

# NSW Rural Fire Service

## Blue Mountains Group Support Brigade

### January Newsletter 2024



### From the President

Happy New Year! As we enter this year, we have exciting news about a dedicated space for Group Support in the Bushfire Control Centre. We now have a space which we can use as a debrief and training area. Further information on this is reported here in this newsletter.

In this last year we successfully integrated the two new functions of Aviation and Transport & Logistics into our brigade. Change is inevitable and we still have some final settling in to do.

Thank you to all for welcoming our new recruits and being respectful of each of our valuable members. We are all volunteers giving to a worthwhile service.

Roza Sage  
President

### Captain's News

Welcome everyone to 2024!

The District Training Calendar for 2024 has been released and is available on GSB website. The ICC roster for February is now up with March to follow soon including the 6ft track roster (this is on 9<sup>th</sup> March so keep it free). Catering for district training courses starts at the end of February and continues for rest of the year.

In May 2024 the triennial Group Officer's elections will be held and at the end of fire season the District Manager's position is to be advertised.

So have a read of this extremely informative edition of the Brigade newsletter as we move into 2024 and thanks to the editor for putting it together.

Ian Mann  
Captain

### General Meeting Dates 2024

February 18

April 21

June 16 AGM

August 18

October 20

December 8

### Executive Meeting Dates

2024

January 25<sup>th</sup>

March 7<sup>th</sup>

May 2<sup>nd</sup>

#### Executive Members

Have been elected to help members with any questions or concerns.

#### Contacts:

Anne Brell

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## Long Service Recognition

Congratulations to the members who received their 10 Year Long Service Medals on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

Unfortunately, Peter McDonald's 30year Clasp did not arrive in time for this presentation but it will hopefully be ready for the February General Meeting. Wendy Horne was an apology so her medal will be passed on to her.

Libby Gahl	Long Service Medal 10years
Wendy Horne	Long Service Medal 10years
Susan Lammiman	Long Service Medal 10years
Regina McDonald	Long Service Medal 10years
Chris Van der Kley	Long Service Medal 10years



Many thanks to Blue Mountains Deputy Group 3, Greg Frullani, for presenting the awards.

## Firemapper

We have been advised that one large screen in the ICC will show the 'shared' map created by those using Firemapper in the field throughout an incident or a hazard reduction. To help us to gain greater situational awareness, members would benefit by becoming more familiar with the mapping symbology used by the NSW RFS.

The Symbology Charts are available on the BMGSB website in Training Materials.

If you would like **Viewing** access to Firemapper, then please email Peter Horn and he will provide you with a QR code for your app version of Firemapper Enterprise. You need to download this free app onto your phone, tablet or ipad.

	Point of fire origin
	Active contained fire edge
	Spot fire
	Inactive fire perimeter
	Proposed containment line
	Proposed backburn (direction)
	Sector boundary

## BMGSB Training!

Training is continuing to happen on shifts throughout the fire season when the weather conditions are unlikely to cause fire concerns. Crews should discuss with their Supervisor the areas they would like to revise. A collection of training resources are available in the PLO cupboard.

1. Try setting up the two T-card mats and doing a scenario using them.
2. Create an incident in CAD TRN or ICON demo. Use this incident to practice a scenario with all crew members doing their nominated roles. Change places and escalate the scenario further.
3. Search CAD TRN, the new magnetics and COP to try to answer all 3 pages of the Bingo Quiz.
4. Print the CAD 5+5 sessions (4 sessions) from the BMGSB website and try using the CAD Manual and other documents to revise some of the 40 'Learning Points' we discussed in the sessions.
5. Use the ICON Training Folder and work through the tasks in it. (red folder)
6. Help a probationer if they have joined your crewing for the day. They need some scribing practice. Role play some field radio messages for them.

**Training in other function areas in 2024:** Ideas that have been raised will be followed up with our Learning & Capabilities Officer, Ramona Oldenmenger. Suggestions so far have been for training in:

1. Setting up the lighting tower – record 'best practice' for doing this. Film the set up and pack up.
2. Forklift driver training courses.
3. Setting up and packing up the Blue Mountains Catering appliance (BMCATER).
4. Driver training.
5. Setting up and working in the new OCV once it arrives. We hope this will be in 2024.

Please email any further training ideas to Dianne by the end of January.

