

# NSW Rural Fire Service Blue Mountains Group Support Brigade

## September Newsletter 2025



### From the President

It was good to catch up with a couple of our new recruits in the ICC over the 6-foot track day. They were keen and willing to come again. Congratulations to the team who worked tirelessly on recruitment it is working.

I again encourage those who can, to put yourselves on the roster. The experience is well worth while and keeping our skills in tip top trim as we come into the next fire season.

Roza Sage  
President

### Working together!

Welcome to the new readers from the brigades across the Blue Mountains. We have received positive feedback from our FF buddies on sharing our district news with everyone. Read on and discover the invitation for technology training help. GS can demystify OneRFS for you if you need help finding the latest Canva Recruitment templates. This and more is on offer (page 6).

### Vale Group Captain Matthew Hunter

On August 26<sup>th</sup> we had the opportunity to attend in person, or via a link, a Memorial Service to honour and celebrate the life of a much loved and respected Group Officer, Mat Hunter.

Mat's sense of humour, support of training, care and management of crews involved in firefighting incidents and ability to listen and advise will always be remembered and appreciated.

Mat Hunter will be greatly missed within the New South Wales Rural Fire Service family of the Blue Mountains.

#### General Meetings of 2025:

October 19  
December 14

#### General Meetings of 2026:

February 22  
April 19  
June AGM 21  
August 16  
October 18  
December 13

#### Executive Committee Meetings of 2025 - 2026

November 6  
January 29  
March 5  
May 7

#### Welcome to these positions:

**Training Officer:** Heather (Chook)  
Connolly

**Social Director:** Chris Davidson



## Captain's News

My thanks go to the three GSB members who travelled with me to Dubbo to attend the State Support Brigade Forum of 2025 at the end of July. The forum was a great way for the representatives of 40 support brigades to network, form friendships with neighbouring brigades and gather and share successful systems and practices. They were also updated on the latest programs, plans and strategies from NSW RFS staff members.

As I reported at the Brigade August General Meeting the 'big ticket' item for Blue Mountains Group Support will be the arrival of our **new Operational Command Vehicle (OCV)** in December or early 2026. It is a truck requiring an MR licence. Think of it as a Comms Room on wheels. It will be parked, and crews will come and go to work in it until the incident is closed. Luckily, we have a number of extra dual members who have recently joined us and love to drive trucks.

Having returned from the Forum, with a suite of ideas and practices employed by other brigades, we are now ready to continue developing our Brigade 5 Year Plan.

This Plan will help us to identify and track changes that can grow our brigade. It will present us with a list of equipment needs to work new tasking ideas and lead into a financial plan for discussion with the Senior Leadership Team. Make sure you take up the opportunity to participate in the next online workshop. We need to work through this together.

Dianne Knight  
Captain



Past NSW RFS Commissioner, Shane Fitzsimmons was one guest speaker at the Forum.

## Get Ready Weekend 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> September

Members who are interested in seeing how Get Ready events are conducted by experienced Community Engagement Officers from various brigades, are encouraged to reach out to your neighbouring brigade and ask to join their event. Three members will be learning the ropes with Hazelbrook on Saturday afternoon.

Our therapy dog trainer and owner, Lou Willis, has been booked for Clooney to work with Lawson and Falconbridge Brigades. Clooney currently visits Katoomba Hospital regularly to support the staff and patients in various wards. He has also worked with children in schools.

The benefit of being a well-trained, RFS dressed, therapy dog at shopping areas events is that he is a magnet for dog lovers and children. This makes them pause and chat which then opens the opportunity for the CE team to talk about fire safety plans.

# Brigade 5 Year Plan

Progress is being made with the development of our Group Support Brigade 5 Year Plan.

## Plan Aims:

1. To increase the opportunities for members to be actively involved in Brigade activities.
2. To increase the number of operational members within the Brigade.
3. To use technology more effectively to support the membership and activities of the Brigade.

Starting with a current list of tasks undertaken across the four Brigade functions areas of Catering, Communications, Transport & Logistics and Aviation we have been working towards increasing these jobs to include new challenges and introduce better ways to address current practices.

## CATERING

Where are we at?

