

NSW Rural Fire Service
Blue Mountains Group Support Brigade
November Newsletter 2026

From the President

Ahoy, all Group Support Brigade members. The Festive season is rapidly approaching, the weather has been beautiful and the various GSB shifts have been moving along, giving hands on experience to members, as well as further opportunities to practise our skills and knowledge. Catering, the ongoing 'heavy lifter' in the brigade, has been managing provisions for various district events and courses. In the Communications area, weekend shifts have included ongoing scenario training, as well as the opportunity to experience a flurry of incidents during 'take-back', in the last few weeks. In Logistics, vehicles continue to be manoeuvred efficiently across the district. We are definitely a brigade with members who have 'get up and go' qualities.

Just a reminder, that there are spots still available to fill on our roster for Comms during November and December. There are also places still available for the Firemapper and ICON training on December 12, so don't miss out.

Last but definitely not least, a number of members in our brigade received National Medals/Clasps for their service to the RFS; a huge congratulations goes to Robyn Catt, Dianne Knight, Janne Bent, Ian Mann, Rosemary Mann, John Brell, Peter McDonald and John George (awarded posthumously).

Libby Gahl – President

General Meetings of 2026:

December 13
A catered morning tea will follow this meeting.

General Meetings of 2027:

February 21
April 18
June AGM 20
August 15
October 17
December 12

Executive Committee Meetings of 2026 – 2027

January 20
March 3
May 5

Captain's News

My thanks go to all our members who worked in the catering function area over the past 8-9 months of training events across the District. It is one of our heaviest loads as we are often crewing both days of the weekend for every weekend. The minimum crew may be one delivery and dispersing volunteer, but the average crew is at least 3 members. Tally that up and it is an enormous amount of volunteer hours just on the catering the training day, let alone with the menu planning, ordering, receiving, storing and preparing hours. Well done everyone!

GSB Newsletter Items / Photos can be sent to: gsbbluemountains@gmail.com

Now we are in the fire season our Communications members will be hoping to crew the ICC every weekend from 1000 – 1700hrs. We will endeavour to have 4 crew members per shift which will tally us to a need for 8 members per weekend. Add to that the predicted TOBAN days and the heavy load will shift from our tired catering members to the comms members.

As a number of our people work across both catering and comms, I can only advise that they pace themselves and remember that family time is important. We appreciate your skills and dedication but take some time to enjoy the festive season and any quiet moments you are able to grab.

Dianne Knight – Captain

Welcome to our Newest Probationary Members

Probationary	**Dual or New to Service**	**Probationary**	**Dual or New to Service**
Isaac Ewald	New to being a volunteer in the Service.	Erwin Willem	Winmalee

Vale Rich Marschall

Richard Marschall joined our Brigade in 2016. He enjoyed the challenges of working in communications in the ICC and later assisted in catering and logistics. His heart issues and surgeries slowed him down, but he and Debra always managed to attend the brigade social evenings.
Rich passed away due to lung cancer on September 19 with his wife Debra by his side.

National Medal Presentation 2026

Congratulations to all the volunteers who were nominated by their Brigade to receive Medals and/or Clasps at the District National Melal Presentation on Saturday 31st October.

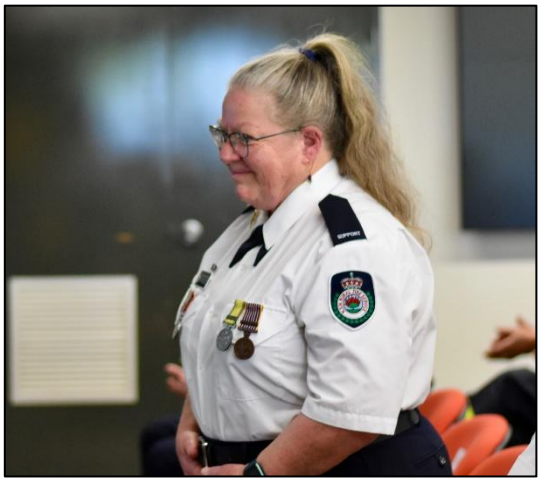


We had eight members presented with awards in the Blue Mountains Group Support Brigade:

Janne Bent	Clasp 2	35 years of diligent service
and	Clasp 3	45 years of diligent service
John Brell	Clasp 3	45 years of diligent service
Rosemary Mann	Clasp 2	35 years of diligent service
Ian Mann	Clasp 2	35 years of diligent service
Robyn Catt	Clasp 2	35 years of diligent service
John George	Medal	posthumously presented to son, Martyn George
Peter McDonald	Medal	over 15 years of diligent service
Dianne Knight	Medal	over 15 years of diligent service

















Training Update

FireMapper and ICON Intel data entry: Our Training Officer has a two hour workshop planned for Saturday 12th December from 1000hrs. You are requested to bring your phone or tablet with FireMapper loaded on it. Please add your name to the Roster if planning to attend.

State Aviation Courses 2027 – All operational members had the selection of Aviation courses for 2027 forwarded to them on Monday 9th November. These courses fill up quickly and the email provides the district instructions for considering these courses.



The Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIMS 2025) - Many of our members have received notification from District that their qualification in AIIMS has expired. This is an essential course for working in the Incident Crisis Centre (ICC) as part of the Incident Management Team (IMT). If you have AIIMS 2017 recorded in your training in OneRFS then you do not need to do the 2025 update.

Some members have not received this notification to consider upgrading their qualification by completing the course on AIIMS 2025 in FUEL. This may mean that your past training in this area is even earlier than the rest of us and is not recognised at all.

New members who plan to work in communications should also add the AIIMS course to their online training list.