### **ONLINE TRAINING:**

**Recommended online courses** (short and informative) that may interest GSB members:

- Code of Conduct Acknowledgement 2023/24
- Respectful and Inclusive Workplace (RIW)
- RFSActiv
- Australian Fire Danger Rating System
- Introduction to Community Engagement (ICE)
- MDT – Technical Go Live (for CAD and ICON operators)

For our long serving members who may not have done any online training:

1. Ask a member who joined us in the past 3 years to walk you through getting in to FUEL as all their preliminary courses have been in FUEL, or
2. Open OneRFS and on the home page scroll down to FUEL. Open FUEL and use the same password you used for OneRFS. Find the Foundation courses and select the one you want.
3. FUEL will **NOT** open easily with ipads so it may be the same with tablets.
4. Google Chrome, as a browser, seems to work comfortably with OneRFS and FUEL.

## Life Membership

Group Support Brigade has honoured 12 members for their outstanding contributions to the brigade, through the presentation of Life Membership.



“Life Membership is generally conferred on a person who has rendered distinguished or special service to an organisation.”

“Life Membership is an honour bestowed on individual members whose exceptional, loyal and outstanding service and contribution has provided a measurable benefit to the organisation over an extended period of time. It should retain its prestige and not be awarded easily.”

(definitions provided by some BMGSB Life Members)

The definitions have been placed in the edition to guide us all as we consider:

1. The nomination process (Brigade Standing Order 1).
2. Developing criteria to support the nomination of any candidate.
3. Length of years considered to be necessary before a candidate can be nominated (Brigade Rule 1).

The committee (Roza, Chris, Janne, Paula, David and Dianne) will guide discussion on the nomination process and candidate eligibility so members can decide if any changes need to be considered.

Please send any ideas you may have to a committee member via an email. The proposals provided at the December general meeting have been loaded onto the brigade website. Brigade discussion, on these proposals, will be held at the February General Meeting Agenda.

## Welfare Reminder

Covid is still very active within the community. If you are feeling at all unwell, please contact the Captain to remove you from a shift or a tasking job.

Whether you test positive, or just suspect it is a bad cold, we would all prefer you to remain at home, rest and recover.



## BMGSB Workspace

Past District Managers have tried to find an area for our brigade to call its own. This has always been difficult as the inherited Fire Control Centre is not a purpose-built facility for RFS and SES to share. There is limited free space available anywhere within this building.

Our Brigade Workspace has been created and will be ready for use in 2024.

### What did we request in the letter of 2018?

The letter of 2018 provided the following BMGSB needs for a brigade space for:

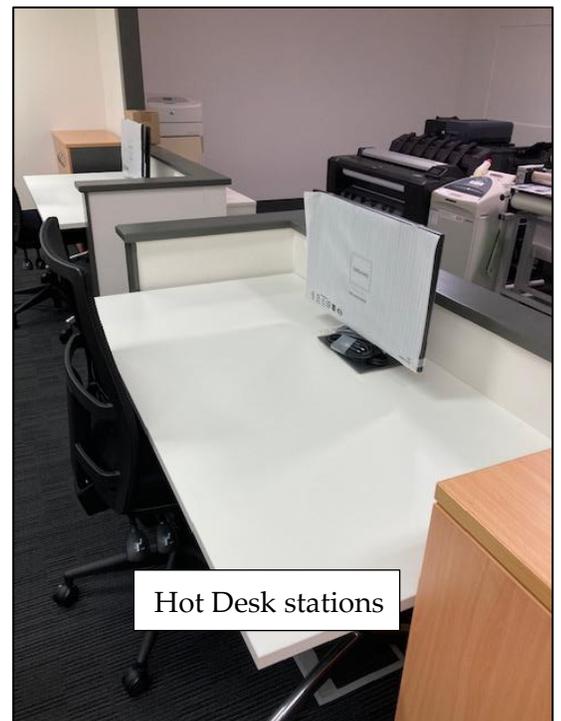
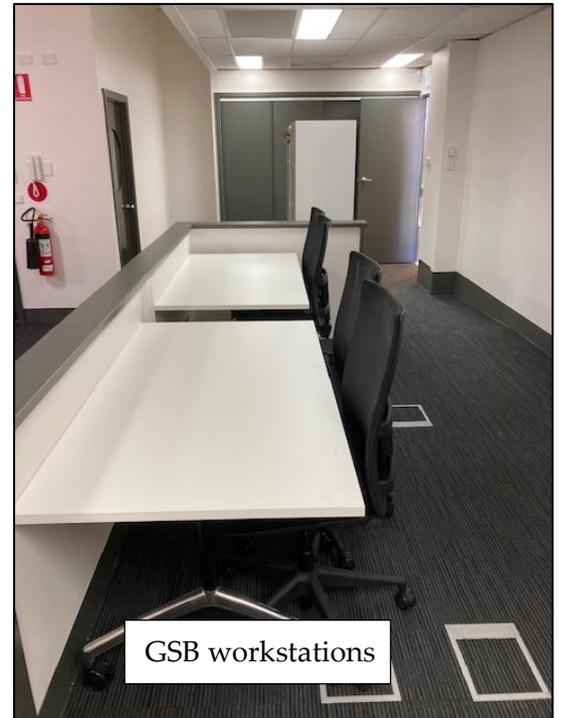
- Training and assessment activities
- Meetings of the brigade executive
- Conducting interviews with new members wishing to join that brigade
- Proudly display honour boards honouring brigade members, past and present
- Catering resourcing and menu planning
- Membership/recruitment drive planning
- Community engagement planning
- Privacy for discussion of confidential or sensitive matters
- A 'time out' space to escape the at times, emotionally charged or draining incident management environment
- Small group training sessions
- Fostering morale, accountability and a collegiate environment of belonging to the world's largest volunteer firefighting agency
- Informal member meetings

