



Media Release

Air Affairs Australia has been providing Airborne Bushfire Reconnaissance services in Australia since 1994 and Chris Sievers, Managing Director, and his team have not stopped developing new firefighting technologies since then.

Starting out with a hired Learjet 35A aircraft configured with a Daedalus 1268 Line Scanner, the system was utilised by the NSW Rural Fire Services providing a capability in large area intelligence gathering not available in NSW prior to that time. The service became an integral tool for the NSW RFS over the years providing state-wide coverage in uncontained fire monitoring and during extreme fire periods.

The Line Scanner systems have been extensively upgraded since 1994, providing high quality, accurate imagery, which is rapidly available. The combination of sensors utilised on the scanners are optimised for maximum sensitivity and definition over active bushfires, providing detail in fire front locations and intensity, combined with accurate post-burn definition.

Imagery is produced through thick smoke when visibility is totally compromised during both day and night flight operations. The image data is transmitted directly from the aircraft via high speed Satellite Communication Systems in a format compatible with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) used by the state fire authorities. The image data requires no further processing by the fire authorities and is available for immediate use.

Due to the dependence on the service capability, Air Affairs was chosen by the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) to continue providing under a term contract arrangement. This contract facilitated the acquisition of a dedicated aircraft (Beechcraft B200T VH-LAB) which was purpose modified for the Line Scanner system. The aircraft was modified with a pressure dome system to facilitate line scanner operations at high altitude, providing clear-air imaging from the scanners sensor head, whilst maintaining full cabin pressurisation.

Over recent years, a customised pod system (AIRPOD-101) was developed by Air Affairs to facilitate line scanner operations on the companies multiple Learjet aircraft. With access to aircraft modified with external wing stores carriage capabilities (usually for high-speed target towing operations), the Line Scanner capable Airpod was designed to interface with existing wire sub-systems fitted to the aircraft. This enables the rapid configuration and de-configuration of the aircraft into the surveillance role, without dedicated aircraft airframe modifications.



All company aircraft configured for Bushfire Reconnaissance flight operations are fitted with a Broadband Satellite Communication system (Satcom). The Satcom operates on the Inmarsat BGAN system and provides a high speed data link (via internet), both nationally and internationally if required. High-speed data communication is a vital element in bushfire reconnaissance flight operations, in particular during extreme events.

Air Affairs Australia also provide firefighting support services under a Call When Needed (CWN) system. The CWN system operates on a national database of aircraft / service providers for Australian Fire Authorities. The database is controlled by the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) and offers access to capable providers in Aerial Firefighting, Airborne Reconnaissance, and ground support equipment to all state fire authorities.

Air Affairs Australia continue to explore further improvement and enhancement on the overall intelligence gathering for Bushfire Reconnaissance flight operations capability and, consideration to implementing Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) systems and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), in combination with the line scanner is currently underway.

Chris Sievers, and members of his firefighting team, will be exhibiting at Aerial Firefighting Asia Pacific where information on all other Bushfire Airborne Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance can be provided.