

SOUTH WEST SLOPES ZONE E-NEWSLETTER

District Mangers Report

BY ANDREW DILLON

Welcome to the February 2026 South West Slopes Zone RFS E-newsletter.

It has been a busy three months for the South West Slopes Zone with numerous grass and bush fires across the district. Once again, thanks to the rapid and coordinated response from all of our brigades we have kept fires relatively small.

The fire with the most potential within our district was the Annie Pyers Drive fire on the 15th February which started near the Dog on the Tuckerbox. The strong weight of attack sent to this fire, coupled with aggressive firefighting strategies employed by our Gundagai members, kept this fire at 246Ha. A great effort by everyone involved.

The SWSZ deployed a Cat 1 tanker and crew to the Victorian fires in early January crewed by members from Nangus and Gundagai North brigades. The deployment resulted in our members working on the large fire near Seymour where they primarily assisted with mop up operations and chainsaw work.

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District Managers Report Continued...

Our members assisted with two larger fires close to our eastern border, within the Southern Tablelands district over the past six weeks. Six Boorowa tankers attended the Rugby Road fire at Narrawa, plus a strike team made up from Demondrille, Wombat, Murringo, and Young brigades. This fire was kept under 250Ha with the combined efforts of the Southern Tablelands and South West Slopes Crews.

The second Southern Tablelands fire which occurred east of Rye Park on 25 January, again involved a number of tankers and Group Captains from the Boorowa area plus a strike team made up of brigades from Demondrille, Young, Wambanumba, and Boara. Thankfully this fire was stopped before becoming a larger problem. Southern Tablelands RFS District Manager Krystaal Hinds has asked me to pass on her thanks for our valuable assistance.



We also had two strike teams from our district attend a large grass fire south of Temora on 27 November. A strike team from Cootamundra and a strike team from Young responded and provided valuable assistance to stopping this 2000Ha plus fire. The strike team from Cootamundra included tankers from the Cootamundra, Wallendbeen, and Stockingbingal brigades. The strike team from Young included tankers from Milvale, Young, Boara, and Maimuru. All of our strike teams were led by Group Captains.

Thanks to all of our members who have worked hard to keep our fires small. Hopefully, the recent rain will take the pressure off as we head towards spring.

Stay safe
Andrew

SWSZ Staff Update

2026 welcomes some changes in staff and roles at the Harden FCC.

Congratulations!

Jock Corcoran has successfully been appointed as the District Coordinator Opo3/2IC for the South West Slopes Zone. Congratulations Jock on your promotion. Jock will head off to Dubbo mid February to attend the OpO3 6 week program.

Kat McCauley has successfully completed her Operational Officer 1 training in Dubbo, with her graduation held November last year. Congratulations Kat, this achievement reflects your dedication, hard work and commitment to developing the skills and leadership required to serve our communities.

Welcome!

With Jock's promotion to OpO3/2IC for the district, this opened up the opportunity for an OpO2 to join the team. John Eccleston was successful in applying for the role and transferred to us from the South East Area Command in September.

You may remember John from his previous employment with us in 2023 as a District Assistant before he took up an opportunity as an OpO2 on Fire Trails in the South East Area Command.

We welcome John back to the South West Slopes Zone as the OpO2 lead for Learning & Development and Membership Services. If you haven't had the pleasure of dealing with John already, feel free to contact him or pop in to the FCC for all your membership and training needs.



**Congrats Kat
on your OpO 1
graduation!**



OPERATIONAL HYGIENE & FEMALE HYGIENE PACKS

The RFS is committed to providing an inclusive, supportive and equitable environment for all members. We continue to listen to feedback from our people and take action to ensure that every firefighter has what they need to serve with confidence, safety and comfort

The Fire Control Centre has completed the delivery of female hygiene packs to stations across the district. These packs include 6 pads, disposable bags, and hand sanitiser contained in a dust proof container for each truck. Please let the FCC know if your brigade requires additional packs.

In addition, the toilet trailer and hand washing facilities, based at the FCC, will continue to be taken out to incidents where required.

Every effort will be made to have the toilet trailer towed to incidents where multiple crews are likely to work into the evening.

