



AERIAL FIRE FIGHTING

ASIA PACIFIC 2026

GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA
22-23 JULY 2026

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FROM NEW TECHNOLOGY & PRACTICES

CONFERENCE AGENDA DAY ONE – 22 JULY 2026

0800 – 0900 **Registration & Exhibition**

OPENING SESSION

0900 - 0910 **Welcome to Country** – Uncle John Graham

0910 - 0915 **Welcome** – John Longhurst, CEO, Tangent Link (Video)

0915 - 0925 **Moderator's Opening Remarks** – Joe Buffone, former Deputy Co-Ordinator General, National Emergency Management Agency Australia

0925 - 0940 **Welcome Address** – Steve Smith AFSM, Commissioner, Queensland Fire Department, Australia

0940 - 1000 **Keynote Address** – Rob Webb, Chief Executive Officer, AFAC

1000 - 1020 **Building the Next Generation of Aerial Firefighting: End-User Driven Innovation for Australian & Global Operations** – Stu Sprung, Vice President, EmberWorks, USA

1020 - 1045 **Why Fly? Evidence on Aerial Firefighting Effectiveness in Australia** – Dr. Matt Plucinski, Senior Research Scientist, Bushfire Behaviour & Suppression Environment, CSIRO National Bushfire Behaviour Research Laboratory, Australia

1045 - 1130 **Refreshment Break & Networking**

SESSION: QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

1130 – 1205 **Panel: Fighting Fire from the Air: Managing Complex Island Incidents Across Culture, Conservation & Capability**
Moderator: Mark Doble, Chief Superintendent, Queensland Fire Department, Australia
Panellists: Jay Lessons, Principal Ranger – Fire, Coastal & Islands Region, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Australia
Simon Johnstone, Station Officer, Queensland Fire Department, Australia
Michael Watego, Bushfire Mitigation Officer (First Nations), Queensland Fire Department, Australia
John Welke, Deputy Chief Officer, Rural Fire Service Queensland, Australia

1205 – 1230 **Towards 2036 – Getting the Balance Right** – Matt Bulow, Assistant Commissioner - State Operations Directorate, Queensland Fire Department, Australia

1230 - 1400 **Lunch Break & Networking**

SESSION: MOVING FORWARD ON FUTURE CAPABILITIES

1400 – 1420 **AI in Fire Operations: Getting the Foundations Right** – James Cox, Head of Product, TracPlus, New Zealand

1420 - 1455 **Panel: UAS – What is Needed to Enable Universal Usage in the AFF Mission**
Moderator: Commander Wayne “Riggzy” Rigg AFSM, Aviation Coordinator, Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV), Australia
Panellists: Deb Sparkes, Aviation Research and Evaluation Manager, NAFC, Australia
Wayne Condon, Head, Toll Uncrewed Systems / Chief Pilot, Australia
Greg Tyrrell, Executive Director, Australian Association for Uncrewed Systems, Australia
Nigel Long, Senior Pilot, Australia

1455 - 1515 **C-160 & 214ST: Enhancing Aerial Firefighting Capability Across Fixed & Rotary Operations** – John McDermott, Founder | President, McDermott Aviation | Transall Tankers, Australia

1515 – 1545 **Refreshment Break & Networking**

SESSION: SAFETY & AIR CREW PRACTICES – A FORWARD VIEW

1545 - 1620 **Panel: Making our Skies Safer**
Moderator: Ben Millington, Deputy Commissioner - Operational Co-ordination Directorate, NSW RFS, Australia
Panellists: Anne Chamberlain, Safety, Risk and Assurance Manager, Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action, Australia
Leith Sherwin, Senior Transport Safety Investigator, Australian Transport Safety Bureau, Australia
Tim Penney, Senior Aviation Safety Advisor, Civil Aviation Safety Authority, Australia
Andelys Bayne, Aviation Specialist, NAFC, Australia

1620 – 1655 **Panel: Air Crew: Working Better Together**
Moderator: Matthew Harper, CEO, Aerial Application Association of Australia, Australia
Panellists: Inspector Jason Evans, Air Attack Supervisor, Queensland Fire Department, Australia
Ray Buchan, Superintendent – Aviation Services, Department of Fire & Emergency Services, Australia
Adam Salter, District Officer Air Operations, Tasmania Fire Service, Australia

