

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES**

**Introduction**

1. The Defence Assistance to the Civilian Community (DACC) program covers the provision of Defence resources for the performance of tasks that are the responsibility of the civil community. Defence resources include personnel, equipment, stores, supplies and facilities. Responses to any disasters and emergencies in Australia are the responsibility of the relevant state and territory governments and their law enforcement and emergency service agencies. Emergency Management Australia, in the Attorney-General's Department, coordinates Commonwealth assistance to the state and territory governments for emergencies. Defence may be just one part of any national response. The Department of Defence's policies and procedures for DACC are contained in Defence Instruction (General) Operations 05-1 *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Policy and Procedures* (copy attached). This document contains details on:

- (a) categories of assistance and procedures for each category;
- (b) authorisation procedures;
- (c) financial and accounting procedures;
- (d) command, control and coordination; and
- (e) reporting.

2. Defence assistance to the recent Australian bushfires was provided under DACC policy and procedures.

**Categories of Assistance**

3. The type of assistance provided to disasters is termed counter-disaster and emergency assistance, and there are three categories of such assistance:

- (a) **Category 1 DACC (DACC 1)**. This is emergency assistance for a specific task provided by a local commander from within his/her resources where:
  - (i) immediate action is necessary to save human life, alleviate suffering, prevent extensive loss of animal life or prevent widespread loss/damage to property; and
  - (ii) local civilian resources are inadequate, unavailable or cannot be mobilised in time.

Requests for DACC 1 assistance are passed direct to a local Service commander who will assess the request against these criteria. DACC 1 tasks are normally short term in nature and are reviewed by Defence after 24 hours. Should the task deteriorate into a much larger problem, it may need to be reassessed and re-categorised.

- (b) **Category 2 DACC (DACC 2)**. This is emergency assistance beyond that provided under DACC 1, in a more extensive or continuing disaster when:

- (i) action, or continuing action, is necessary to save human life or alleviate suffering, prevent extensive loss of animal life or prevent loss/damage to property;
  - (ii) state resources, including government and commercially available resources, are inadequate, unavailable or cannot be mobilised in time; and
  - (iii) the assistance required is likely to be beyond the resources of local military commanders.
- (c) **Category 3 DACC (DACC 3).** This is assistance associated with a civil emergency or disaster recovery that is not directly related to the saving of life or property. DACC 3 includes assistance given when the use of Defence resources is considered appropriate, despite the fact that state or commercial resources might also be available.

### **Defence Responses**

4. Australian Defence Force (ADF) assistance in combating the fires was requested initially by the NSW Rural Fire Service on 2 November 2002. As circumstances evolved, requests came from the ACT Emergency Services Bureau, the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Victorian Country Fire Authority. A detailed summary of requests and responses is attached to this submission. Support ceased in the ACT on 2 February 2003 and in NSW and Victoria on 15 February 2003.
5. ADF support was mainly provided in the:
- (a) Upper Hunter region;
  - (b) Shoalhaven region;
  - (c) Kosciusko National Park;
  - (d) Great Lakes region of NSW;
  - (e) west and south of the ACT; and
  - (f) alpine region in the north-east of Victoria.
6. Support provided by the ADF typically included:
- (a) accommodation and meals;
  - (b) bedding and stretchers;
  - (c) aircraft facilities;
  - (d) helicopters;
  - (e) fuel tankers;
  - (f) water tankers;
  - (g) bulldozers and graders;
  - (h) generators;
  - (i) chain-saw operators;
  - (j) buses; and
  - (k) personnel to provide liaison, advisory and coordination of Defence assistance and to assist with planning and construction of fire-breaks.
7. To support the deployment of ADF resources to fire areas, base logistic services such as catering, accommodation, stores preparation and the personnel to provide services were activated. Personnel providing this support included ADF members, APS staff and contractors.

### Costs

8. Under the provisions of DACC, Commander Australian Theatre, exercising the authority of the Parliamentary Secretary, waived most costs for assistance. Cost of rations and accommodation provided at Singleton for civil fire fighters and fuel provided to non-Defence agencies were subject to recovery.