“...to ensure that every firefighter has what they need to serve with confidence, safety, and comfort”



NANGUS ROAD FIRE

A grass fire was reported on Nangus Road at approximately 2:00 pm on 11 December 2025, with responding crews observing a large column of smoke while en route. A timely and accurate initial situation report was provided to Fire Control, confirming the presence of a going fire and the immediate need for additional resources which included 16 funded appliances, a pre-determined dispatch bomber from Wagga, 2 x bucketing helicopters, 1 x dozer, and a bulk water truck.

At the time the fire was reported, the fire ground was experiencing hot, dry, and windy conditions. With temperatures in the high 20's to low 30's, gusty easterly winds, and a relative humidity of around 30%, this created a High Fire Danger environment. These conditions contributed to the rapid fire spread and spotting, reinforcing the need for immediate aerial support and coordinated ground action.

Due to steep and inaccessible terrain, crews identified early that a direct ground attack would be limited. This information was clearly communicated to Fire Control, with aircraft requested as a priority to support suppression efforts. Whilst resources were being deployed, crews transitioned to property protection, ensuring the safety of nearby assets.



Aerial firefighting operations commenced shortly after, and by approximately 3:20 pm aircraft had made a significant impact on the fire spread. A pre-determined dispatch bomber dropped two loads before two helicopters with buckets commenced work. This allowed ground crews to improve situational awareness and identify a suspected point of origin, which was reported back to the Fire Control Centre (FCC).

During firefighting operations, one appliance sustained damage. The crew immediately notified FireCom via radio, ensuring crew safety and alerting other responding units to the situation.

Changing wind conditions caused the fire to spot across Nangus Road, however effective coordination between ground crews and aircraft ensured the spot fire was quickly contained. An ambulance was requested to attend the incident as a precaution, allowing firefighters to be assessed for smoke inhalation.

Nangus Road Fire Continued...

The fire was declared contained at approximately 8.00pm. A decision was made to conduct a small, controlled backburning operation from the fire edge to the roadside to strengthen containment lines and prevent further spread. Nangus brigade continued regular patrols of the fireground area over the following week.

Following an investigation into the cause of the fire, the property occupier received a fine and a hazard management inspection was undertaken to reduce the risk of future incidents.

Key factors contributing to the successful containment included early confirmation of fire activity, clear communication of resource needs, a strong weight of attack, clear command of radio communications, and excellent cooperation between ground and aerial firefighting resources. These combined efforts were critical in limiting the spread of the fire and protecting the local community.

A number of private firefighting tankers assisted with the fire, their combined efforts along with the brigades, helped to keep the fire small. Thanks to the brigades who responded to the incident: Nangus, Wantabadgery, South Gundagai, North Gundagai, Mundarlo, Tumblong, Coolac, Jugiong, Burra Creek, Cootamundra HQ, Wombat, Demondrille, Cootamundra Aviation, Gundagai FRNSW, as well as NSW Ambulance.

Special thanks to Nangus brigade Captain Dean Daley and Group Captain Anthony Elliott for their leadership during this fire.



**Fire Incident Map on next
page...**

2026 DISTRICT EXERCISE

The South West Slopes District Exercise will be held at the Harden Fire Control Centre on Sunday 20th September 2026.

The biannual exercise will feature a number of round robin scenarios giving participants the opportunity to practice their skills and learn new firefighting techniques.

The exercise is a great way to introduce new members to the RFS. Brigades are always encouraged to bring new recruits along for a great experience. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be available from the store along with firefighting equipment if required.

As with previous exercises, this day is non-competitive and provides a great way to catch up with other RFS members from across the district.

All meals will be provided, with some give away items also being made available.



**SUNDAY 20TH
SEPTEMBER
2026**

**HARDEN
FCC**



DISTRICT OPERATIONS BRIGADE

The South West Slopes District Operations Brigade has now been formed and people can join the brigade through the online membership portal. An information night will be held at the Fire Control Centre on Wednesday 22nd April for members to attend and find out more details regarding the brigade. During the information night, a date will be set for an upcoming election to fill the field officer positions within the brigade.

The new brigade will have multiple roles which are all critically important to coordinated firefighting. The brigade will focus on providing a structure to those vital roles that are important during an escalating incident.

