSW responded to 18 road accidents, 27 powerlines and trees down, 54 flooding incidents and 112 automatic fire alarms.

At the peak of the storm, around 250 FRNSW firefighters from 50 fire stations were responding to around 40 incidents simultaneously across the city.

In addition to operational support, FRNSW also supported the SES by providing media and web capabilities to cover night shifts for the exhausted media and communications team in Wollongong. Media Manager Tammy Ingold headed to Wollongong for a 12-hour shift on Tuesday 6 March and found herself doing radio grabs throughout the night, while Web Coordinator James Hanney provided invaluable assistance in keeping the SES website up and running.

The resources and assistance provided by FRNSW throughout the flood crisis demonstrates the depth and breadth of skill and capabilities that FRNSW possesses as an organisation, and the strong working relationships which we have with other emergency service agencies.



Key flood statistics

More than 75% of NSW was affected by flooding

SES and other emergency services spent an estimated 70,000 hours helping flood-affected communities in NSW

SES received nearly 7,400 requests for assistance

41 evacuation orders were issued

65 areas were declared natural disaster zones



Help shape our future

Four years since the release of its last corporate plan, FRNSW is enlisting the passion and commitment of its thousands of staff and volunteers to help shape the future direction of the organisation in both the short and long term.



Commissioner Mullins speaks with recruits at their graduation ceremony

Two plans are currently being prepared – a 20-year Future Directions Plan that sets out the organisation’s long-term vision and the key strategies to achieve this; and a 2012-16 Corporate Plan which sets more specific, measurable strategies for the next three to four years.

Commissioner Greg Mullins said the organisation had come a long way since the last corporate plan was prepared in 2008.

“We have changed our name to better reflect what we do and have introduced a number of initiatives aimed at improving our support services and supporting a more diverse workplace,” Commissioner Mullins said.

“All organisations need a blueprint for the future to work from, in order to provide direction. Our staff are our greatest asset and we want to tap into that resource – people’s ideas and passion – to help create that blueprint. That is why we are encouraging as many staff as possible to have input into both these plans.”

Paul Johnston, Manager Planning and Performance Evaluation, said there had been a great response to the online staff survey which closed on 15 June.

“Both the survey results, and the outcomes from a number of focus groups which met to discuss and research critical issues likely to impact on FRNSW, are being used to inform the futures plan and corporate plan,” Mr Johnston said.

Each focus group was assigned to explore one of seven key issues expected to be critical in planning FRNSW’s future.

These issues are:

- The Environment – the impact of climate change, increasing prevalence of flood and other weather events, best strategies and capability developments
- Changing Society – population and demographic projections, socio-economic changes, at-risk groups, crime
- Workforce and Workplace Change – a more diverse workforce, lifestyle impacts, new approaches to work, volunteer management

- Community/Stakeholder Expectations – community safety objectives, community engagement, partnerships, resources.
- Technology – IT infrastructure and technologies, operational technologies, impact of the information age
- Resources – impact of changes in the global economy, managing increasing costs of services and living, managing contractual arrangements,
- Government – national, state and local government coordination, long-term viability of the public service, changing models of government intervention.

“Online discussion forums linked to these issues were set up on the intranet to enable all staff to give their thoughts about these topics,” Mr Johnston said.

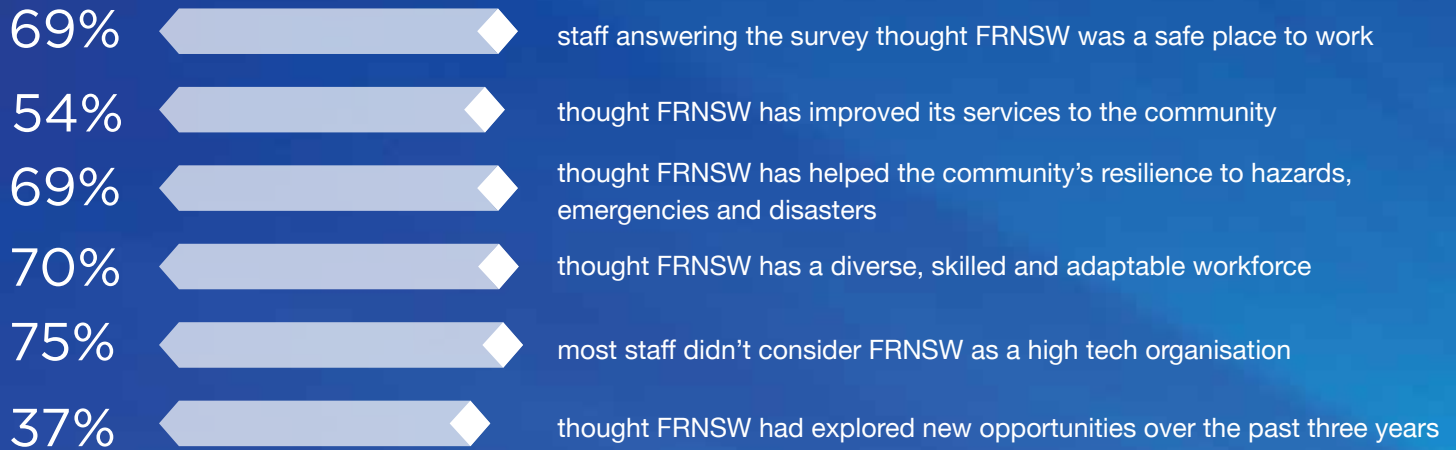
In mid-July a Future Directions workshop was held involving a cross-section of people from within the organisation as well as external stakeholders. A draft futures plan and a draft corporate plan is being developed using workshop outcomes and will be issued for all staff to comment on before it is finalised.

“FRNSW continues to go from strength to strength. The passion and commitment of our workforce and volunteers are testament to that,” Commissioner Mullins said. “This is a great opportunity for those who already have invested so much personally and professionally in FRNSW to hold a stake in its future direction. I encourage everybody to get involved and to help chart the future of their service.”

Future Directions survey – what you told us

During May and June, FRNSW conducted an online Future Directions survey. In all, 1292 staff members, including permanent and retained firefighters as well as admin and trades staff, took up the opportunity to have their say, a pleasing participation rate. The survey sought staff opinions on a range of key issues.

On FRNSW’s performance over the last 4 years:



On where FRNSW is going:



- 79% – most staff wanted FRNSW to expand its response capabilities
- 59% – many staff also agreed FRNSW should increase its community education and community preparedness
- 41% – felt they knew what FRNSW stood for and where the organisation was going.

On how FRNSW staff work together:



- 57% – most staff (57%) felt that FRNSW’s culture reflected the values of honesty, integrity, respect, courage, selflessness, professionalism and teamwork
- 29% – felt that their leaders encouraged them to learn, participate and achieve
- 32% – felt that they were given an opportunity to have their say
- 24% – felt that they were listened to when they raised issues.

* Staff thought that the issues having most influence on FRNSW in the future would be government policy and priorities, the economic climate and population growth/changing profile.



When asked to identify three things FRNSW should do in the next 20 years, most comments from staff centred around the following key issues:

- ✓ making better use of technology
- ✓ improving ways FRNSW delivers community safety and education
- ✓ recruitment practices – getting the best person for the job
- ✓ improving internal communication
- ✓ promoting leadership and development in the workforce
- ✓ improving training at all levels and across all disciplines
- ✓ giving more control at the local level (ie less bureaucracy).

Balancing the budget

On 12 June the NSW Government announced its 2012/13 state budget. A central aim of the budget is to build a solid financial base for NSW so that it can withstand a major reduction in GST revenue and a renewed global economic slowdown. In simple terms, the demands on the state budget have been exceeding the ability to pay for them, leading to significant budget deficits. The Government is committed to controlling this imbalance and returning to budget surpluses to protect the State's AAA credit rating and to restore economic growth.

One way savings will be achieved is by capping labour expenses, thus achieving savings of around 1.2% annually, or around \$2.2 billion across all agencies over four years. Apart from commitments around the number of teachers, nurses and Police officers, the cap applies to all Government agencies, including FRNSW.

The state budget provides FRNSW with a range of challenges, and some hard and possibly unpopular decisions will have to be made. FRNSW's Executive Leadership Team has been examining ways to make these savings while minimising their impact on staff, and on the scope and quality of services that FRNSW provides. FRNSW has been communicating regularly and consulting with unions, firefighters and support staff about possible solutions to these challenges. On a more positive note, the budget also contained some welcome news for FRNSW. Highlights include:

- more than \$18 million for new and upgraded fire stations, including funds for new fire stations at Coolamon and Port Macquarie, a major upgrade of Springwood Fire Station, and funding to begin planning for new and replacement fire stations at Maryland (Wallsend and Newcastle Hazmat), Terrigal, Waterloo (13 stn), Yennora (73 stn), and Ropes Crossing (78 stn).
- \$14.9 million to complete the \$17.3 million Personal Protective Clothing Replacement Program that will see FRNSW outfitted with the most advanced PPC in Australia
- more than \$3 million toward a four-year program to replace radios and particularly handheld transceivers with new, state-of-the-art radios
- more than \$3.7 million toward a new computerised Fleet and Equipment management system for FRNSW, RFS and SES.

Commissioner Greg Mullins is confident that FRNSW will overcome any challenges that the budget reductions bring. "We have been through a period of unprecedented growth and renewal over the last decade, and we will meet this new challenge. We are an organisation that finds solutions to problems and pulls together when the going gets tough."

Stations chime in for Smoke Alarm Battery campaign



Firefighter highlights need for working smoke alarms

Firefighters were again very proactive for this year's 'Change Your Clock, Change Your Smoke Alarm Battery' campaign.

