

Submission: 294

Rural Fire Services NSW



RFS

ADS-B mandate – Rural Fire Service feedback

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1. Contact information

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2. Releasability

Public, published

3. Feedback

The NSW RFS strongly supports the Department's proposal to mandate ADS-B for all aircraft operating across all classes of airspace. This support is based on several key considerations:

- **Operational safety in complex airspace:** The NSW RFS conducts extensive and complex aerial firefighting operations, frequently in uncontrolled and congested airspace. The implementation of both ADS-B OUT and IN capabilities will significantly enhance real-time situational awareness for pilots, aircrew and Air Attack Supervisors. This improvement is expected to reduce the risk of aviation incidents occurring, particularly in low visibility operations.
- **Integration of drones:** The proposed mandate includes requirements for drone operations, which are increasingly utilised by the NSW RFS for hotspot detection, mapping, and logistical support. Ensuring ADS-B requirements for these drones, and other emergency service operators will support and future proof the integration of unmanned systems into the broader aviation operations picture.
- **Enhanced incident investigation and operational oversight:** ADS-B provides highly accurate flight data, which will improve the quality and efficiency of incident investigations and contribute to continuous improvement in aviation safety and operational practices.

Under the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) contract standards, ADS-B OUT has been mandated for all contracted aircraft since September 2024. In alignment with this standard, all NSW

RFS owned aircraft are already equipped with ADS-B OUT, reinforcing the Service's commitment to aviation safety and operational excellence.

The proposed broader mandate will ensure consistent adoption of ADS-B across all aerial assets operating in and around firegrounds. This will deliver a significantly enhanced level of situational awareness and safety, particularly in dynamic, high risk environments where multiple aircraft, including drones, operate in close proximity and often in low-visibility conditions.

The NSW RFS recognises the financial implications of full ADS-B implementation. However, the safety and operational benefits far outweigh the costs. As such, the NSW RFS supports widespread adoption of ADS-B technology across all relevant platforms prior to the end of 2033, ensuring a future-ready, integrated, and safer aerial firefighting capability.