The intent of the District Operations brigade is to ensure we can continue to provide these important services that our 61 brigades rely on. A Captain will lead the brigade and Senior Deputy Captains/Deputy Captains will be elected to lead the following streams:

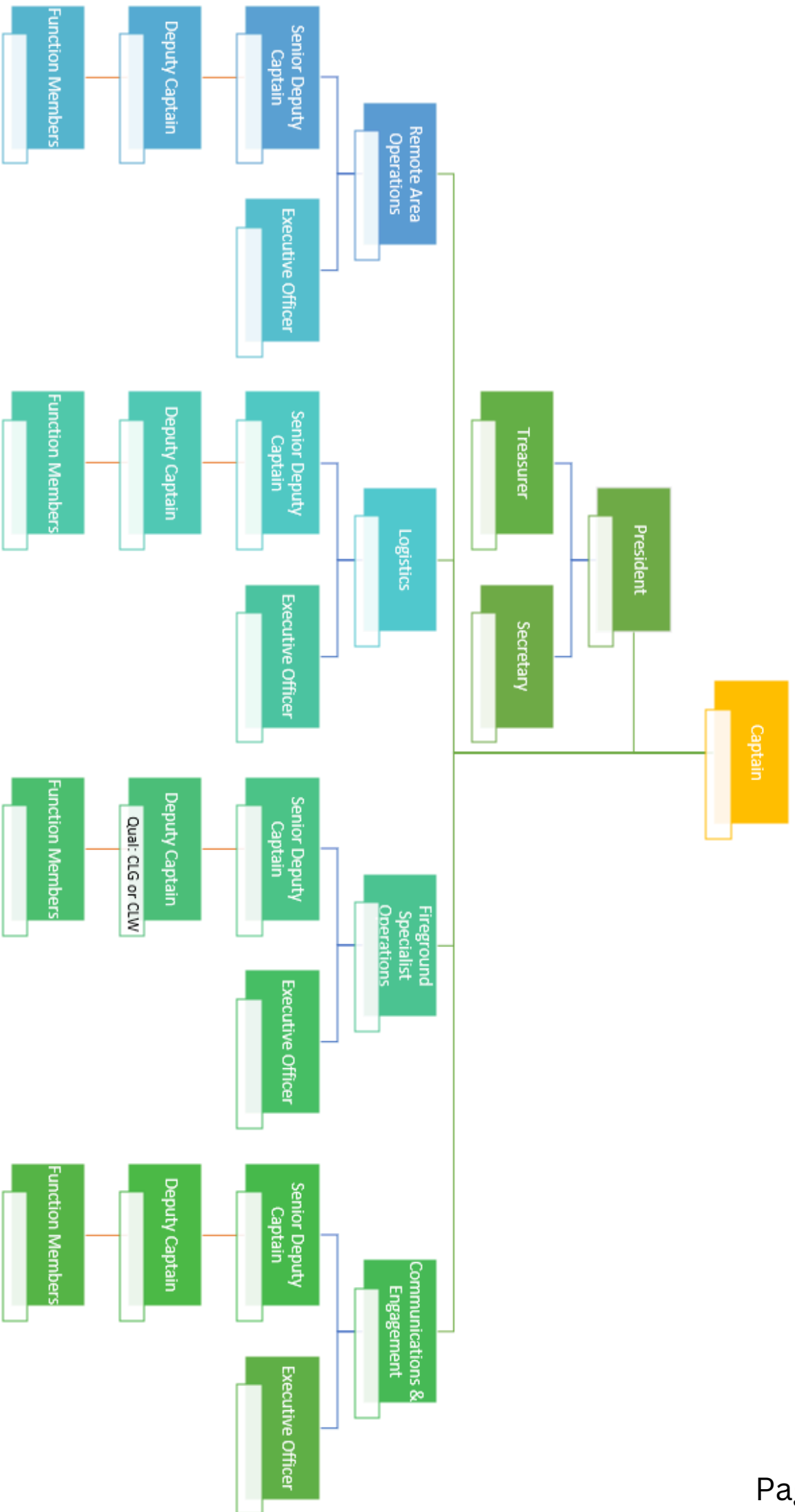
- **Remote Area Operations** - primarily comprising of the existing members of the SWS Remote Area Firefighting Team
- **Logistics** - members who focus on transporting the fuel pod, cool room, and toilet trailers to fires, plus transporting other important items to stations outside of the fire season
- **Specialist Operational Capability** - tree felling chainsaw specialists, heavy plant supervisors, and staging area supervisors
- **Operational Communications** - radio/computer aided dispatch specialists and members who are trained to undertake community liaison work during fires, such as setting up information points and door knocking.