Many stations organised photos and stories with their local newspaper around the 1 April end of daylight saving, reinforcing links with their local community and boosting the message that also ran in citywide newspapers, radio, TV, and magazines. Some firefighters who speak another language were also interviewed on SBS radio in Arabic, Greek, Italian, Vietnamese, and Cantonese, reaching out to migrants who are particularly vulnerable to fire. With seniors especially vulnerable to fires in the home, one of our longest-serving firefighters, Bill King, gave interviews with seniors newspapers, and the Community Engagement and Development Unit delivered presentations at seniors events.



Part of the FRNSW contingent in the Sydney Mardi Gras 2012

Sydney Mardi Gras 2012 – don't rain on MY parade!

Heavy rain failed to dampen the spirits of the 100 participants representing FRNSW in the 2012 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade held on 3 March. Despite the soggy conditions, the FRNSW contingent was cheered on by thousands of spectators who lined the streets to watch the spectacular procession of floats and enjoy the Mardi Gras' celebration of equality and diversity.

This major annual event attracts huge numbers of visitors from all around the world and is a great opportunity for FRNSW to promote key fire safety messages and demonstrate our commitment to tolerance and diversity both in the workplace and the community. The Class 3 Pumper was draped with large banners proclaiming, "Fire & Rescue NSW supports our diverse workforce – be fire safe!" A banner on the rear of the truck announced, "Only working smoke alarms save lives!"

Firefighters also threw dozens of large red and yellow inflatable beach balls emblazoned with, "Fire & Rescue NSW supports diversity," into the crowd. "It's a very visual event," said Assistant Commissioner Mark Whybro. "The parade gets an incredible amount of media coverage and it's a wonderful opportunity for FRNSW to engage with the community and promote fire safety – especially when you've got lights flashing and sirens blaring. That certainly attracts attention. The parade is also great fun, and you do get to meet some very interesting people!"

FRNSW's entry this year comprised a Class 3 Varley Commander Pumper, a Logistics Support vehicle and the Community Safety van. Commissioner Greg Mullins was joined by Deputy Chief Executive Rosemary Milkins, Assistant Commissioner Mark Whybro and a very enthusiastic group of firefighters, trades and administration staff, and CFU volunteers. Singing star Paulini Curuenavuli also joined the FRNSW ranks for the parade, and her new single "Fireman" proved a very popular addition to the playlist of fire-themed dance music which was pumped through speakers from the back of the van.

"When we were in the marshalling area, people would walk up to the truck and just start dancing when they heard Paulini's song," said a contingent member. "They'd have a little bop and then continue on their way. The atmosphere was electric and there was an amazing camaraderie."

Spreading the word on prevention

Every year between May and September, FRNSW sees a spike in the number of residential fires and, sadly, the number of preventable fire fatalities. The aim of Fire Prevention Week is to educate people about the fire risks in their homes and influence them to change their behaviours and take action to prevent fires from occurring.

Fire Prevention 2012 was launched in style at the Church Street Mall in Parramatta, on Saturday 28 April by the Minister for Emergency Services, Michael Gallacher, FRNSW Commissioner Greg Mullins and Parramatta Lord Mayor Lorraine Wearne

With the help of crews from 27 Parramatta, 73 Fairfield and 55 Guildford, and major community partner GIO Insurance, FRNSW put on a great event. GIO Insurance provided a number of kiosks, specially designed to allow people to directly access and complete a Home Fire Safety Audit (www.homefiresafetyaudit.com.au).

The event attracted widespread media coverage, with stories running on Channel 9 and Channel 10 news, along with grabs on major radio stations 2GB and 2UE.

Throughout the week, a number of other events were held across the State. Firefighters from 480 Wagga Wagga, with the help of David Weir, FRNSW's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Coordinator, hosted an event targeting people from CALD communities, in particular the Sudanese and Bhutanese communities, which are the among the newer migrants in the area.

Chief Superintendent Ken Murphy, Area Commander Regional South, said the event was a great success.

"We had a great turn out from the local CALD community and the firefighters from 480 Wagga Wagga did a fantastic job engaging with them and teaching them about fire safety and prevention. "There was also extensive media coverage across the Riverina area,

with WIN News and Prime 7 News broadcasting stories, and the local newspaper running a large story."

In Sydney, Seniors Coordinator SF Melanie Rebane and Lisa Williams, FRNSW's Aboriginal Services Coordinator, together with firefighters from 10 Redfern, hosted a joint event at the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence in Redfern.

"The aim of this event was to promote the Fire Prevention Week messages to seniors and the Indigenous community, who continue to be two of our key at-risk groups in terms of fires in the home," Senior Firefighter Rebane said.

The week culminated in the annual Open Day, which was a resounding success. Here are some of the comments MMCU and CEDU had received at the time this article was written:

"...Open Day seems to have been a huge success in Metro West 2 with all stations reporting healthy visitor numbers and some stations exceeding previous attendance records 10 fold!! We had in the vicinity of 1100+ people visit MW2 stations." Inspector Craig East, Duty Commander Metro West 2.

"... At 23 [Gladesville]... I estimate that over 200 attended. All who attended expressed great appreciation and appeared to enjoy it very much. All crew members participated with great enthusiasm and it all went through without a hitch." SO Richard Thompson, 23 Gladesville.

"Brief report on the outcome of Brigade Open Day 2012 at 441 Sawtell. Approximately 700 attended... Around 450 sample bags were taken by children and 350 sausage sandwiches were consumed. All in all a great exercise and a great team effort from the staff." Capt Keith Rhodes, 441 Sawtell.

"We had over 1000 people attend 48 station yesterday, all of which were very impressed... Hurstville City Council Mayor, Steve McMahon attended with his wife and children as well as Oatley Member of Parliament, Mark Coure, who were also very impressed with

the day... Throughout the day we ran three demonstrations of the kitchen fire simulator.

This not only entertained the audience but more importantly educated them about the dangers of leaving kitchens unattended whilst cooking and what happens if they put water on a fat fire... As always we had our BBQ operating to raise donations for the Burns Unit. We sold almost 500 sausages between 10am-2pm... we made approx \$1100 this year." RetF Reynir Potter, 48 Mortdale.

"My daughter Frankie (2) and I went along to the open day at Marrickville Fire Station this morning and I wanted to say thanks for a fantastic event. It was great to meet the team and see the workings of the station... the balloons were a particular hit with my daughter..."Kristen Costandi.

FRNSW commends all of the stations that made use of the Open Day media release template and set up photo opportunities with their local papers and promote Open Day on local radio station. At last count, there were more than 140 articles specifically about Open Day and at least 35-40 individual radio interviews. Some of the photos that went with the articles were amazing, and really captured the spirit of Open Day.

Well done and thank you to everyone who participated in Fire Prevention Week and Open Day this year.



Open Day at local fire stations



Firefighters assessing damage to affected tilt slab walls

Super store inferno

Story and photos by Inspector Kernin Lambert

At 1541 hours on Friday 24 February, the Sydney Communication Centre received an Automatic Fire Alarm to the Harvey Norman retail centre, Jamisontown. The centre is a 220m x 120m structure, comprising warehouses, offices and retail/show rooms, approximately 16,300 m² in size.

Pumper 102 Regentville and Aerial Pumper 86 Penrith were initially assigned to the call. As additional 000 emergency calls began to be received confirming a fire at the premises, the response was upgraded to a 2nd Alarm.

Officer-in-Charge Pumper 102 Station Officer Phillip Marsh reported large volumes of smoke visible upon leaving the station. Upon arrival on scene, Station Officer Marsh observed fire conditions to continue to intensify and upgraded the response to a 4th Alarm. Large volumes of black smoke and heavy fire activity were associated with the western end of the building, in the vicinity of the loading dock and warehouse area.

SO Marsh carried out an initial size-up and determined fire was spreading rapidly through the storage warehouse, with potential for even greater fire spread through the large unsprinklered building and requested a 12th alarm; In an earlier Pre-Incident Planning

exercise, firefighters had identified the building contained a high fire load and significant potential for major fire spread; SO Marsh's size-up, decision to request a 12th alarm and initial firefighting strategy were based on the knowledge obtained via the PIP.

Due to the high intensity of fire conditions, initial firefighting operations were defensive. Firefighters began to attack the fire through the Sector D loading dock with two 70mm fire attack lines. Crews directed cooling streams onto a bank of LPG and helium gas cylinders within the rear loading dock, now being impacted by fire and in danger of BLEVE (boiling liquid expanding vapour explosion).

Due to the heavy intensity of fire conditions, initial firefighting operations were defensive. Firefighters began to attack the fire through the Sector D loading dock with two 70mm fire attack lines.

Aerial Pumper 86 positioned at the Sector A/D corner and set up an aerial master stream. Due to fire intensity, firefighters recognised the possibility of tilt slab wall failure and collapse. A collapse exclusion zone was established and all crews operated safely outside of the collapse zone.

As fire began to break through the roof, the master stream of Aerial Pumper 86 was used to knock down fire intensity within the warehouse, slowing fire spread. Fire appliances were working off pillar hydrants attached to the internal 150mm ring main. Recognising the potential that the ring-main water supply could soon be overrun, SO Marsh directed the third arriving pumper to go to the booster connection and boost water supplies. Hazmat Pumper 77 went to the booster fitting on Mulgoa Road and began pumping into the ring-main, improving fireground water supplies.

Hazmat Pumper 77 went to the booster fitting on Mulgoa Road and began pumping into the ring-main, improving fireground water supplies.