### Does our new brigade space address the needs of 2018?

The new BMGSB workspace has been set up to provide:

- cupboard storage space for GSB memorabilia
- filing cabinet for administrative matters
- 2x workstations for members to use
- a desktop computer for training
- data terminals at all desks so laptops can be used
- 2 x Hot Desk spaces available for a major incident needs
- area to interview potential new members
- space to go for a chat and have some quiet time
- 18 lockers for storing personal items on long shifts
- New whiteboards in the room for displays (still to be installed)
- The area will be cleaned professionally as part of the building cleaning contract
- GSB also continue to have to book the Conference and Training rooms and use of the Mess Area.

Access to the new Group Support Brigade Workspace will be open to all members to view before and after the February General Meeting. Future accessing on the space will be discussed at the meeting.

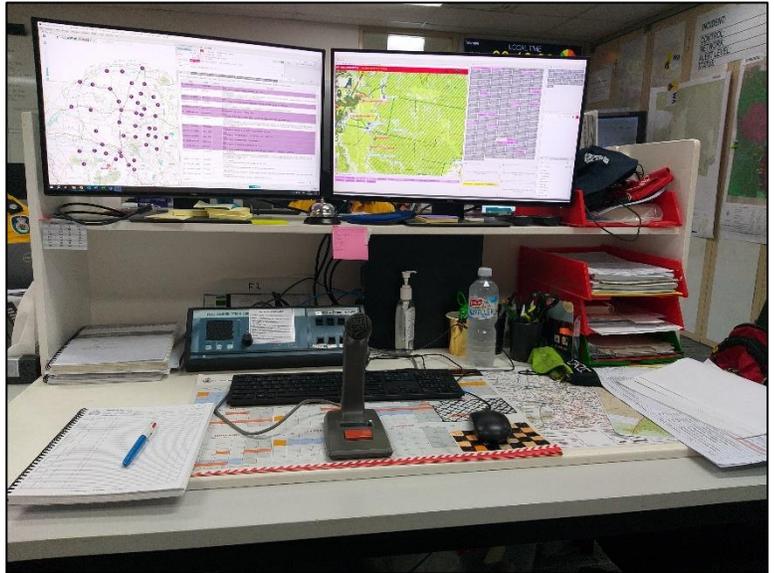


# Christmas Deployment

## Namoi/Gwydir S44 – Pilliga Forest 26 Dec 2023 - 1 Jan 2024 by Wendy Horne

I enjoyed a beautiful drive to Narrabri through Mudgee then via Coolah and Boggabri and returned via Coonabarabran and Mendooran. My partner packed a sumptuous feast, and I stopped wherever the scenery took my fancy.

BMSUPPOH, Nissan Pulsar is a bit gutless going up steep hills and the stereo speakers sound terrible, but the aircon works well. I am grateful that I was booked into Civeo <https://civeo.com/>. It is designed to service the mining sector, and its brilliant. Simple single rooms with ensuite, TV, wifi, small fridge with a useful size freezer and aircon. The facility has a gym, self-serve laundries and the best catering. Hot meals served canteen style for breakfast and dinner, and a huge selection of cold foods to make your own lunches and snacks to take away.



