



Name of Deployment (update 05)

News and information for families

29 February 2016

Welcome

The following update has been provided by Jamie Cowan who is the New Zealand Liaison for the National Rural Fire Authority during this deployment to Tasmania.

Day 46 of Campaign

Today (Friday, 26 February) is Day 46 of the Tasmania campaign and significant progress is being made. The focus is now shifting to demobilising fire crews, rather than sending more.

On that note it is unlikely that New Zealand will be asked to supply further crews.

The second rotation started with a couple of slow days due to poor weather. Low fog stopped aircraft from deploying crews to the fire line. These delays are a little frustrating but all part of our business.

Over the past week Taskforce Charlie crew members have been “hot spotting” (chasing down hot spots on the perimeter at night, digging them up and putting them out) and building hand lines.

The crew have put in several kilometres of hand line around the fire edge, mainly for the protection of nearby farm land and forestry blocks. Putting in hand lines is a gruelling task but essential in remote areas where heavy machinery is not an option.

Taskforce Delta spent last week removing hose and gear (from both the Gordon River and Maxwell fires), building helipads (so crews can better access parts of the fire ground) and hot spotting (including mopping up hot spots using helicopters and ground techniques). To access these hot spots, the crew often had to cut access tracks through tight scrub with chainsaws.

Taskforce Charlie and Taskforce Delta completed their first seven day period at the fire line on 22 February. This was followed up with two days of much needed rest and relaxation (R&R).

- Taskforce Charlie (led by Trevor Bullock) worked in the North West of Tasmania on the Wuthering Heights fire and took their R&R in Davenport.
- Taskforce Delta (led by Matt Flynn) worked in the south of Tasmania on the Strathgordon, Gordon River fire and headed to Hobart for their R&R.

Each Taskforce has now returned to their fires and will have their last days at the fire ground on 2 March, before gathering in Melbourne for a final debrief. New Zealand crews plan to depart for home on approximately 4 March.

Wyatt and Gary visit crews

New Zealand Fire Service Commission Chair, Hon Wyatt Creech and National Rural Fire Authority, Operations Manager, Gary Lockyer, visited Tasmania to meet with government officials and the New Zealand crews based in Strathgordon.

Situation Reports

Tasmania State situation overview - as at 1030 hours, Friday 26 February 2016,
Current fire statistics:

- 45 are active state-wide
- 22 are currently ongoing
- 21 are in patrol
- 1 is under control, and
- 1 is being controlled.

There are currently no emergency warnings or watch and act alerts. All fires have now been mapped.

Two 'Advice' messages are currently in force (Lake Mackenzie and Lorinna). The spread of the fire will determine future alerts, however the situation can change rapidly. Please see www.fire.tas.gov.au for more details.

To date, approximately 123,800 hectares have been burnt. The current fires have an approximate perimeter of 950 km and hot spots remain for a number of fires.

The status of the major fire complexes are detailed below. Please note the circumstances are largely unchanged.

Access is difficult and the majority of responses involve aerial insertion, hand tools, containment and blacking out where possible.

Significant progress is being made on the majority of fires and planning is underway for rehabilitation.

Wuthering Heights Road (Taskforce Charlie)

Significant progress has been made on blacking out and there is no expectation that this fire will pose further threat.

The fire is considered to be under control.

Demobilisation will start after 3 March.