Duty Commander MW1 Inspector Mick Morris arrived at the fireground and following a handover from SO Marsh, took control of the incident. Inspector Morris established an Incident Control Point, known as "Jamisontown Control", nominated a staging area and appointed a Staging Officer. Aware the building contained a number of compartments, separated by fire walls and fire doors, Inspector Morris's next priority was to investigate the building interior, in the hope of establishing effective fire cutoff points and stopping internal fire spread. At this time, heavy flames had now broken completely through the roof at the western end of the building and a large plume of thick black smoke was rising above the building, visible across most of Sydney. Heavy fire fully involved the loading dock and warehouse.

Fuelled by polyurethane foam rubber mattresses stored on racking, fire conditions were ferocious and intense.

Breathing apparatus (SCBA) crews gained entry via sector A to investigate the extent of fire travel within the structure. Firefighters observed several outer internal sliding steel fire doors had automatically operated and closed, securing showrooms on the northern side of the structure. Upon making investigations beyond the closed fire doors, firefighters discovered three further internal sliding steel fire doors had not closed, allowing heavy fire conditions to impact three non fire-rated timber doors separating the fully involved warehouse from three large showrooms (2,700m² electrical/computer section, 2,000m² bathroom/flooring section and 4,500m² furniture section.). These timber doors were being directly impacted by fierce and intense fire activity from the burning warehouse and were in danger of imminent failure, allowing fire to spread unchecked into the retail departments and the remainder of the super centre. Protection of these doors became the priority of firefighters. Duty Commander MW2 Inspector Robert McGowan was appointed Sector Commander A and controlled operations within the internal sector to prevent fire spreading into the retail sections.

Crews from Pumpers 32 (Mount Druitt), 98 (Cranebrook), 63 (Blacktown) and 489 (Warragamba) deployed 70mm attack lines to the locations of the above internal door openings and commenced aggressively attacking the fire to prevent it spreading from the fully involved warehouses into the non-involved retail showrooms. Timber doors at all three locations were alight. The doors separating the electrical/computer section had been completely consumed by fire and fire was now starting to spread into this section (the interior wall, false ceiling and goods at the western end of the compartment were already alight).

Aggressive firefighting resulted in fire spread being knocked down and further fire extension from the warehouse into the computer/electrical section prevented. Firefighters described furnace like fire conditions beyond the separation doors. Crews pulled false ceiling above all doors, to examine with thermal imaging cameras any weakening of separation walls or fire penetration. Interior hose lays to all three cutoff points were lengthy, the longest being 80m. Fire conditions remained intense. SCBA crews worked for several hours, successfully preventing fire spread from the warehouse into the retail showrooms. While interior crews fought to stop the fire spreading, aerial master streams attempted to control fire intensity within the fully involved warehouse. In addition to Aerial Pumper 86, Aerial Pumper 97 Huntingwood was deployed in Sector A and directed an aerial stream onto the fire. Ladder Platform 27 Parramatta was positioned in Sector A and the aerial crew provided critical information to Sector A Commander concerning condition and integrity of the roof and wall structures in the vicinity of where internal crews were operating. Firefighters in Sector D directed 70mm hose streams into the involved loading dock and warehouse.

Safety Officers were appointed in all active sectors, including internal operations sectors where interior attack was being undertaken. Main BA Control was established in Sector A. Rescue Pumper 78 Dunheved was the designated Rapid Intervention Team. The rehabilitation pod was deployed to the incident. Ambulance crews attended the incident and remained on standby for firefighter welfare. Several hours into the fire, the first of a number of concrete tilt slab walls collapsed within the established collapse zones. Hazmat crews monitored the smoke plume and water runoff.



Aerial photo shows the extent and ferocity of the blaze

Super store inferno

...continued from page 25

Water supply was increased when a second pumper was placed at the booster. Use of two pumping appliances caused significant improvement of water supply into the ring-main, enabling firefighters to press home the attack.

Zone Commander MW1

Superintendent Alex Scott attended the incident and undertook a flyover aboard Polair and was able to make aerial assessments that assisted in the overall formulation of fireground strategies. Zone Commander MW2 Superintendent Stephen Lyons and Area Commander Metropolitan West Chief Superintendent Tom Milburn attended the incident as part of the Incident Management Team. Director Metropolitan Operations Assistant Commissioner Jim Hamilton attended the incident and following a hand-over

briefing assumed Incident Control, placing Duty Commander MW1 in the role of Operations Officer and appointing Superintendent Scott Logistics Officer. Commissioner Greg Mullins attended the fireground and received a detailed briefing from the Incident Controller. Commissioner Mullins conducted an inspection of the fireground, reviewed operations and provided key support to the Incident Management Team.

The fire attracted enormous media attention, with a number of networks deploying satellite trucks for live crosses during peak national news broadcasts. Operational Media Coordinator Superintendent Ian Krimmer worked in close conjunction with Assistant Director Media, Ministerial and Communication Mr Andrew Parsons to provide regular media updates and briefings. A large media conference was conducted with Commissioner Mullins.

By 1830 hours fire activity had diminished significantly and the threat of further fire spread had been contained. Although an area 4,600m² had been destroyed by fire, 11,700m² of showroom, retail departments and offices and all contents had been saved. The combination of low metal sheet roof, high combustible fire load and large open plan area of the trading floors could have resulted in rapid and extreme fire activity and the total loss of the entire complex, had firefighters not been successful in holding the fire at the cutoff points.

During media interviews the following day, business owner Mr Gerry Harvey stated that when he saw television news footage of the fire, he expected his Jamisontown business to be completely destroyed. Instead, he was astounded that firefighters had been able to save so much. Incredibly, the business commenced re-trading within days.

Mates in darkest times

When Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker presented Deputy Commissioner John Benson with an award recognising FRNSW's service to the city during its darkest hours after last year's earthquake, it not only symbolised the stronger bond between the two countries' emergency services agencies but it also brought closure for many of those impacted by the disaster.

Deputy Commissioner Benson accepted the 2011 Christchurch Earthquake Award on FRNSW's behalf at a commemorative first anniversary ceremony at North Hagley Park on 22 February 2012. A 39-year fire service veteran, Deputy Commissioner Benson admits he was quite overwhelmed by the resilience the Christchurch community displayed during his visit.

"Yes, they are grieving for their families and friends," he said. "But they are so positive and motivated about what they are going to do to rebuild their city, how they are going to do it, and about what they have already done. They are a determined nation."

Personnel from NSW and Queensland emergency services and the Australian Defence Forces travelled to New Zealand in both private and official capacities to commemorate the anniversary of the tragic event.

"I think, to some degree, many Australian rescuers were also still grieving in a way," Deputy Commissioner Benson said. "But, speaking with them after the anniversary ceremony, you could see they were comforted in the knowledge that people in Christchurch have now moved on. Despite all the difficulties people have been confronted with, including natural disasters such as this, they are still bouncing back."

The Deputy Commissioner said while a great deal of work had been done in the past year to clear the debris, there was still considerable damage not only in the Christchurch central business district but also in surrounding communities such as Lyttelton.

"There was a whole residential building estate that was completely submerged in mud and dust – it actually sank. People just had to move out. In 30 to 40 homes there is no one left. It is like a ghost town," he said. "When you see things like that you get an appreciation of not only what did occur but also of how it has affected people and local communities."

FRNSW led USAR Task Forces 1 and 3 as part of the Australian Government's response to the earthquake. The two teams of more than 70 disaster assistance specialists performed more than 400 individual tasks, including searches and rescues, during the deployments.

"The learnings we took out of that have put us in good stead for future deployments," Deputy Commissioner Benson said. "We learnt a lot, not only about the resources, training and equipment required but also command and control – how to work with multi-jurisdictional agencies and how that can be coordinated on a large scale."

Deputy Commissioner Benson said it was crucial for FRNSW to follow up with the communities it has assisted through USAR deployments.

"I think it is important to the people of those communities to see that while our job may be done we still care about their recovery. They are so appreciative. After the ceremony in Christchurch we were stopped constantly by people wanting to thank us," he said.

The bond between FRNSW and New Zealand emergency services has also been strengthened.



Deputy Commissioner John Benson with Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker

"I think, to some degree, many Australian rescuers were also still grieving in a way,"

"FRNSW, through the Commissioner's efforts, has international standing; and the New Zealand USAR personnel and firefighters speak very highly and warmly of FRNSW," Deputy Commissioner Benson said.

In a letter to the Deputy Commissioner, Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker wrote: "Congratulations on the award. It is a reminder to us all that we are privileged to live in a world where others are prepared to selflessly come to the aid of those in need and provide assistance, comfort and protection."

Response opens gateway to the East



Chief Supt Rob McNeil lays flowers at commemorative ceremony

Stepping off a train in Tokyo the day after attending a ceremony at Minimi Sanriku to mark the first anniversary of the devastating Japan earthquake and tsunami, Chief Supt Rob McNeil was surprised to find himself eagerly greeted by a Japanese couple.

“I was wearing my FRNSW uniform and these people at the train station stopped me and said ‘thank you very much’,” Chief Superintendent McNeil said. “They knew FRNSW had been part of the Task Force that had searched the buildings in the town where they had lost people they had known. They just wanted to thank us for being there. It was very humbling. What we did was our job – it is what we do. You don’t do it because you expect anything in return.”

Now an Assistant Commissioner, Rob McNeil was a Chief Superintendent when he led the Australian Task Force deployed to assist in Japan for seven days from 14 March 2011 – three days after the earthquake and tsunami had struck.

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade invited Chief Supt McNeil to return to Minimi Sanriku to take part in a commemorative flower-laying ceremony with Australian Defence Force Deputy Chief, Air Marshall Mark Binskin, on 11 March. The area was one of the hardest hit by the tsunami and was where the Task Force had concentrated much of its work during the deployment. The Australian and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce, the Japanese Government and the Australian Embassy also invited Chief Superintendent McNeil to attend a number of other events and functions during his six-day visit.