### Defence Training Area Management

9. Defence Instruction (General) ADMIN 59-1 *Management of Defence Training Areas* (copy attached) prescribes Defence policy on the subject. This policy requires Defence training area management authorities to produce 'standing orders' for training areas, emergency management plans (eg fires), and to implement approved environmental management plans. Standing orders are required to address emergency response and environmental management. Environmental management plans include fire management plans.

### Environmental Management

10. Defence acknowledges that the Australian community's aspirations and expectations are that it will manage responsibly the numerous, broad and diverse natural and cultural environmental resources over which it has management responsibility. Defence holds the view that pro-actively protecting the environment is an important component in the successful undertaking of Defence training activities. The Australian environment (which consists of the natural, built, cultural and social environments) has values that extend beyond their operational value to Defence. These values include recognition that components and attributes of Australia's environment are to be conserved, and where necessary preserved, for present and future generations of Australians.

11. The diverse range of military training activities carries with it a significant potential for ADF activities to have an impact on Australia's natural environment, particularly in relation to fire events. Examples of activities include infantry tactics training, artillery practice, armoured vehicle manoeuvre, high explosive ammunition bombing, air-to-ground cannon fire and the use of smoke grenades. Defence is nevertheless strongly committed to undertaking its operations and activities in an ecologically responsible and sustainable manner. This approach to responsible, environmental management in general, and for fire management in particular, is reflected in the fire management sections of the site-specific land management plans of the 1970s and 1980s and in the recent, more detailed environmental management plans that succeeded them.

12. Currently, all major training areas and facilities are covered by environmental management plans that incorporate fire management strategies and fire management implementation plans. Fire management procedures and practices are further identified in Defence Instruction (General) ADMIN 20-26 *Defence Manual of Fire Protection Engineering* (see also the *Manual of Fire Protection Engineering* [Chapter 6] – copies attached). Defence employs about thirty regional environmental officers to develop, coordinate and guide the implementation of the environmental management plans. The work of the regional environmental officers is overseen by a group of senior environmental advisers. Part of the responsibilities of the senior and regional environmental officers is to review regularly:

- (a) site-specific fire management plans;

- (b) ongoing liaison/coordination with external fire control agencies and, in some cases, the formal response support arrangements;
- (c) working relationships with site user groups and site managers; and
- (d) budget requirements for programmed fire prevention and mitigation works.

13. The regular review of fire management plans is founded upon Defence's acknowledgment of the considerable risk of exposure to natural, accidental or intentional (malicious) ignition potential, both within and external to Defence site boundaries, together with organisational capability to respond to predicted or unpredicted adverse weather events.

14. Defence recognises that effective and efficient bushfire control is a function of pre-season planning and preparatory response resource coordination both within Defence and with external agencies. Resources for adequate detection and initial response reflect prevailing site bushfire danger risk ratings, weather/fuel/site characteristics and Defence activity conducted at the site. Time and resources may also need to be committed for appropriate post-suppression patrol to avoid perimeter re-ignition.

### **Risk Mitigation**

15. In general, bushfire mitigation on Defence training areas is centred around traditional ground fuel monitoring, ground and aerial hazard reduction, response training and curtailment of Defence activity according to rising fire danger risk ratings and the potential for activity-generated ignitions.

16. As a general rule, training area management staff participate with local bushfire management and risk management committees. This includes, in some instances, integration into state fire agency radio networks. While Defence policy requires emergency plans to be in place, the actual response to fires on training areas is generally a contracted function or through memorandums of understanding with state firefighting agencies. Training area staff provide an initial response when safe and practical to do so, within the limits of their knowledge, experience and ability.

