

17<sup>th</sup> January 2009

## EVANS HEAD AERODROME USED TO FIGHT BUSH FIRES

On Thursday the 15<sup>th</sup> of January, 2009, a bushfire which was accidentally ignited by practice bombing at the RAAF Evans Head bombing range. The blaze quickly exceeded the range control's ability to contain it. The NSW Rural Fire Services were then called upon to fight the blaze.

During the peak of the Blaze seven truck units were located on the ground supported by two fixed wing water bombers and two helicopters operating from the Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome. The usage of the Aerodrome to fight the fire continued for three days and ensured the travel time of the water bombers to the fire was kept short. A short transit time means a greater amount of the water bomber's payload can be devoted to carrying water as opposed to fuel. When fighting a fire with a water bomber, travel time is a critical factor in being successful.

The Evans Head Aerodrome was utilized heavily during a major bushfire fighting effort over Christmas 2007. During that period the airstrip was utilized by many aircraft fighting a nearby fire. Operations from YEVD continued for a period of seven days continuously during daylight hours. During the two busiest days a peak of 420,000 litres of water (a standard rural fire services tender carries 3,000 litres) was airlifted by aircraft and dumped on the fire. The Air Tractors utilized by Rural Fire Services can carry up to 3,300 litres of water per trip. That equates to 127 trips per day!

A Rural Fire Services Air Tractor departs after being refilled with 3,300 litres of water from Evans Head Aerodrome.

Further information is contained in an article in the Northern Star, follow the link below:

<http://www.northernstar.com.au/story/2009/01/17/raaf-crews-help-fight-bushfire-at-evans-head/>