Catering can be divided into three areas:

Administration	Logistics	Cooking
Planning	Receiving	Shopping
Crewing	Storing	Storing
Menus	Sorting	Food prep
Orders	Labelling	Cooking
Invoicing	Packing	Clean-up
Payments	Delivering	Pack-up

Over 100 training events are catered in the non-fire season.

Analysis of our current jobs in the area of Catering.

Throughout the 2 workshop opportunities currently completed, we have managed to brainstorm potential growth possibilities for each function area.

The addition of Community Engagement to our brigade tasks has been received well. The District is our community, so the purpose of this function area seems to be trending towards assisting District Office with tasks that come to them, eg CWA talk on Hazards Near Me app. It has also been suggested that our members could learn a lot by working with BM brigade CE Officers so we can improve our skills and assist local brigades if needed.

The **third 5 Year Plan Workshop will be a Teams Online event on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> September** commencing at 7.30pm. Keep an eye out for the email with the meeting link a few days before.

## Linking Logistics and Catering

We are starting to look more closely at cross function training allowing members to be busy in a number of areas instead of specialising in just one. There are some members who work in all five functions – catering, aviation, logistics, CE and comms.

By getting your food handling certificate you can deliver and supply lunch to certain training events as well as future staging areas. Great tasking for our keen drivers. An easy course to complete.

Below is the link to the online, free training course for Food Handling. It would be helpful if interested members complete this course and then email their certificate to DC Catering Rosemary Mann [rosemarykmann@gmail.com](mailto:rosemarykmann@gmail.com)

Link for the free course: <https://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/training/food-handler-basics-training>

This course would also be good for those with catering qualifications to do as a refresher.

# Six Foot Track Marathon of 2025

Well done to everyone who was able to assist with the variety of tasks we performed for the running of the Six Foot Track Marathon. It was the first time we have ever had this race in Spring rather than Autumn.

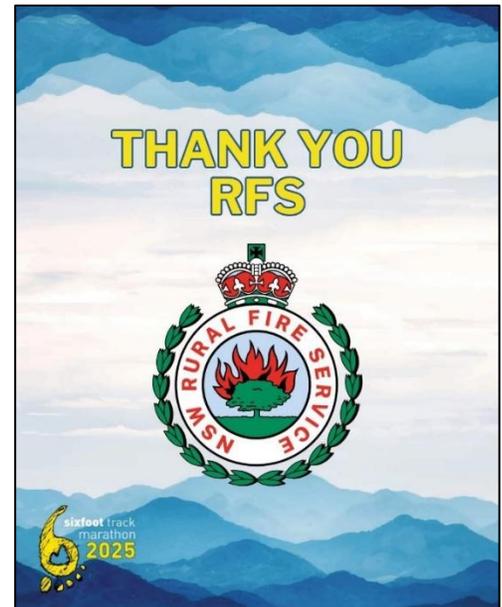
The usual tasking was involved:

- Packing checkpoint supplies
- Setting up the event magnetics in the ICC
- 6 Foot track start set up
- Catering shopping, preparing, invoicing
- Setting up the lighting trailer
- Positioning and setting up the mobile field kitchen (BM Catering)
- Comms crewing the ICC from 0400 - 1800hrs
- Catering crewing for prep/cooking from 0400hrs
- Transporting runners back and forth via 2 buses (Transport Alpha and Bravo) from 0600 - 1800hrs

Overall we had **30 crew positions to fill**, and we successfully did this. These jobs were from Wednesday through to race day on Saturday. In all we worked 175 hours or more. Three of our new probationary members also worked shifts with us all.



A great team effort Blue Mountains Group Support Brigade!



## New on the Brigade Website

1. **Tour and Set Up of the MFK** (mobile field kitchen) document so all our new drivers can drive the catering truck and take responsibility for it just as they have done with Cat 1s and Cat 7s. This document is available for all members to download and print from the GS website.
2. **FLASH – Fast Learning and Skills Honing:**
  - 5 documents for CAD Operators have been provided by State Ops
  - All 5 are reminders or refreshers for both the OCC Operators, District State and Communication Brigade members when using the dispatch system.