**Department of Defence**  
May 2003

### **Attachments:**

DACC 2 Support to Firefighting Operations - November 2002 to February 2003  
 Defence Instruction (General) Operations 05-1 *Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Policy and Procedures*  
 Defence Instruction (General) Admin 59-1 *Management of Training Areas*  
 Defence Instruction (General) Admin 20-26 *Defence Manual of Fire Protection Engineering*  
*Manual of Fire Protection Engineering (Chapter 6)*

## DACC 2 – SUPPORT TO FIREFIGHTING OPERATIONS – November 2002 to February 2003

### ADF Support for NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS)

Date of Request	Nature of request and identified resources	Duration
2 November 2002	Request for accommodation and meals at Singleton Army Barracks for 165 firefighters with effect from 3 November until 7 November 2002.	5 days (to 7 November)
5 November 2002	Request for extension of accommodation and meals at Singleton Army Barracks for 77 firefighters until 10 November 2002.	3 days (to 10 November)
7 November 2002	Request for increase in number of firefighters accommodation at Singleton from 77 to 260 until 10 November 2002.	3 days (to 10 November)
8 November 2002	Request for extension of accommodation and meals for 200 firefighters at Singleton from 10 November to 24 November 2002.	14 days (to 24 November)
14 November 2002	Amendment to number of firefighters to be accommodated at Singleton: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 15 November – 264</li> <li>• 15 - 17 November – 78</li> <li>• 17 – 23 November – 50</li> </ul>	--
9 November 2002	Request for provision of tarmac space and refuelling facilities at HMAS Albatross for civil aircraft conducting firefighting operations in the area from 9 to 11 November 2002.	3 days (to 11 November)
11 November 2002	Request for extension of tarmac space and refuelling facilities at HMAS Albatross for civil aircraft conducting firefighting ops in the area from 11 November to 15 November 2002.	4 days (to 15 November)
11 November 2002	Request for provision of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 helicopter for fire spotting.</li> <li>• 2 helicopters for water bombing.</li> </ul> (Helicopters provided from Naval Air Station Nowra.)	4 days (to 15 November)
14 November 2002	Request for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an extension of tarmac space and refuelling facilities at HMAS Albatross for civil aircraft conducting firefighting operations in the area from 15 November to 22 November 2002.</li> <li>• extended provision of 2 rotary wing aircraft for water bombing and 1 rotary wing aircraft for fire spotting.</li> </ul>	7 days (to 22 November)
21 November 2002	Cancel requirement for accommodation at Singleton and provision of 3 rotary wing aircraft on stand-by at NAS Nowra with effect from 21 November 2002.	--
21 November 2002	Request for an extension of tarmac space and refuelling facilities at HMAS Albatross for civil aircraft conducting firefighting operations in the area, including provision of a mobile tanker from HMAS Albatross for use both on and off base, from 22 November to 29 November 2002.	7 days (to 29 November)
25 November 2002	Request provision of one 20,000L capacity fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1) from 26 November for 5 days. Location - Albion Park (subsequently located in the Great Lakes area.).	5 days (to 31 November)
27 November 2002	Request for 1 water tanker and 1 fire truck from HMAS Creswell to be placed on stand-by for fire operations in the Booderee National Park for 7 days.	7 days (to 4 December)
28 November 2002	Request for an extension of tarmac space and refuelling facilities at HMAS Albatross for civil aircraft conducting firefighting operations in the area, including use of the mobile tanker, both on and off base, from 29 November to 6 December 2002.	7 days (to 6 December)
28 November 2002	Cancel requirement for 1 fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1). Tanker relocated to Great Lakes area and returned to base 28 November 2002.	--
29 November 2002	Request for second mobile fuel tanker from HMAS Albatross, for use both on and off base, from 29 November until 6 December 2002.	7 days (to 6 December)
4 December 2002	Cancel requirement for 1 water tanker and 1 fire truck from HMAS Creswell to be on stand-by for fire operations in the Booderee National Park with effect from 4 December 2002.	--