The organisational chart on the next page outlines the proposed positions within the District Operations Brigade.

**Information
Night**

**Wednesday,
22nd April at
the Harden
FCC**





TRAINING UPDATE - 2025 & BEYOND

2025 was a standout year for training, with three Bush Firefighter and Breathing Apparatus Operator courses delivered in addition to our regular program. This significant effort would not have been possible without the dedication of our Trainers and Assessors, so thank you for your continued commitment.

Members interested in supporting training or becoming qualified Trainers and/or Assessors are encouraged to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) through the training nomination portal. We are also seeking to expand our RAFT team, with nominations open to members who are arduous fit and able to complete the required medical and fitness checks.



Bush Firefighter training has now been divided into Firefighter 1 and Firefighter 2, with training portfolios updated accordingly. The South West Slopes training team intends to continue to deliver these as a single course.

Later this year, we aim to deliver our first Structural Firefighting course. The initial intake will focus on members able to assist with future course delivery, with additional places available for those who currently hold BAO and VF qualifications.

The 2026 training calendar is now live, with nominations open via the online training portal:

<https://swsz.com.au/training-nomination>

**Interested in becoming a Trainer and/or Assessor?
Submit an EOI through our training portal below**

<https://swsz.com.au/training-nomination>

South West Slopes Zone Training Calendar 2026



South West Slopes Zone

January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			NYD	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26 Aust Day	27	28	29	30	31

February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 Meeting	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 RFD	25	26 RFD	27	28 RFD
29	30	31				

April 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6 Est Mon	7	8	9	10	11 Est Sat
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23 SCHOOL HOLIDAYS	24 FAA/ART	25 FAA/ART
26	27	28	29	30		31 Anz Day

May 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 Mothers Day	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

June 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 AF	8 King Bday	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 AF	22	23	24	25 CLW	26	27 CLW
28 CLW	29	30 Meeting				

July 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 Father Day	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

October 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5 Labor Day	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

BF - Bush Firefighter

AF - Advanced Firefighter

VF - Village Firefighter

TFT - Trim Felled Trees

TFI - Tree Felling Intermediate

FA - First Aid

RFD - Rural Fire / Off Road Driving

CLW - Crew Leader Wildfire

CLG - Crew Leader Grasslands

CLS - Crew Leader Supervision

GLG - Group Leader Grassland

CBD - Conduct Briefings and Debriefings

ART - Adv Resuscitation Technique

Legend

FF	Bush FireFighter	CLW	Crew Leader Wildfire	SFF	Structural Firefighter
VF	Village FireFighter	RFD	Rural Fire Driving/Off Road Driving	CCA	Communications Centre Assistant
BAO	Breathing Apparatus Operator	AF	Advanced Firefighter	Meeting	Training Team Meeting
CBD	Conduct Briefing and Debiefing	SWSX	South West Slopes District Exercise	FAA/ART	First Aid / Advanced Resus Applications
TFT	Chainsaw Crosscut (Trim Felled Trees)				

All courses are subject to change based on seasonal conditions and the operational requirements. More courses may run if demand requires.

For further information contact Harden FCC on 6386 1700

BRIGADES SPREAD CHEER ACROSS THE DISTRICT

Thank you to our many brigades across the district who once again have gone above and beyond this past holiday period in participating in community events and Santa Runs to spread festive cheer and share important fire safety messaging to our communities.

The Santa Runs are a highlight to many in our communities and something that children and families look forward to each year. A lot of planning and safety aspects go into these events by our crews, including mapping of areas in order to reach as many people in their community as possible, as well as also being prepared to respond to an emergency incident should they need to.

Our members have dedicated countless hours throughout the Christmas period, while also maintaining operational readiness to ensure communities could celebrate safely and feel supported by their local brigades.

So thank you, it is greatly appreciated by all of us here at the South West Slopes.

If brigades have any photographs or events they wish to share with the district, please forward them through to the office for inclusion in our newsletters.