## Welcome to our Newest Probationary Members

Our Recruitment Day in July provided us with some very enthusiastic dual members who have joined so they can continue to learn new skills and increase their opportunity to task. They will of course remain committed to their firefighting brigades but by joining us they can be busy in a variety of ways. Welcome to:

	Probationary	Dual Member from	These new members have assisted with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bus transport</li><li>• Six Foot Track Marathon with bus transport, erecting lighting tower and communications in the ICC</li><li>• Airport lifts for OS returning deployments</li><li>• Moving trucks between brigades and servicing needs as well as MDT fit outs</li><li>• Catering</li></ul>
1	Sid Edwards	Hartley RFB	
2	Jim Rathmell	Wentworth Falls RFB	
3	Michael Green	Bell RFB	
4	Chris Williams	Faulconbridge RFB	
5	Richard Jordan	South Katoomba RFB	
6	Louise Redmond	South Katoomba RFB	

## Picnicking in the Megalong Valley

The TFT course participants downed their chainsaws and ventured back down the trail to our catering truck for hot drinks, fruit and chocolate biscuits - the appetizers, while the cooking smell drifted across the picnic site. They thoroughly enjoyed the final meal of a couple of rolls stuffed with salad, bacon, onions and sausages on a very icy cold Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> August. It was such a good picnic day that we returned for a second job on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September. Lucky chainsaw participants!



## Training Update

Make the most of the upcoming **Tech Workshop on Sunday 21st September**. Our training Officer, Chook, will be offering support with ACTIV, OneRFS, FUEL, MDTs etc. Please make sure you bring your own device and that you have a -vol email address working. Tech Support at State HQ will help you set this up by ringing them on 1800 005 123 on a weekday.

As this Newsletter is also going to all the Blue Mountains brigades, if any members of local brigade are also interested in attending the Tech Workshop at District Office, in the ICC, from 1000-1430hrs then email the Group Support captain and book in: [DianneKnight-vol@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:DianneKnight-vol@rfs.nsw.gov.au)

As this is late notice brigade members from across the district are invited to email the Captain and register for the next Tech Workshop. When we get at least 6 interested participants we will schedule an event. Chook, supported by other GS members, can help you to:

- Find your new vol email address and sort it from your gmail or Hotmail set up - untangle the emails
- Help you to navigate OneRFS to change your profile information (make vol email your main email) or find video clips, admin toolkit templates and recruitment templates on Canva etc
- FUEL has lots of necessary online workshops and courses so we can go through these in OneRFS with you
- MDTs can be demonstrated as a first look or as a refresher
- HNM = Hazards Near Me – what does it provide to us and the community?

As communications officers we work with technology systems to a greater degree than all our FF members so please reach out if you feel we can help you as an individual or as a brigade training opportunity.

**AVIATION October 11<sup>th</sup>** – Deputy Captain Aviation, John Brell, is offering a one hour workshop on the aircraft used in the field and how you can do radio work with one pilot by becoming a RESPONSIBLE PERSON. 'Top of the Hour' and 'Bottom of the Hour' welfare checks with pilots are essential. It is a workshop that may spark your interest in doing the ARO (Aviation Radio Operator) course later. You do not have to be a Group Support Brigade member to become an ARO.

All GSB Comms members should consider doing this workshop and any of our new Probationary members are also encouraged to come along. Check the GS Roster and book in.

### COMMUNICATION SKILL CARDS

As part of the new Learning & Development Pathway the old Communication Centre Assistant (CCA) course will be online as well as providing 5 Skill Cards for practice. These Skill Cards are close to ready and will be on:

- Skill Card 1 Radio Operation
- Skill Card 2 Logging
- Skill Card 3 Disposition Boards
- Skill Card 4 Mapping Skills
- Skill Card 5 Phone Operation

All our current Comms members have this CCA qualification. They are called General Operators and play an essential role in doing radio work, the magnetics/TCards, phones as part of a communication cell in a major incident. They DO NOT have to do CAD.



Any new and current members, working in our other function areas can request to look at the CCA course and consider transferring some of their fireground knowledge and experience into becoming a General Operator. Computer skills are not essential for this new course in CCA. Talk to our Training Officer, Chook Connolly or Captain, Dianne Knight.



Two Comms members attended the Hillview HR to assist with the use of MDTs to provide information into ICON. A new experience for us all so well done Peter and Anne.