“I don’t think most people realise the

impact that our response, and the fact that we stayed and helped, had within Japan; also the fact that Prime Minister Julia Gillard was the first leader of a country to visit Japan after the disaster,” Chief Supt McNeil said.

Australia’s effort was valued so much that framed photographs of Australian Task Force members working in the field decorate the walls of offices belonging to the Mayor of Minimi Sanriku, Jin Sato, and the Vice President of the Japanese Parliament’s House of Councillors, Hidehisa Otsuji.

Chief Supt McNeil’s schedule also included visits to Wagyu beef farmers in Fukushima who had lost their livelihoods due to the nuclear power plant failure, and to former students and teachers of a Sendai agricultural high school that had been destroyed.

“Many towns along the coast devastated by the tsunami not only lost infrastructure but also the people who defined the communities,” he said. “These communities are fragmented and their people have been displaced. New leaders need to be found to drive the rebuilding.”

Part of this rebuilding includes a big emphasis on ensuring future generations do not forget the lessons learned from the disaster.

“I spoke with school children about the deployment and the responsibility that rests with each generation to pass on what happened to avoid any future complacency when it comes to

prevention and preparedness.

On the day of the tsunami, people came down to the waterfront to watch. We don’t want to see that happen again.

For FRNSW, the lessons from a year ago continue to be put into practice.

“Overall the deployment was successful. Looking at it at a strategic level, our USAR capability is very good and very strong and there have been some issues that have been ironed out,” said Chief Supt McNeil. “Our relationships with other emergency services are excellent but we need to maintain the relationships we have forged with the RAAF, foreign embassies and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and continue to work with each other to make sure these operational deployments go as smoothly as possible.”

Meantime, FRNSW’s effort in supporting the recovering communities in East Japan continues to be appreciated. Minimi Sanriku Mayor Jin Sato recently wrote to Chief Supt McNeil to thank him for taking time out to attend the memorial service “to remember those who lost their lives in the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami”.

“We are committed to dedicating ourselves to the recovery and rebuilding of Minami Sanriku ... and we greatly appreciate your continued support and guidance,” he said.

Geared up for disaster

USAR 1 is a semitrailer fully loaded with urban search and rescue equipment and is based at Ingleburn Disaster Response and Rescue Education Centre. The semitrailer is one of seven USAR resources available for operational or training use in FRNSW. It carries equipment as ordinary as a garden spade, and equipment as specialised as the Entry Link Camera, the Delsar Life Detector and the Wohler Pipe Camera.



USAR officer using an Entry Link Camera

Entry Link Camera

This purpose-built camera picks up video, audio and temperature information which is transmitted via microwaves to the receiving antenna. The antenna can be 15km away in ideal conditions but more typically is around 1.5km away. Audio and video information is fed into a hard disk and recorded or burnt onto CD or DVD. From the hard drive, the audio and video is fed into a monitor that displays it for the incident management team to view. This enables specialists to advise rescue crews from the safety of the command centre.

The camera emits a red laser light that enables accurate positioning to capture the desired image, as there is no viewfinder. The laser also indicates what surface is being targeted and measures its temperature. The camera weighs about a kilogram and is powered by rechargeable batteries.

Delsar Life Detector

This purpose-built acoustic and seismic listening device is designed to detect signs of life in a collapsed structure or similar environment. It listens for noises made by people trapped in rubble.

It also enables rescuers to talk with those who are trapped via a sausage-shaped microphone/speaker that can be lowered into voids.

The detector is extremely sensitive – at its highest sensitivity level, the impact of half a toothpick dropped from a height of 15cm at one end of a table can be heard by a sensor at the other end of the table at an uncomfortably loud volume for operators. However its strength can also be its weakness. During the rescue attempt in Christchurch recently, the detector couldn't be used because vibrations from machinery in an adjacent street were being amplified and drowning out any signs of life.

The Delsar kit comes with six seismic detectors, two headphones (because two heads are better than one!), cables to join the detectors on the rubble pile, and ground spikes and magnets to help in positioning the detectors. It is battery operated and easy to transport over a rubble pile.

The Delsar works in two different modes:

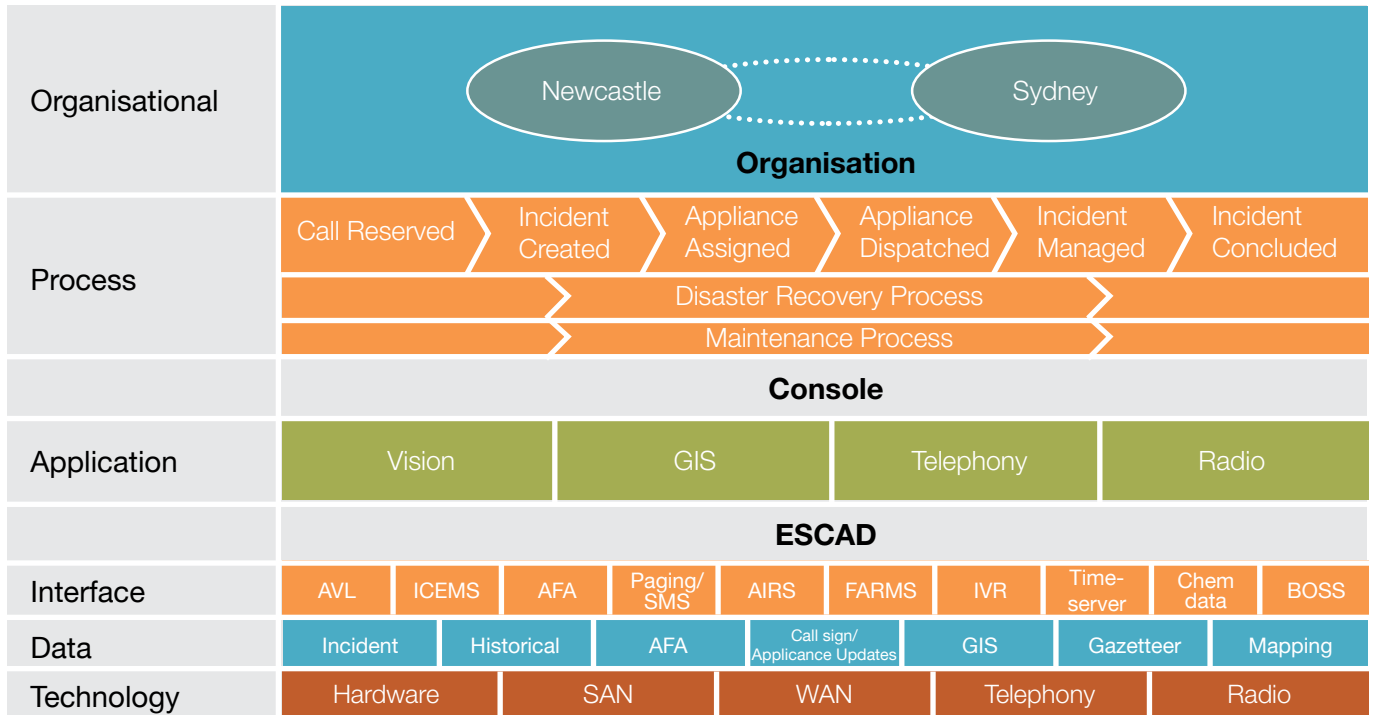
- in victim detection mode, its purpose is to find any trapped people quickly thus allowing the greatest possible area to be tested. In this mode, the detectors are arranged in a straight line on the rubble pile
- in victim location mode, its purpose is to find the best place to start debris removal in the rubble in order to rescue trapped people who have been located. In this mode, the detectors are arranged in a circle.

Wohler Pipe Camera

This small camera is the size of a ping pong ball and is connected to the control box by a 30 metre cable. The camera is placed into pipes and voids to gather information about what is inside, and can pan, tilt and zoom. The camera is operated from the main control unit which has an LCD screen to display the vision picked up by the camera.

The camera and cable are water resistant. The whole unit weighs about 0.8kg, runs on 12 volt rechargeable batteries and is easily transported over rubble. An accessory attached to the camera transmits radio signals indicating the camera's location even through metres of concrete.

ESCAD goes live



The image above maps the new FRNSW Emergency Services Computer Aided Dispatch (ESCAD) system processes.

FRNSW recently undertook a major upgrade of its emergency call-taking, dispatch and fire communications systems, which went live on 12 June 2012. Known as the Emergency Services Computer-Aided Dispatch, or ESCAD Project, it included replacing the current CAD, audio recording and telephony, all at the end of their serviceable life, with expansion of the existing Newcastle site.

The upgraded FRNSW ESCAD system uses the same CAD platform used by the NSW Police Force and ACT Emergency Services. “This is the first phase of an enhanced emergency services cluster arrangement,” said Chief Supt Paul McGuiggan. “In subsequent phases, RFS and SES dispatching operations will also migrate to this IT platform. That will significantly improve the

speed and accuracy of incident-related information transferred between agencies, enhancing each agency’s resilience.”

Chief Supt Paul McGuiggan commented, “This upgraded technology will enable better coordinated, enhanced operations and also more efficient use of resources. For example, emergency calls are being routed to the next available call-taker, regardless of where they are located, reducing call-answer times and improving dispatch times. In addition, every FRNSW call-taker now has immediate access to mapping and location information for the entire State, rather than the current situation where only information for their area of operations is immediately available.”

The new technology is improving ComCen operations and allowing FRNSW to keep excelling in its service delivery to the community. In addition, it has provided a platform for further improving operations in the future

through automated vehicle location, a major mobilised operational incident management system, improved incident management support and integrated inter-agency incident communications.