“The Santa Runs are a highlight to many in our communities and something that children and families look forward to each year”



FUNDING & GRANTS

Funding provided to the South West Slopes RFS by Hume Link and Transgrid

The South West Slopes Zone RFS was the recipient of one of seventeen projects that received funding through the Hume Link / Transgrid Community Investment Benefit Program.

Funding of \$140,755.00 has been provided to the SWSZ RFS for two fire detection cameras and seven digital fire danger rating signs.

The two fire detection cameras will be positioned in the Gundagai area, completing the South West Slopes Zone fire detection camera network, and providing much needed coverage in the south of our district.

The seven electronic fire danger rating signs will be positioned in critical locations within the Gundagai and Cootamundra areas.

For further information on the Community Investment Benefit Program please visit:

[Community Investment and Benefits page.](#)

“... provided to the SWSZ RFS for two fire detection cameras and seven digital fire danger rating signs”

HumeLink
Community
Investment and
Benefits Program

FOCUS ON...

Battery and low voltage issues in appliances

We have been advised by a number of brigades in our district that they have been having battery issues requiring full replacement and/or low voltage issues affecting onboard systems such as radios and Mobile Data Terminals (MDT).

Where possible, trucks should be connected to station charging systems when not in use to maintain battery condition and overall vehicle reliability.

In addition, all vehicles should be taken for regular maintenance runs to confirm they are operating correctly and to ensure critical components, including pumps and auxiliary systems, remain in good working order. This will help reduce the number of batteries requiring replacement and help ensure vehicles remain ready for immediate use.

Members are reminded to idle trucks at 1200 RPM when stationary. Operating at this RPM assists in reducing Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF) build-up and ensures adequate electrical output to support all onboard systems, including radios and the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT).

Motorola radios may enter maintenance mode if insufficient voltage is supplied, which can impact communications during operations. Maintaining correct idling and charging practices helps prevent this issue.

Newer Isuzu models require a few minutes to send vehicle data to the ECU prior to isolating the vehicle. If a vehicle is isolated before this data transfer occurs, it can cause the vehicle to go into limp or maintenance mode. Please allow 3-5 minutes after turning off the key before turning the isolator to the "OFF" position.

Things to Remember:

Trucks plugged into charging station when not in use

Ensure Isolator switch is turned to the "OFF" position

Regular maintenance runs

Idle trucks at 1200RPM when stationary

Allow 3-5 minutes after turning off newer Isuzu trucks before turning the isolator to the "OFF" position

FROM THE DESK OF...

South West Slopes Zone Chaplain - Neil Percival

13 Positive Habits for Psychological Well-Being

As firefighters, we're encouraged to ask ourselves whether we're physically fit for the task by using the IMSAFER acronym before we jump on a truck. Check your BF manual if you've forgotten what that means. But how often do we consider whether we're mentally fit. These are some basic self-care practices and priorities that help to build resilience for the psychological challenges that firefighting can throw at us. I've been trying for several weeks to come up with a memorable acronym, like IMSAFER, with no success. Please let me know if you have something.

- 1.SLEEP:** Prioritize quality sleep (7-9 hours) to regulate mood and energy. A regular sleep routine is important.
- 2.ACTIVITY:** Regular physical activity, even short walks, boosts mood and reduces stress.
- 3.DIET:** A balanced diet fuels your brain and body and enhances focus and mood.
- 4.CONNECTION:** Maintain strong relationships with family, friends, and community.
- 5.MINDFULNESS:** Focus on the present moment through meditation or deep breathing.
- 6.STRESS:** Find healthy ways to relax and switch off and do things that bring you joy.
- 7.SUBSTANCES:** Limit mood altering substances like caffeine, alcohol, and drugs.
- 8.GOALS:** Set realistic goals and work towards them for a sense of achievement.
- 9.LEARN NEW SKILLS:** Challenge your brain with new skills for improved mental fitness. Nominate for one of our 2026 training courses.
- 10.HELP OTHERS:** Volunteering or supporting others builds connections and creates a sense of purpose. We've already got this one covered.
- 11.ROUTINES:** Daily routines/rituals provide structure and control during uncertain times.
- 12.EMOTIONAL AWARENESS:** Learn to recognize and acknowledge difficult feelings without being overwhelmed by them.
- 13.SUPPORT:** Don't hesitate to reach out for professional help when needed. We have a lot of confidential resources available within the RFS and your own GP can be a conduit into other community resources.