### The Fire and IMT

The fire started early Dec, on 8 Dec multiple lightning strikes and wind changes escalated the situation significantly. In CAD, 13 incidents were combined into one “parent” incident. (Refer to CAD user guide section 9.10 to learn how to do this). By 27 Dec, all firefighter units were from Forestry Corporation or NPWS. There were 6 aircraft and about 10 heavy plant too. The IMT was a mix of all 3 agencies, with the IC from RFS and a Deputy IC from each agency. I was the only comms operator, talking to two DIVCOM (on separate channels, FC and NPWS) and occasionally direct to their units when there was any problem with comms to/from DIVCOM. My main duties were to record the fireground weather reports and SITREPs hourly in the log and in CAD. I also monitored CAD for new incidents and talk to Namoi/Gwydir RFS units on PMR. Fortunately, there were only 3 other small and unrelated incidents in the 5 days I was there. With 3 channels to monitor, I had to stay nearby the desk to see which lit up, and switch it from Monitor to On to talk, then switch back to Monitor. It got a bit messy at one point when I couldn't work out which incoming call had priority, and I am grateful that the Operations Officer stepped in to help me.

### Lessons learned or confirmed:

1. Make time before starting first shift to walk through the incident in ICON. It helps build situational awareness, so that the radio transmissions on first day make more sense.
2. Be mentally prepared to work CAD and radio alone, ie responsible direct to the Operations Officer. Get to know their personality and what they value most from the comms operator.
3. Try to meet the DIVCOMs for shifts. Matching faces to voices helps immensely in subsequent radio transmissions, and the same goes for them in return. They really value what we do.
4. Take frequent short breaks, either standing at or away from the comms desk to relieve aches/pains and writer's cramp.
5. Don't be afraid to leave a blank line between transmissions/conversations, it makes reading the log later, by yourself or by others, much easier. Check handwritten log entries as soon as practicable, for completeness and legibility.

6. Be prepared to be served rubbish food (high fat, sugar, salt) in the IMT, or take your own preferred foods.
7. Don't bother packing anything for hobbies or pastimes, the best thing to do before and after shift is to get some exercise and 8 hours quality sleep.

## TOBAN variation to procedure

EXECUTION	
<b>Initial Response:</b>	Forest/Scrub/Grass - 1 x Group Officer and 3 x Heavy or Medium Tankers
<b>RFS Strike Team:</b>	Available - normal call out arrangements
<b>RAFT:</b>	Available - normal call out arrangements
<b>Trail Bikes:</b>	Available - normal call out arrangements
<b>Bulk Water:</b>	Available - normal call out arrangements
<b>OCV:</b>	Available - normal call out arrangements

All CAD Operators and Supervisors received an email December 15<sup>th</sup> on a change to turn-out of appliances on TOBAN days.

The Concept of Operations for all TOBANs indicates, in the Execution section, how many appliances need to be paged with a Group Officer. The OCC do the initial paging and our crew then have the authority to turn out the next appliances, advised by CAD, to get the Initial Response truck number correct.

Please note that this is only for Forest/Scrub/Grass incidents. Any other type of incident and the crew would receive instructions from the Duty Officer.

Any additional appliances required would then revert back to being directed by the Duty Officer.

## Penrith Therapy Dogs visit State RFS

BMGSB member, Louise Willis, and her dog Clooney, were one of several Penrith Therapy Dogs owners who visited the State RFS Headquarters prior to Christmas.

They were there to explain their role in the community and to provide support to our RFS staff members in these busy and often tragic times.

They were welcomed into all sections of the headquarters and had a great day spreading Christmas cheer to all those who work there.

Louise and Clooney even visited our new member, John Anderson, as he worked his CAD shift in the OCC.



## Systems Access Audit 2023-24

Many thanks to those who have completed a check of their access to the various systems we work with in the ICC. I have removed the audit from the Map Desk so if anyone is yet to check their Wildfire, CAD and or ICON access then please do so and just email the SDC if there are any problems.

At this stage of the 2024 fire season, we will not be requesting any further PRD access to CAD. Those working in TRN are encouraged to continue to practice. We have 16 members with PRD and the focus will be to support them to develop their skills and competencies.