The technology implemented includes automatic call distribution, for the first time allowing real-time load-sharing across all ComCens. This means that the full FRNSW capacity is now immediately available to service calls and dispatch appliances, rather than waiting for calls to be manually overflowed to another centre by the Telstra agent. A key fundamental component in design and implementation of the new CAD was that it must provide the same level of resilience as previous systems.

To ensure the greatest benefit was obtained from this new technology, a Strategic Review of the future of FRNSW’s current four Communication Centres was conducted in 2011. The Review examined our operating

model and highlighted that Katoomba and Wollongong each manage only 4% and 8% of FRNSW's emergency communications operations respectively. As a consequence, the Review recommended closing the two sites to enable better management of workload and resources. One major outcome of closing these two Communications Centre in early June has been use of these personnel to permanently staff new fire stations, thus enhancing community safety.

The project team for ESCAD varied, depending on what stage the project was at, and what expertise was required. Key personnel who worked on this project to ensure its successful implementation included Project Manager Mike Hinton, Project Director John Shenstone, FireCOM Operational Project Manager Gino De Bono and various other subject matter experts.

With pre-determined attendance ("station areas") abolished, station crews will notice that the nearest appliance is being responded to incidents, improving response times for both initial turnout and backup crews. Dispatch prints are better laid out, making them easier to read and also including information on pre incident plans to assist crews with planning enroute and making them aware of potential hazards at that location. The new dispatch prints also include the strategic radio channel for the incident location, thus aiding in managing incidents where appliances cross zone boundaries.

"With ESCAD, our ComCens are now much more aware of State-wide incident activity," said Chief Supt Paul McGuigan. This improved situational awareness is resulting in better incident and resource management."

Following the go-live In June, not surprisingly with a system of such complexity, some unexpected teething problems did arise. However through the dedication of the operators, supervisors, response coordinators, project managers and technical staff, the problems were identified, logged and resolved as quickly as possible. Their resilience, patience and can-do attitude was much appreciated.

Training to the rescue



Firefighters demonstrate vehicle extrication skills

Senior and Qualified Firefighters who work at rescue stations will be able to sign up for a new Rescue Training Program from September this year.

The new Training Program was designed following extensive consultation with FRNSW firefighters and rescue instructors. The out-of-station portion of the course will now be six days, and is made up of a series of components which are assessed at the trainee's station. These are followed by practical application modules for each component of the training.

"The course's new structure will ensure our firefighters continue to gain nationally recognised rescue qualifications, but will also give more firefighters the opportunity to be trained as accredited rescue operators," said Gail Wykes, Director of Education and Training.

The new Rescue Training Program will increase the number of rescue operators Statewide and will enable FRNSW to continue excelling and improving in providing rapid and reliable response to rescue incidents.

Another benefit of the new course is that it includes self-paced learning, which means that firefighters can do some coursework in their own time, at their own pace, at the station. There is also no time limit for firefighters to complete the training, but the quicker a firefighter completes the self-paced learning, the quicker they can enrol in the practical sessions. The new Rescue Training Program has a much needed flexible approach to training and will mean that more firefighters have access to higher skills.



Chester Hill station becomes heavy hazmat

“This new Heavy Hazmat station gives ME3 zone a great advantage and allows FRNSW to further enhance fire and hazmat protection in this area,”

With the nearby M5 and M4 motorways used by thousands of trucks daily, there are many truck MVAs and associated spills within the station’s response area. Zone Commander Superintendent Greg O’Connor said that the station’s transition to Heavy Hazmat provided a wider coverage and greater community protection.

“This new Heavy Hazmat station gives ME3 zone a great advantage and allows FRNSW to further enhance fire and hazmat protection in this area,” he said. Station Officer Davy agrees. “We used to go all over Sydney,” he said, “and although the hazmat area extends beyond the fire boundaries, it’s a bonus to work within the local area, especially when it comes to pre-incident planning which is a good blend with the firefighting activities.”

Fatal truck accident – Menangle

“Firefighters were called to a very serious accident on the Hume Highway at Menangle, south of Campbelltown, where a B-double truck had crossed to the incorrect side of the road and crushed a car carrying 3 people on the Menangle Bridge. Rescue crews from 421 Picton and 93 Narellan were joined by Hazmat from 85 Chester Hill and 77 St Marys when up to 1,000 litres of diesel fuel spilled into the Nepean River. Crews from 93 Narellan, 248 Camden, 88 Campbelltown, 87 Rosemeadow, the RFS and 2 SES boat crews also assisted. Unfortunately the occupants of the car were killed, and crews concentrated on preventing the spill from contaminating catchments for Warragamba Dam.”

From Commish’s Corner No. 531

Chester Hill gets heavy

“This new Heavy Hazmat station gives ME3 zone a great advantage and allows FRNSW to further enhance fire and hazmat protection in this area.” Zone Commander Superintendent Greg O’Connor

As the extensive renovations to Chester Hill Fire Station near completion, crews are preparing to move back to the upgraded station following six months of intensive hazmat training. During the building work, 85 Station was relocated to Chullora and firefighters are keen to return to the revamped station which, along with the Heavy Hazmat capability, has facilities to wash spillage suits and masks and to refill air cylinders.

Chester Hill will now play a dual role in enhanced protection for the greater metro area of Sydney with an SO and 5 staffing both 85 Pumper and the Heavy Hazmat. Station Officer Joe Davy said that the transition from fire station to Heavy Hazmat station was a monumental task, especially as specialised hazmat capabilities require such an extensive area of expertise. Despite the challenge, the crews were undaunted, remained enthusiastic and handled the training extremely well.

“Some of us have hazmat backgrounds, and we were able to mentor and pass on valuable knowledge and experience,” SO Davy said. “Hazmat is such a diverse area you never know what you are going to encounter. If something weird and wonderful happens, ie “I’ve never seen that before”, Hazmat is generally called out to have a look. The substances could be either biological or chemical; it’s possible for there to be up to 80 different chemicals stored together in a mixed container load on the back of a truck. There is virtually no end to the combination of substances or the length of the incidents. I’ve attended some that have gone on for a couple of days.”

SO Davy stressed the importance of technology and the FRNSW Scientific Officer in the role of Heavy Hazmat. “Apart from the gas detectors, the cache includes laptops containing chemical databases,” he said. “The data provide a multitude of information including the correct PPE, how to neutralise chemicals, boiling points, medical side effects, distance for establishing the hot zone and so on.”

Chester Hill Fire Station is strategically located near a major industrial area.

When opportunity knocks

On 24 January 1965, Sir Winston Churchill passed away. At that time, he was so revered by Australians that a nationwide appeal for funds was launched by the Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies. The Returned Services League carried out a nationwide doorknock in Australia on 28 February 1965, with similar doorknocks held in the Commonwealth countries of the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand.

The purpose was to fulfil Sir Winston's wish of establishing travelling Fellowships, similar to Rhodes Scholarships, to give opportunities to enable ordinary people from the participating countries to travel overseas to meet people and to learn.

This one-day doorknock is still the greatest one day doorknock in Australian history raising more than \$1.82 million (\$20.9 million in today's value). By the time the contributions and pledges from the Commonwealth and State Governments, Australian companies, institutions and individuals had been collected, the amount raised had more than doubled to \$4.4 million (\$50.7 million in today's value).

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust was established to administer not only the funds raised by the 1965 Appeal, but also the Churchill Fellowship award scheme. To be successful in applying, a Churchill Fellow must:

- propose a suitable study program in which it can be shown that overseas study is essential in order to gain a better understanding of a particular issue
- the program being studied, if implemented upon return to Australia, will have worthwhile benefits to the broader Australian community
- upon return from the study program, the Churchill Fellow has the ability and determination to implement change within the Australian community.

Every year the Governor of NSW presents around 26 Fellowships to NSW recipients. In 1978, former Chief Officer Bill Reay was the first member of the then NSW Fire Brigades to be awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study hospital fire prevention and safety programs in the United Kingdom. It was a further 14 years before another firefighter, Ian Krimmer, was successful in applying for a Fellowship to study child safety programs used in the USA and the United Kingdom, with the information learnt providing the basis of our current FireEd and IFAP programs.

Ian was keen for other firefighters to share the amazing experience of travelling overseas as a Churchill Fellow and ever since has actively promoted and assisted firefighters in applying for Fellowships. Although highly competitive, a number of NSW firefighters have now successfully completed overseas studies as Churchill Fellows: Chief Officer Bill Reay (1978), Assistant Commissioner Brett Hume (1991), Superintendent Ian Krimmer (1992), Station Officer Bill Clifford (1994), Commissioner Greg Mullins (1995), Superintendent John Neely (1997), Senior Firefighter Jim Casey (2008), Senior Firefighter Anthony Hatch (2009), Qualified Firefighter Grant Harper (2009), Senior Firefighter Shannon Crofton (2011) and Station Officer Morgan Cook (2012). Firefighters interested in applying for a Fellowship are encouraged to contact Ian Krimmer, Vice President of the NSW Churchill Fellows Association, for further information.



FRNSW all a-twitter

Use of social media in Australia continues to grow rapidly, transforming the way people, network and communities connect and engage.

At the start of May 2012, there were 10.9 million Facebook users nationally, with more than half of all Australians (51.5%) having Facebook accounts. (Google Adplanner reported 13 million unique Australian visitors [UAVs] to Facebook; the difference between user numbers and UAVs is likely users logging in from multiple locations – home, work, school etc.) At the same time Twitter users had increased to 1.8 million and YouTube users to 11.0 million.

Social media can be a valuable tool for promoting FRNSW's role and activities in emergency management, engaging with local communities and disseminating safety messages. Staff members can also participate in communities of practice relevant to their roles. FRNSW employees and business units are encouraged to consider using social media where appropriate in carrying out their duties to achieve corporate objectives and priorities.