1655 – 1700 **Moderator's Closing Remarks**

1700 – 1800 **Drinks Reception** sponsored by TracPlus Global Limited

1900 **Event Dinner** sponsored by Coulson Aviation (Invited guests only)



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CONFERENCE AGENDA DAY TWO – 23 JULY 2026

0830 – 0900 **Registration & Exhibition**

0900 – 0905 **Moderator's Opening Remarks**

0905 – 0925 **Keynote Address** – Trent Curtin, Commissioner, NSW Rural Fire Service, Australia

0925 – 1005 **Panel: Thinking Outside the Box**
Moderator: Chris Hardman AFSM, Chief Fire Officer, Dept. of Energy, Environment & Climate Action, Australia
Panellists: Jayson McKellar, Director of Aviation, NSW Rural Fire Service, Australia
Brett Loughlin AFSM, Chief Officer, SA Country Fire Service, Australia
Alina Hamblyn, Manager Aviation, Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action, Australia
Sandy Whight, Executive Director National Capability, AFAC, Australia

1005 – 1045 **Panel: Making Australia 'Australia' in the Aerial Fire Mission**
Moderator: Matt Bulow, Assistant Commissioner - State Operations Directorate, Queensland Fire Department, Australia
Panellists: Brett Loughlin AFSM, Chief Officer, SA Country Fire Service, Australia
Alina Hamblyn, Manager Aviation, Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action, Australia
Christopher Ryder, Chief Superintendent Manager Aviation, NSW RFS, Australia

1045 – 1115 **Refreshment Break & Networking**

SESSION: CONTRACTING & BUDGETARY CHALLENGES

1115 – 1155 **Panel: Budget Realities vs Expectations for the Aerial Mission- Pressure Points**
Moderator: Brett Loughlin AFSM, Chief Officer, SA Country Fire Service, Australia
Panellists: Martin Gibson, Executive Manager State Air Operations, Queensland Fire Department, Australia
Chris Hardman AFSM, Chief Fire Officer, Dept. of Energy, Environment & Climate Action, Australia
James Leader, Procurement Manager, AFAC / NAFC, Australia
Adam Salter, District Officer Air Operations, Tasmania Fire Service, Australia

1155 – 1215 **Are We Fighting Modern Megafires Like Gamblers – or Like the House?** – Dan Reese, Chief Executive Officer, BLAZETAMER380, USA

1215 – 1255 **Panel: Contracting Environment: Sovereign vs Agency vs Operator Challenges**
Moderator: Sandy Whight, Executive Director National Capability, AFAC, Australia
Panellists: Josephine Stirling, Director, NAFC, Australia
Matthew Harper, CEO, Aerial Application Association of Australia, Australia
Sharon O'Sullivan, Senior Commercial and Procurement Manager, Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action, Australia
Julian Fraser, CEO, Australian Helicopter Industry Association, Australia

1255 – 1415 **Lunch Break & Networking**

SESSION: APAC & GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

1415 – 1440 **Beyond the Horizon: Hidden Risks Behind Successful Aerial Firefighting** – Stephen Bishop, Senior Specialist Aviation & Heavy Machinery, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, New Zealand

1440 – 1505 **The Evolution and Sustainability of Aerial Firefighting & SAR Operations; Perspective & Reality** – Captain Roslan Bin Aziz, Assistant Fire Commissioner, Head of Standards, Training & Inspectorate, Air Division, Fire & Rescue Department, Malaysia

1505 – 1540 **Panel: The Future of Cooperation**
Moderator: Joe Buffone, former Deputy Co-ordinator General, National Emergency Management Agency, Australia
Panellists: Paul Karpus, Division Chief – Aviation Program Helicopter Operations, CAL FIRE, USA
Stephen Bishop, Senior Specialist Aviation & Heavy Machinery, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, New Zealand
Ben Millington, Deputy Commissioner - Operational Co-ordination Directorate, NSW RFS, Australia
Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Christophe Debray, Senior Expert in Disaster Risk Reduction, Civil Protection & International Cooperation, France

1540 – 1545 **Moderator's Closing Remarks**

1545 **Event Close**