To help our members with this online AIIMS course we now have 3 copies of the Manual printed and available for borrowing. You will find them in the Resource Room at District Office. Please record your name on the borrowing sheet and the date you have the document. If possible, try to complete the 89 online questions and get the Manual back within a four week period. The second part of the course is the Scenario, and we will hold a few workshops in February to help members with this section.

Some of us experimented with setting out the coastal township scenario using one of the new District Bushfire Model Kits and found it a great way to discuss the risks, issues and plans needed for the incident. This use of this Kit will be part of the Scenario Workshops we are planning for February.

Disaster Risk Awareness Expo

Members of South Katoomba RFB and Blue Mountains Group Support Brigade assisted with the Disaster Risk Awareness Expo on Saturday 7th November at the Planetary Health Centre, Katoomba.

The event provided members of the public with the opportunity to participate in workshops, explore interactive exhibits, meet emergency services teams, and experience the iFire immersive bush fire simulation.

It also gave us the opportunity to network with our partner services and check out some great resources that we each provide in emergency situations.







District asked for some extra Community Engagement assistance at this event and GSB were happy to provide 5 additional crew to work on the day.



Our IC bravely allowed his youngest team member, Cooper, to dig out a splinter with a pair of pliers.

Cooper was the only one with sharp enough eyesight to see the tiny splinter and yes, he did manage to extract it.

Who can remember their Grandma doing likewise with the sewing needle, that had to be sterilised with the flame from a match, before the digging commenced?

Sharing Community Engagement Resources

The opportunity to network at the Disaster Risk Awareness Expo provided the following links which may be useful to all our CE volunteers in our brigades across the district.



GET READY NSW: This site allows you to navigate to their Resource Hub with free downloads of fact sheets and posters.

The QR code fact sheet on apps such as Hazards Near Me NSW, takes the public to the option of downloading on different phones automatically.

Well worth printing off copies to hand out.



Sharing the Catering Load

The Salvation Army Emergency Services: The Salvation Army were showcasing their ten ton catering truck which they keep at Windsor. It can manage a crew of 6 people. Very impressive. They set up at Bulls Camp years back to assist with support needs.





Captain Terry Capon was only too happy to show off his truck. They also have 2 x 8 tonners available.

The Rapid Relief Team had a fabulous set up with trailers for cooking as well as one for coffee.

The set-up of their cooking trailer was well organised with coloured tubs for different storing needs.







Northern Deployments (late September – early October)



Both Wendy Horne and Peter Horn worked at different times in the Comms section of the Glenn Innes FCC for the northern district fires.

They were deployed as CAD Operators but also had the opportunity to do some Aviation Radio Operator tasking.

Paul Hamilton was up north for Air Base jobs as well, so Group Support was well represented in assisting in the S44.

Members interested in being deployed can talk to these three experienced communication / aviation members for further information on what a deployment is like.

Counting GSB Volunteer Hours

Following the introduction & uptake of *RFS ACTIV* it's time to rethink how we collect and analyse *GSB* members' hours each month. We know this donation of people's time is significant, whether measured in hours or dollars.

I have been working on a spreadsheet that gathers the 'hours-worked' information from three sources:

1. the log files kept by *ACTIV* and accessed at the end of every month
2. a file from Peter Horn that summarises the month's *GSB* roster. Peter sends that file to me early each new month
3. my own data recording of the Transport & Logistics callouts.

BM GSB MEMBER HOURS THIS PERIOD		
Start	End	Duration
1-Oct-26	31-Oct-26	4w 3d
SUMMARY OF 29 BM GSB DEPLOYMENTS		
Activity	Member Hrs d hh:mm	# Deployments # Members
Admin	350h:36m	11+ → 25
Aviation		
Catering	33h:30m	9 → 23
Com Eng	02h:06m	1 → 1
Comms	38h:30m	7 → 24
Maintenance	31h:42m	1 → 8
Operational	13h:18m	1 → 5
Training	258h:12m	1 → 18
Trans&Log	37h:15m	6 → 7
Other	170h:12m	1 → 43
Out of Area	87h:0m	1 → 1
AVIATION+		
TOTAL MEMBER HRS:	34d 10h:06m	= $30,979
HRS PER WEEK:	186.5	@ $37.50/hr

These are the three key data sources. The hours reported are blended together in a considered and meaningful way. The key idea is to avoid double counting. The whole thing can then be summarised in a spreadsheet and presented to our bi-monthly meetings.

Big message to all: Please remember to do the *ACTIV* Check-in and Check-out **every** time you do a *GSB* job. It's easily done in *ACTIV* and can be done after the event should you forget on the day. That is, there's a kind of catch-up facility.

We should strive to avoid the garbage-in-garbage-out problem by not overlooking *GSB* work shifts. If, relying on your memory, you are 15min off in any one-time entry that's less of a big deal than forgetting entirely.

Our Captain may occasionally use these numbers to show *RFS* brass just how much support brigades contribute, and how valuable they are to the Service. It's important that the monthly summary is accurate, has credibility & integrity. Thanks for your time spent reading this.

Bernd Luedecke
Deputy Captain Transport & Logistics

RFSActiv – Check in and record your volunteer hours.

Check out when you finish your training / meeting / shift.

Shirts on Fire

The first order for one item for each operational member has been processed and submitted. When the apparel arrives you will be informed and able to collect it when we have shifts happening at District Office.

For individual orders you follow the directions below, pay and receive them at your personal address.
To see the selection of clothing available you need to go to the link below:
https://www.shirtsonfire.com.au/collections/blue-mountains-group-support
The password is BMGS526.
Hyperlink straight to items and sizes:

https://www.shirtsonfire.com.au/collections/blue-mountains-group-support?page=1#a407ae772160dc89541ae5dba5b8715a