However, there are also significant potential risks for both individuals and the FRNSW in use of social media, particularly because of the newness of these tools and their rapid ongoing evolution. A FRNSW social media policy is currently under development and will be released shortly. This will assist staff in knowing what conduct is acceptable in these new mediums of communication. Implementing the requirements of this policy will help to minimise these risks.

In the second half of 2011, FRNSW began establishing a significant presence on social media networks. Regular updates were posted on its Twitter and Facebook accounts, allowing the organisation to engage with the community through these channels. Both media were also unblocked internally to staff, allowing access to these on FRNSW's computer network.

FRNSW's YouTube site was redeveloped and more videos added, and this site was also unblocked to staff (although Youtube generally remains blocked at present for bandwidth reasons). As at 14 May 2012 FRNSW's Twitter account had 2588 followers, its Facebook site had 7,888 likes and its YouTube site had received 46,958 views of its 46 videos.

In addition, FRNSW social media channels have been actively used for key campaigns/promotions, including the statue/home fire safety audit promotion in August/September 2011 and the permanent firefighter recruitment campaign in December 2011. Social media is again a critical component of the 2012 winter home fire safety campaign.

During 2012 FRNSW is moving to integrate its social media sites with other communications channels and to adopt a more strategic approach to its social media messaging. Both the quantity and timeliness of this messaging will increase, and links to images and video footage will be included wherever possible.

Current FRNSW social media sites are as follows:



Twitter: www.twitter.com/firerescuensw
Facebook: www.facebook.com/frnsw
YouTube: www.youtube.com/firerescuensw
Google+: <http://bit.ly/xVLRdh>
Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/frnsw

Several other FRNSW business units or FRNSW-related activities are also operating on social media including CFUs, the Firefighter Championships and annual events like the '400 in 4' fundraising ride.



Smoke on the water



A FRNSW firefighter “extinguishes” the boat fire

Firefighters raced to the Royal Motor Yacht Club at Pittwater as thick blue and orange smoke poured from valuable yachts. Three motorboats were apparently engulfed in flames, with one burning through its moorings and drifting out into the bay, potentially creating havoc for other craft. Meanwhile, marina staff were trapped at the end of one of the finger wharves.

That was the scene that greeted firefighters one sunny morning in late March.

However there were no real flames. The smoke, thick but harmless, came from three large smoke machines and orange smoke bombs, produced by Adam Campbell from Hazmat and Mark Langdon from Comsafe. This very realistic exercise was planned by ME2 C platoon, to simulate a fire in the challenging environment of a marina.

Station Officer Steve Collins led 6 Mona Vale, the first crew to arrive, and immediately set up the incident. Firefighters Daniel Bennell and Frank Gates from Mona Vale, and Matthew Hardman and James Tierney from 60 Avalon, deployed along the wharf and attacked the fire with hoselines.

The exercise was a good example of how FRNSW can use direct lines of communication with other agencies to lead a coordinated response.

Firefighters Paul Frankham and Glenn Lovelace from 68 Narrabeen boarded an RFS boat from Scotland Island and began a concentrated attack from the water. FRNSW firefighters also worked side-by-side with the RFS, NSW Water Police, and Roads and Maritime to ensure all people were evacuated or rescued in a timely manner.

Inspector Ron James from ME2 quickly arrived to form an incident management team, acting as Incident Controller with Inspector Wayne Reeve from the RFS as Operations Officer. Station Officer Peter Newton from Avalon became Safety Officer, and Station Officer Barney Fenasse from Narrabeen established a Rapid Intervention Team, set up a rehab area and corralled rescued marina staff to a safe area for first aid.

With his previous experience and dulcet tones, Station Officer Ken West from 61 Lane Cove was Communications Operator for the

exercise, while Firefighters Andrew Gore, Christopher Bennett and Todd Delaney hooked into the booster system and helped out with the myriad odd jobs that these exercises always entail.

Once the “fire” had been extinguished, boxes of oranges were dropped into the water around the boats, marking the footprint of a hazardous spill that comes with these fires. The oranges drifted with the wind and tides, but were contained by the Hazmat Otter team of Inspector Steve Moran and Firefighters Andrew Johnson and David Wilson, with help from the RFS boat from Elvina Bay.

Representatives from the Boating Industry Association also came to observe. FRNSW’s ComSafe and the RFS have worked with the Boating Industry Association to develop a training and support package for fire wardens and key staff at marinas. This Fire Safety Management pilot program was rolled out at the Royal Motor Yacht Club in 2011.

“Marina staff came from all over Pittwater and surrounding areas to participate in the exercise, and it’s great that marina operators take safety seriously,” Superintendent Kel McNamara said. “Special thanks should go to the Yacht Club’s Manager, Peter Moxham, for his proactive participation and eagerness to make the exercise a success.”

Flammable fibreglass

Boat builders favour fibreglass because it is light, strong, and can be moulded into the shape of a boat hull quickly and cheaply. However the resins that bind the glass fibres also make modern yachts highly flammable. The smoke is not only highly toxic, it can also be so thick and black that visibility is reduced to zero, even in the outdoor environment of a marina.

Rescuing large animals – a jumbo-sized task

Story by: Senior Firefighter Anthony Hatch



As a fulltime firefighter with FRNSW and a SES rescue operator on my days off, you go to many animal rescues a horse stuck up a tree, a cow in a swimming pool, the circus trailer tipped over on the freeway with an elephant and giraffe stuck inside, just the usual stuff!!

We turn up and everyone says, “Thank goodness you’re here” and expects that we know what to do. Truth is, in Australia Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue (TLAER) is normally undertaken by well-meaning rescuers working with no specialised equipment and no real training in this area at all.

Unfortunately, this approach has led to a number of rescuers and animals being injured. One rescue involving a cow in a dam went horribly wrong when a co-worker of mine was kicked by the cow and almost had his leg broken. He could have been killed.

After searching, I found that people in the USA and the UK were teaching TLAER, but not here in Australia.

I made contact with some of these and they all helped me by sending photos, manuals and information,

but I couldn’t do the hands-on learning and ask the many questions that I wanted answered.

So I applied for a Churchill Fellowship and was thrilled to be accepted. The next thing I knew, I was on a plane heading around the world to study large animal rescue!

I met amazing people like John and Deb Fox who have set up an animal rescue team in Felton, California where they train firefighters in animal rescue. I learnt how to rescue a horse from the bottom of a steep cliff; how to get an animal out of an overturned trailer safely; but most importantly, how to do all this with only the equipment we carry on our fire appliances back home in Australia.

The next stop was San Diego Zoo in California, to work alongside some of

the most highly regarded veterinarians and animal keepers in the world. Here I learnt about sedating VERY large animals including giraffes, rhinoceroses and elephants. I watched anaesthetisation and surgery on a fully grown elephant suffering from a toothache, followed by the not-so-easy task of getting him back on his feet again!

After that, it was off to Kentucky to meet Drs Tomas and Rebecca Gimenez who run Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue, a training company. Rebecca even pulled a few strings and took me to a top secret building which I can’t tell you about, but it was remarkably shaped like a pentagon. There I was introduced to a vet who works with the American Special Forces Teams looking after animals such as bomb dogs and transport donkeys. That might come in handy if I ever have to rescue a horse that has been shot (a distinct possibility in some areas of Sydney in which I have worked).

Then it was into another advanced course in TLAER where I learnt to get horses and cows out of bogs, dams and septic tanks (now that’s a crappy job). One of the most interesting lessons was the advanced technique of lifting a horse with a helicopter when all other options were not suitable. As we are all aware, recently there have been major floods across Australia. Many animals trapped by rising floodwater could be saved using this method but it will require buying a special lifting sling for this to happen. Keep an eye on the sky because you may just see the first horse in Australia to fly under a helicopter one day.

The next leg of the learning experience was in England with Jim Green, the Animal Rescue Specialist from Hampshire Fire & Rescue. As you would expect with all the rain in England there are lots of heavy animals



A high level of skill is required when conducting large animal rescues

getting stuck in mud all over the countryside. For a month I responded with the team to lots of different rescues but the one that makes every Australian laugh was a call to 20 European carp fish in a puddle. I will say no more about that other than it was not a joke.

I was also invited to meet the veterinarians responsible for the Queen's Horses, the Household Cavalry at Buckingham Palace and the King's Troop. Not a bad place to be invited to for a cup of tea if you're over that way. They were right; just mention you are a Churchill Fellow and it does open up some very impressive doors.

One of the most fascinating things I found out was that the London Fire Brigade's Animal Rescue Specialists actually teach vets across the UK how to rescue large animals during a four-day intensive course. I was invited to help teach on one of these courses at Cambridge University.

Where to from here? Well now the biggest part of my Churchill Fellowship is doing something with what I have learnt. I now owe so much to the Churchill Trust and the Australian community for the valuable opportunity they have given me.

The easy bit is writing training packages and developing courses that

we can teach to rescue operators, veterinarians, RSPCA officers and animal owners across Australia. The hardest bit is raising the money and paying for the equipment that is required to undertake this training. One horse training mannequin costs \$10,000 alone, and the lifting slings can be thousands of dollars as well.

After reading my Churchill Fellowship Report, the Australian Veterinary Association invited me to be a guest speaker and presenter at their national conference in South Australia in 2010, and also asked if I could conduct a number of training workshops at universities around Australia.

These workshops were attended by vets as well as members of the Mounted Police, SES, RSPCA and officers from other state fire & rescue services. All participants enjoyed the hands-on workshops and places on upcoming courses are keenly sought.

Some people say to me: "Why bother, it's just a horse or a cow?" Well, a race horse can cost over one million dollars. But just as important is when a 12-year-old girl's pony is stuck in a dam and she looks up at me with tears running down her cheeks and says: "Please don't let my horse die". To her, that pony is worth a lot more than a million dollars.