Do you want to know more about any of these suggestions or want help with implementing them? Give me a call

Neil Percival

South West Slopes Zone Chaplain

0412 352 937

neilpercival-vol@rfs.nsw.gov.au

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RFS

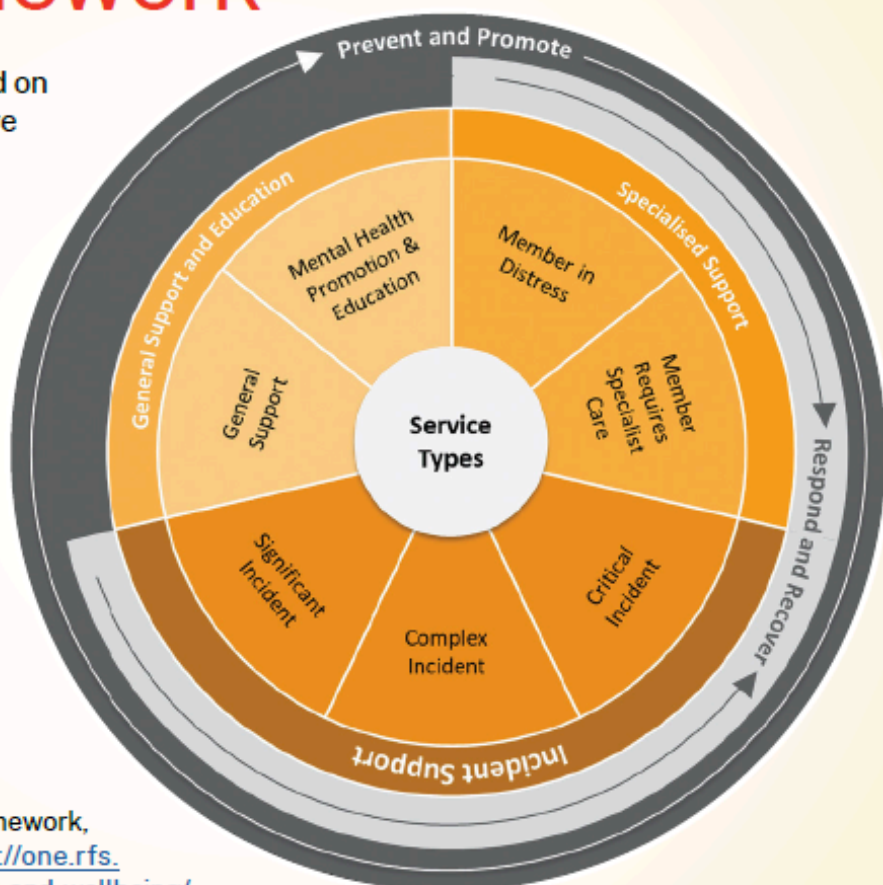


New RFS Mental Health Services Framework

The updated MHS Framework is premised on evidence-based practices of Stepped Care and Trauma Informed Care.

Stepped care is an evidence-based, staged approach to delivering mental health services. It is comprised of a hierarchy of mental health interventions that are matched to the individual's needs, the least intensive at the bottom of the hierarchy, and the most intensive at the top.

Trauma Informed Care is based on an understanding of the ways trauma affects people's lives, their support needs and service usage, and providing person centred, recovery-oriented and compassionate care.



For more information on the Framework, scan the QR code or visit <https://one.rfs.nsw.gov.au/for-volunteers/health-and-wellbeing/mental-health-hub/navigating-mental-health-services>

RFS Support Options

RFS Peer Support and Chaplaincy

24/7 access to Peer Support is available to all members who may be experiencing a traumatic or stressful reaction following their operational involvement. Also connects you to our Chaplaincy and Family Support service. 1800 049 933

RFS Psychologists

Access to RFS Psychologists providing therapeutic support for all members. mental.wellbeing@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Member Assistance Program (MAP)

A confidential counselling and wellbeing service for all RFS members and their immediate family. Telus Health - 1300 360 364