5 December 2002	Request for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension of tarmac space and refuelling facilities at HMAS Albatross, including use of 2 mobile tankers, both on and off base, from 6 December until 13 December 2002 (on 6 December, one of these tankers was diverted to fulfil the Ulladulla requirement).</li> <li>• Provision of 1 mobile fuel tanker to operate in the Ulladulla area (until 13 December 2002).</li> <li>• Two rotary wing aircraft (one to have winch capability) be placed on stand-by at HMAS Albatross for 6 days from 5 December 2002 until 11 December 2002.</li> </ul>	7 days (to 13 December)  7 days (to 13 December) 6 days (to 11 December)
5 December 2002	Request accommodation and meals for approx 20 police personnel at HMAS Albatross from 5 December 2002 to date TBA.	Indefinite
6 December 2002	Provision for undetermined time of 1 mobile fuel tanker to support civil aircraft conducting fire operations in the Great Lakes region of NSW (Port Stephens).	Undetermined
9 December 2002	Request that the tasks for the 2 rotary wing helicopters be amended to include the use of the aircraft for water bombing operations.	--
12 December 2002	Cancel requirement with effect from 12 December 2002 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Navy helicopters on stand-by at HMAS Albatross.</li> <li>• Meals and accommodation at HMAS Albatross for 20 police.</li> <li>• One 10,000L fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1) in the Great Lakes region.</li> </ul>	--
12 December 2002	Continue to provide until 20 December 2002: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Airfield space and refuelling facilities at HMAS Albatross for civil aircraft.</li> <li>• 3 mobile fuel tankers (fuel type Jet A-1) for off base use.</li> </ul>	Extra 7 days until 20 December 2002.
20 December 2002	Cancel provision of mobile fuel tankers (fuel type Jet A-1). Continue to provide airfield space and refuelling facilities at HMAS Albatross until 30 December 2002.	Extra 7 days until 30 December 2002.
23 December 2002	Cancel requirement for airfield refuelling at HMAS Albatross with effect from 24 December 2002.	--
29 December 2002	Cancel requirement for tarmac space for civil aircraft at HMAS Albatross with effect from 30 December 2002.	--
9 January 2003	One 10,000L fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1) to support civil aircraft conducting fire operations in the Khancoban region for 7 days.	7 Days (to 16 January)
16 January 2003	Extend provision of one 10,000L fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1) in Kosciusko National Park region until 24 January 2003.	7 days (to 24 January)
22 January 2003	Extend provision of one 10,000L fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1) in Kosciusko National Park region until 31 January 2003.	7 days (to 31 January)
29 January 2003	Extend provision of one 10,000L fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1) in Kosciusko National Park region until 7 February 2003.	7 days (to 7 February)
6 February 2003	Extend provision of one 10,000L fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1) in Kosciusko National Park region until 14 February 2003.	7 days (to 14 February)