Gloucester – bigger and better

A major refurbishment completed earlier this year increased the size of Gloucester Fire Station by 65%.

The \$702,000 upgrade included another engine bay, allowing the station's second appliance to be parked onsite.

There is a new training area and mess room, more storage for personal protective clothing, and a renovated operations room and office area. A new rainwater tank is connected to the new shower and toilet area.

The State Member for the Upper Hunter, George Souris, officially opened the renovations on 2 March with FRNSW Commissioner Greg Mullins and Gloucester Shire Council Mayor Geoff Slack.

\$720,000 upgrade

65% increase in size



Firefighters get top gong

In this year's Queen's Birthday Honours List, five members of FRNSW were recognised for their exceptional efforts and achievements over many years of service. The Australian Fire Service Medal was awarded to Superintendent Bob Alexander, Education and Training (formerly of FIRU); Inspector Wayne Buxton, City of Sydney Fire Station; Station Officer Bruce Cameron, Regentville Fire Station; Captain Kevin Ryan, Bathurst Fire Station and Captain Bob Crawford, Kyogle Fire Station.

Inspector Wayne Buxton has given 45 years of service as a firefighter and has been a leader and mentor to aspiring young firefighters and is sought by more senior staff for his wise counsel. Following several tragic fires in backpacker premises, Inspector Buxton spearheaded an investigative taskforce which led to new and revised fire safety regulations for these types of accommodation being introduced across NSW.

Superintendent Bob Alexander has served for 38 years. Until recently, he had State-wide responsibility for implementing and auditing fire investigation training ranging from recruit level to specialist full-time investigators within FRNSW. He also often trained other agencies such as NSW Police, interstate fire services and the Federal Police. Inspector Alexander has assisted the Federal Police undertake fire investigation training for Police Officers from Iraq, and has conducted fire investigation training in Indonesia and the Solomon Islands. Inspector Alexander has frequently been the lead fire investigator at high profile or complex investigations here in NSW, interstate and overseas. He has now undertaken a new role in FRNSW's Education and Training Directorate.

Station Officer Bruce Cameron has served as a firefighter for 32 years and has previously received several commendations for his actions at large bushfires at Terrey Hills and Katoomba. Following the tragic 2004 Boxing Day tsunami in Indonesia, Bruce was deployed to Bandah Aceh where, under atrocious conditions he provided logistic support to the Australian medical team. In 2012 he was deployed to New Zealand following the devastating earthquake where led the Task Force in the rescue of the only live victim from the collapsed CTV Building. He has been instrumental in developing urban search and rescue training packages for all emergency service personnel.

Captain Robert Crawford has served as a firefighter for 46 years. At age 19 he was appointed Captain of Kyogle Fire Brigade, a position he still holds today, and was the youngest firefighter to ever achieve such a rank. He has provided countless community safety messages and local education programs to Kyogle and surrounding community throughout his career and has keenly supported many community groups. Under his leadership, his crew regularly attends local businesses, schools, nursing homes, factories and shops to promote fire safety.

Captain Kevin Ryan has provided 43 years of service to FRNSW and the NSW community. As Captain of Bathurst Brigade, one of the busiest fire stations in western NSW, he has steered the local retained firefighter crews through several vital service delivery changes, including the establishment of new fire station premises in Bathurst. He is a key driving force within the Firefighter Championships Association, where he has held the position of Executive Councillor since 1990. He has attended every Championship since 1970 and his dedication to this Association has helped develop the skills of thousands of retained firefighters from across NSW and interstate.



Commissioner Mullins (2nd from left) congratulates Capt Mervyn Reed, Chief Supt Murgatroyd, and SO Tony Camilleri on receiving AFSMs

Congratulations to **Chief Superintendent Peter Murgatroyd**, Area Commander Regional North, Station Officer Tony Camilleri, Wollongong Fire Station, and Captain Merv Reed from Tocumwal Fire Station who all received the Australian Fire Service Medal in this year's Australia Day Honours. The trio have had long and distinguished careers serving the community through FRNSW with a total of 98 years of service between them.

Chief Superintendent Murgatroyd has given more than three decades of outstanding service in southwestern Sydney and northern NSW. He provided leadership to firefighters during the 2005 Macquarie Fields riots and was deployed to the Victorian Coordination Centre to provide senior executive support during the 2009 Victorian bushfire emergency 2009. He was chosen by his peers to represent fellow senior officers for many years in the Senior Officers Sub Branch of the FBEU.

In more than two decades of outstanding service, **Station Officer Tony Camilleri** has acquired significant technical expertise in building collapse rescue operations and has demonstrated a unique ability to teach other FRNSW personnel about specialist rescue incidents. He has been a major influence in rescue training techniques across NSW. In 2009, with two other FRNSW firefighters, he cycled 4,000 kilometres across Australia from Perth to Wollongong through the Nullarbor Desert to raise more than \$15,000 for Camp Quality.

Captain Mervyn Reed has served for 43 years as a retained firefighter in his local area. He worked with the Ambulance Service of NSW to enable local firefighters to render first aid pending the arrival of paramedics. For more than 40 years he has personally contributed to enhancing the firefighting skills of countless retained firefighters across NSW through the Firefighter Championships. He has also coordinated the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal for 15 years.



Mountain men live up to legend

Commissioner Mullins with retained firefighter John Kearney and Deputy Capt Peter Nankervis and their wives

Debates about best practices in bushfire firefighting, prevention and preparation have come and gone and come again over the decades. But after more than 100 years of combined firefighting service in the Blue Mountains, “living legends” Peter Nankervis and John Kearney have seen and done it all.

Former Blackheath Deputy Captain Peter Nankervis retired earlier this year as possibly Australia’s longest-serving paid firefighter. His “tours of duty” during his 61-plus years with the NSW Fire Brigades, now Fire & Rescue NSW, have not only included responding to the biggest Blue Mountains bushfires in living memory – those of 1952, 1957, 1968, 1977, 1980, 1994, 2001 and 2006 – but also the Victorian bushfire emergency in 2009 and 1999’s Glenbrook rail disaster and Sydney’s severe hailstorm

“I just like being able to help,” Peter, a very fit and healthy 82, said. “Every time the fire bells or siren goes off there is someone in trouble and in need of help. It is what we are here to do. The police, the ambos, the bushies (RFS)

“Every time the fire bells or siren goes off there is someone in trouble and in need of help.

and the SES are the same.”

Firefighting has come a long way since Peter first joined the Blackheath brigade. “The equipment, protective gear and the training firefighters receive these days is just fantastic,” Peter said. “When I joined up in 1951 I was given a brass helmet, an old tunic and we drove a 250 Dennis – that was it. My job during a bushfire was to go around and find all the dead tree branches so they could be used to set up a backburn. I would then have to light up a branch and pull it along the line to start up the fire.”

Peter rose through the ranks and was eventually appointed Blackheath brigade deputy captain in 1982 – a job he held right up until his retirement.

With a lifetime of emergency response in one of NSW’s most bushfire-prone

regions behind him, there are a couple of particular incidents that stick out in Peter’s memory.

One occurred during the devastating bushfires of 1968. Over four weeks in November and December bushfires, fanned by 100km/hr westerly winds, raged through 1.5 million hectares of the Lower Blue Mountains, Sydney and the Illawarra, killing 14 people and destroying 150 homes.

“It was during those fires we lost the fire tanker at Wentworth Falls,” said Peter. He and the crew had been

Mountains bushfires

1957: 30 November to 2 December. Widespread damage throughout the Blue Mountains. Leura and Wentworth Falls were the worst affected areas. Four people died and 158 buildings were destroyed. Approximately £1 million in damage.

1968: 15 October to 3 December. Widespread damage to infrastructure, houses and buildings. A total of 1,500,000 ha Statewide were burnt and 14 people died. £1.5 million damages bill.

1977: Three people died, 49 buildings were destroyed and 54,000 ha burnt.

1994: January. The fires started at Mt Wilson and, fanned by gale-force winds, burned through the Grose Valley, destroying thousands of hectares of bushland, threatening property and devastating homes at Hawkesbury Heights.

2001: Christmas Eve. A total of 753,314 ha were burnt and nearly 160 homes and 460 other buildings were either destroyed or damaged in the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and South Coast regions.



called out to Old Blaxland Road one afternoon when a fire front started bearing down on the neighbourhood. A house exploded and the tanker also went up in flames. A woman fled her home but Peter took her back inside to keep her safe. Many say he probably saved her life. Peter then went on to put out a roof fire with a garden hose.

During another bushfire in the early 1980s, Peter and former Blackheath Captain Ross Hatswell were at Mt Wilson, Kurrajong, where a bushfire was raging in a gully below. “We went up to the point to take a look at it and we shouldn’t have been there,” Peter said. “The fire started coming up out of the gully straight at us. It sounded like a Boeing 747 had taken off and was falling out of the sky.”

Peter’s fought a lot of fires in his time but they aren’t the only badges of honour he proudly bears from his time with the brigade. A keen competitor

and supporter of the State firefighting demonstrations (now championships), Peter and his former teammates have held the record for the suction event since 1960.

Peter maintained his regular BA and firefighting training, both at the Wellington Training Centre and in the BA Hazmat training truck rat cage – an arduous activity even for young firefighters – right up to his retirement.

His former colleague, Blackheath Retained Firefighter John Kearney, retired last month (April 28) after more than 41 years of service. “I have had a wonderful time in the brigades,” said John, who rarely took a day off during those four decades, always ready to respond to an emergency.

Commissioner Greg Mullins praised the dedication and commitment of Peter and John and their incredible record of service at a special morning tea

held on their behalf at Blackheath Fire Station earlier this year. He also paid tribute to their wives, Gwen Nankervis and Janice Kearney.