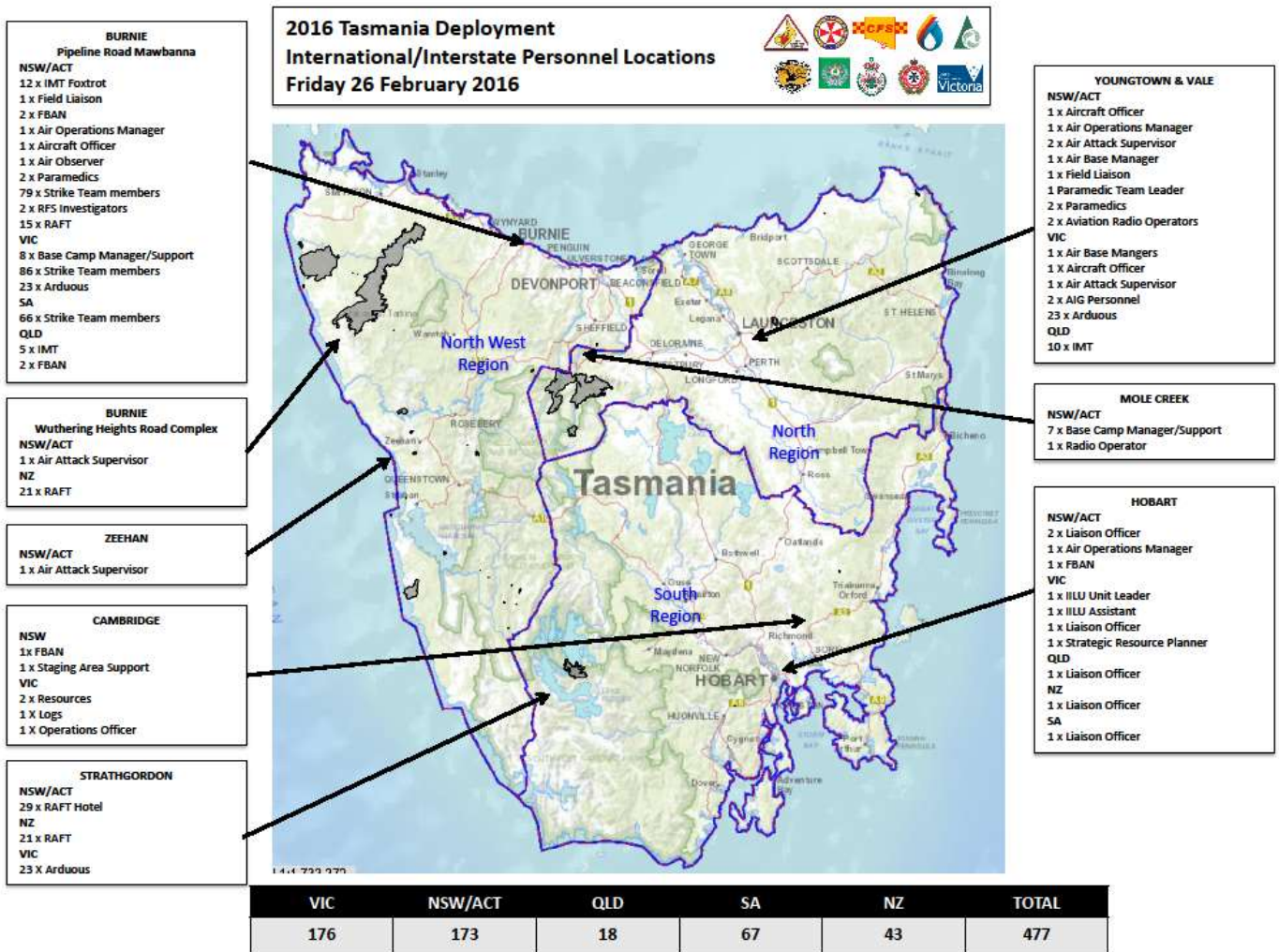
Gordon River Road South West (Taskforce Delta)

No substantial change. The boundary of this fire remains unchanged.

This fire has been placed in patrol and no further flare ups are anticipated. Internal hot spots may continue to smoulder until significant rainfall is received in the area.

Crews are undertaking tree assessment and gear retrieval.

Locations



A Few Action Shots from the Field



Photo: Taskforce Charlie - You could drive your car on this hand line the crew put in with hand tools only - and they're still smiling!



Photo: Taskforce Delta of to work!



Photo: Taskforce Delta - Martijn, Malcolm and Sid after a hard day in the scrub.



Photo: Taskforce Charlie crews working to assess and treat hazard trees along a public road.



Photo: Taskforce Delta - Tyler and Andy back on the helipad.



Photo: Art work the crews have come up with for a deployment T-Shirt!