### ADF Support for ACT Emergency Services Bureau

Task Request	Request & identified resources	Duration
12 January 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Navy helicopters for water bombing and fire spotting by 13 January 2003 for 7-14 days.</li> <li>4 bulldozers to construct fire breaks from 13 January 2003 for up to 7 days.</li> </ul>	7 days (to 20 January)
13 January 2003	One 10,000L fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1) to support civil aircraft conducting fire operations by 14 January 2003 for 7 days.	7 days (to 21 January)
15 January 2003	1 bulk water tanker (30,000L) for resupply of fire fighting appliances – ASAP for 7 days (10,000L tanker deployed as the bulk tanker is not able to operate off main roads).	7 days (to 23 January)
15 January 2003	Extend provision of following until 27 January 2003: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 helicopters for water bombing and fire spotting.</li> <li>4 bulldozers.</li> <li>1 fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1).</li> </ul>	7 days (to 27 January)
17 January 2003	Provide a communications specialist to establish a viable communications link between the Emergency Services Bureau Coordination Centre and Navy helicopters (operating on different frequency bands).	Until communications link in place.
18 January 2003	Provision of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 15 kilovolt ampere generators.</li> <li>10 graders for road clearing.</li> <li>one 30,000L water tanker.</li> <li>five 10,000L water tankers.</li> <li>one 10,000L fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1).</li> <li>accommodation for up to 1,000 firefighters and emergency personnel.</li> </ul>	7 days (to 26 January)
18 January 2003	Provide up to 30 personnel equipped with chain-saws to clear trees.	7 days (to 26 January)
18 January 2003	Provision of 6 planners (3 operations, 2 logistic, 1 communications) for the ACT Emergency Services Bureau Headquarters.	Duration of the emergency in ACT.
19 January 2003	Provision of two 12-seater buses with drivers from 19 January, to ferry fire crews daily within the ACT.	5 days (to 23 January)
20 January 2003	Reclassify 1 DACC support of 1 fuel tanker and light fire truck (28 SQN) to DACC 2, and extend tasking until 27 January 2003.	7 days (to 27 January)
22 January 2003	Extend provision of the following resources until 28 January 2003: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 helicopters, 4 bulldozers.</li> <li>one 10,000L fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1).</li> <li>one 30,000L water tanker (replaced by 10,000L tanker).</li> <li>one 30,000L water tanker.</li> <li>five 10,000L water tankers.</li> <li>10 15 kilovolt ampere generators.</li> <li>one 10,000L fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1).</li> <li>10 graders.</li> <li>accommodation for up to 400 firefighters.</li> <li>30 chainsaw operators.</li> <li>Planning and logistics officers.</li> <li>1 fire tender.</li> </ul>	Various: Extra 1 to 3 days (to 28 January)
26 January 2003	Extend provision of the following resources until 2 February 2003: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>one 30,000L water tanker.</li> <li>five 10,000L water tankers.</li> <li>one 10,000L fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1).</li> </ul> Remaining tasks/resources requested on National Emergency Management Coordination Centre task request of 22 January 2003 to be cancelled.	- Extension, 5 days (to 2 February) - cancellations, with effect from 28 January 2003
28 January 2003	The following resources are no longer required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>one 30,000L water tanker.</li> <li>five 10,000L water tankers.</li> <li>one 10,000L fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1).</li> </ul>	All ADF resources to ACT Emergency Services Bureau have returned to base.

### ADF Support for Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment

Task Request	Request & identified resources	Duration
17 January 2003	Provision of 100 personnel detachment to clear and construct bare dirt fire breaks with hand tools in remote hilly terrain for 7 days.	7 days (to 27 January)
22 January 2003	Extend provision of 100 personnel detachment until 1 February 2003.	5 days (to 1 February)
22 January 2003	Provide the following engineer plant equipment on call for immediate deployment from 23 January 2003: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 bulldozers.</li> <li>• 1 grader.</li> <li>• 2 refuelling vehicles, with off-road capability.</li> </ul>	9 days (to 1 February)
27 January 2003	Extend provision of the following support until 8 February 2003: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100 personnel support and logistics detachment.</li> <li>• 3 bulldozers, 1 grader, 1 fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1).</li> </ul>	7 days (to 8 February)
28 January 2003	Provision of aerial support to transport 30 firefighters between Bairnsdale and Merimbula staging points, and strategic firefighting locations inaccessible by fixed-wing aircraft by 29 January up to, and including, 4 February 2003. Resources identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sea King (NAS Nowra) – deployed 29 January – in location on 29 January 2003.</li> <li>• Iroquois (Oakey) – deployed 30 January - in location on 31 January 2003.</li> </ul>	7 days (to 4 February)
1 February 2003	Release Navy Sea King from support task to Victoria Government – air transport of firefighters with effect from 1 February 2002. Aircraft to return to base but remain on 12 hour notice to move for next 7 days (until 8 February 2002).	6 days (to 4 January)
4 January 2003	Extend provision of the following support until 15 February 2003: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 personnel support and logistics troop.</li> <li>• 3 bulldozers, 1 grader, 1 fuel tanker (fuel type Jet A-1).</li> </ul>	7 days (to 8 February)
		7 days (to 15 February)