“The role of a retained firefighter is a family affair,” Commissioner Mullins said. “So many Christmas dinners and family occasions would have been ruined because Peter and John had to take off to respond to an emergency. I think this remarkable achievement is testament to the commitment you have to each other and the community.”

The Commissioner presented Peter and John with Long Service and Good Conduct Medals, as well as watches at the retirement event.

Breakout quote: “It sounded like a Boeing 747 had taken off and was falling out of the sky.”

World Firefighter Games comes to Sydney

From 19-28 October 2012, Sydney and Fire & Rescue NSW will play host to the 12th World Firefighter Games. This year's event is expected to attract up to 10,000 competitors from around the world and with more than 50 events to choose from – ranging from traditional sports like athletics, swimming and cycling to more unusual events like the 'Fire Truck Challenge' and the 'Fire House Cook Off', it's fair to say that this competition has something for everyone.

So, why should you be involved?

The World Firefighter Games is open to all full time, part time, and volunteer firefighters, paramedics and SES volunteers, administration and trades staff and immediate family members who are over the age of 18. The registration fee allows you to enter up to three (3) events* plus events like the Amazing Race and Dragon Boating. And of course all firefighters are eligible to compete in the Toughest Firefighter Alive event the blue ribbon event of the World Firefighters' Games.

The Games will kickoff on 19 October with the Opening Ceremony at Darling Harbour

The massive harbour-side parkland at Pyrmont Foreshore, in Sydney's inner city area, will be transformed to the Games Village and entertainment precinct during the event. There will be events and activities for the whole family including fireworks displays and live bands and performances, not to mention the opening and closing ceremonies, gala dinners and events for the singles. Entry to the Games Village is included in the registration fee.

So visit www.worldfirefightersgames.com.au to register and get involved in this great event.

*Note that sports like swimming and athletics count as one 'event' and you can enter as many races within that event as you like

Competitor profile

Tim George
Senior Firefighter, 257 Coffs Harbour

Event: Indoor rowing

Bio: I joined FRNSW in 1999, and I have been at 257 Coffs Harbour Fire Station for about 12 months.

I've been a rower since high school and am a member of the Maclean Rowing Club. I love being out on the water at 5.30am in the dark – it's the ultimate morning workout. Indoor rowing is hard work but still a good challenge. After the World Firefighter Games, I'll be competing in the rowing events at the 2012 Pan Pacific Masters Games on the Gold Coast, with SO Billy King, who is a veteran of the sport. I am looking to get an indoor rowing team together for the World Firefighters Games, so if you're interested contact me at 257 Coffs Harbour.

Tammy Ingold
Media Manager

Events: Fire House Cook Off, swimming

Bio: I've been at FRNSW for five years now but this is the first time I've competed in a World Firefighters Games. My younger brother and I will be competing in the games, and then the Port Macquarie Half Ironman at the end of October. I'm looking forward to competing against emergency services personnel from around the world.

Competitor profile

With gratitude for service to the people of NSW

Deaths of retired and current members January to April 2012

SO Tom Simpson	RetF Jim Malone
SO Jim Hinson	SF Phillip Cox
RetF Neil Harmon	SF John Baddock
RetF Anthony Palermo	QF Lawson McFadzean
Mr Bob Hall (Senior Finance Officer and Credit Union Senior Officer)	SO Ted Forster
SO Earl Quinn	Capt Telford Rose
SF David Trezona (still serving)	Capt Rosario Cremasco
Capt John Cross	SO Leslie Cooper
RetF Douglas Bell	RetF Shane Luckie (still serving)
SO Max Beard (still serving)	RetF John Mye

Farewell and enjoy 'you' time

Retirements January to April 2012

Staff member	Station	Date retired	Staff member	Station	Date retired
RetF A Longford	Balgownie	15 January 2012	RetF J Johnson	Gilgandra	29 February 2012
Capt W Purser	Blayney	10 February 2012	RetF M Rowlands	Mudgee	7 February 2012
RetF P Wilson	Bourke	2 March 2012	SO C Clair		8 March 2012
RetF R Brooks	Finley	11 January 2012	SO P Dodd		8 March 2012
RetF G Wilson	Lithgow	6 March 2012	SF A Parkinson		15 March 2012
RetF D Williamson	Orange	7 February 2012	SF I Maples		8 March 2012
SF S Schmidt		20 April 2012	SO S Kelly		8 March 2012
RetF R Dryden	Thirroul	11 February 2012	SF M Newham		8 March 2012
Supt G McBain		23 March 2012	SO M Davidson		8 March 2012
RetF S Gralton	Wangi Wangi	7 February 2012	SF W Morris		8 March 2012
RetF E Cesco	Wentworth	1 January 2012	SO J McNamara AFSM		8 March 2012
Capt C Hungerford	Weston	6 March 2012	SF J Thomas		3 January 2012
SF G Golds		7 April 2012	SF S Brooks		8 March 2012
SO D Garratt		8 March 2012	SF G Henry		8 March 2012
DCapt J Van Praag	Riverstone	5 April 2012	SF P Nickel		8 March 2012
RetF P Johnson	Merimbula	1 January 2012	QF K Organ		23 February 2012



Riverina Country – southern hospitality

There's a track winding back to an old-fashioned shack, along the road to Gundagai, wrote Jack O'Hagan in 1922. Ninety years later the gum trees are still growing, the Murrumbidgee's still flowing and the night sky is ablaze with stars. To see this beautiful countryside, the inspiration of artists and poets, and experience some old-fashioned country hospitality, a visit to the Riverina district in southwestern NSW is a must.

The region is steeped in history; John Oxley explored the area in 1817; there was a gold rush in the 1850s; Banjo Patterson, Henry Lawson and Steele Rudd wrote extensively about Riverina life; infamous bushrangers Dan "Mad Dog" Morgan, Ned Kelly and John O'Meally galloped across the hills and plains. It was in the Riverina that artist Tom Roberts painted his most celebrated artwork, *Shearing the Rams*, which now hangs in the National Gallery of Victoria. Australian cricketing legend Sir Donald Bradman was born in the Riverina town of Cootamundra, renowned for its colourful namesake, the Cootamundra Wattle. The old bullocky teams have disappeared, but a bronze statue of the dog sits on the tuckerbox five miles from Gundagai.

These days you're unlikely to see a bushranger or a gold rush in the Riverina, but you will see some spectacular scenery in one of the most productive and agriculturally diverse areas in Australia. The district grows over 25% of the State's fruit and vegetables including rice, wheat, maize, canola, citrus and wine grapes. The Riverina is also home to five million sheep and lambs and 6,000 beef cattle.

As a holiday destination, there's something for everyone. The list includes national parks, heritage buildings, historic trains and planes, festivals, art galleries and walking trails. Take a leisurely trip on a riverboat, fossick for gold, go fruitpicking, horse-riding or fishing. The more adventurous can experience hot air ballooning or skydiving. (See www.visitriverina.com.au for more details.)

The Riverina is also home to three cities: Albury, Griffith and Wagga Wagga, the largest inland city in NSW. Located on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, Wagga Wagga boasts Charles Sturt University (which runs an award winning winery and cheese making facility), museums, galleries, theatre, an aquatic centre, great shopping, cafes, as well as a miniature railway and zoo situated in the botanical gardens.

Then there's the wine! The Riverina is the largest wine producing region in NSW. With annual grape production of around 300,000 tonnes, the area produces 60% of the State's wine, and there are over 15,000 hectares of vineyards.

unWINEd is an annual event held by the wineries of the Riverina, and as the title suggests, focuses on wine and regional food. The event is held every June long weekend, with local wineries opening their doors and offering a range of activities including tutored tastings, cooking demonstrations by celebrity chefs, music, and entertainment for the whole family. (See www.unwined-riverina.com for more details.)

For a short break or an extended holiday, whether you fly, drive, travel by coach or train, this unique part of Australia is well worth a visit – just don't forget your camera!

Getting there The Riverina district is a four-hour drive from Sydney or Melbourne and is a two-and-a-half hour trip from Canberra. Coaches travel daily from Sydney and Melbourne. Trains run twice daily from both Sydney and Melbourne. Regional Express has regular flights to Wagga Wagga from Melbourne and Sydney. Qantas also flies from Sydney.

FRNSW resources in the Riverina and surrounding area include 19 fire stations in Region South 3 and 16 stations in Region West 3. FRNSW support of SES operations in the Riverina following major flooding in early 2012 is detailed on page 16.

Sydney's BIGGEST 10-DAY PARTY



REGISTER NOW!

www.worldfirefightersgames.com.au

HURRY NOW TO JOIN THE PARTY

It's the Olympics for Everyday Heroes and it's the hottest ticket in town.

Join us for the spectacular Opening Night, showcase your country in the Participants Parade and enjoy the fantastic **FREE** Opening Ceremony featuring iconic Aussie entertainer, Diesel, along with a world class fireworks display!

With over 70 sports and a massive social calendar, the Games is set to be one of the best parties to hit Sydney yet!

Check out our facebook page and latest video entries in the 2012 Sydney World Firefighters Games YouTube competition. Enter your training video for the chance to **WIN** free registration for the 2014 Games!

BE PART OF A WORLD CLASS EVENT CELEBRATING EVERYDAY HEROES





No 7 Mack-Magirus Ladder

The 1931 Magirus wooden ladder extended 26m (87ft). In 1967 it was re-mounted on this 1942 Mack 75 chassis, powered by a 510 cubic inch 6-cylinder petrol engine. Retired in the late 1970s, the appliance is on display at the Museum of Fire.

Photo courtesy Museum of Fire and The Good Egg Studio