

Fire Safety In Aged Care Facilities

**Fire Sprinkler
Systems
Implementation
Committee
Annual Report**

May 2017

Prepared by the Fire Sprinkler Systems
Implementation Committee

Letter to Secretary

Ms Carolyn McNally
Secretary
Department of Planning & Environment
320 Pitt Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Ms McNally

I have pleasure in submitting to you the fourth Annual Report of the Fire Sprinkler Systems Implementation Committee.

The Report addresses the Committee's operations from April 2016 until end March 2017 and reports on progress with fire sprinkler system installations in existing residential aged care facilities.

Excellent progress was made in the final year of the four-year program. The program deadline of 1 March 2017 saw 97% complete the program. The Committee remains focused on the remaining small group still to complete a sprinkler retrofit.

The Report is submitted in accordance with Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 for you to provide to the Minister for Planning and Minister for Ageing and for publication on the Department of Planning and Environment's website.

Yours sincerely



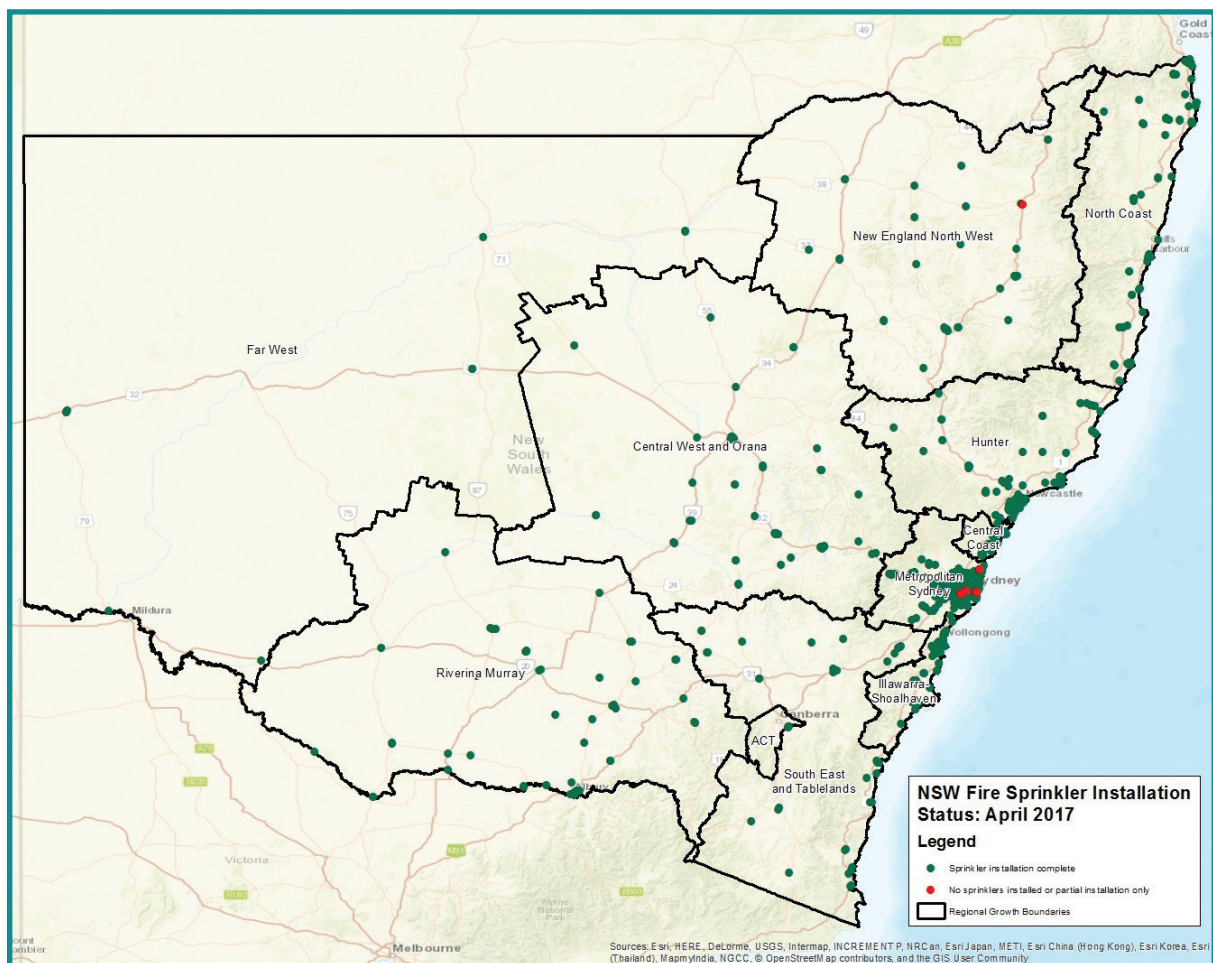
Ivan Donaldson
Chairperson
Fire Sprinkler Systems Implementation Committee
May 2017

April 2017

By the end of April 2017:

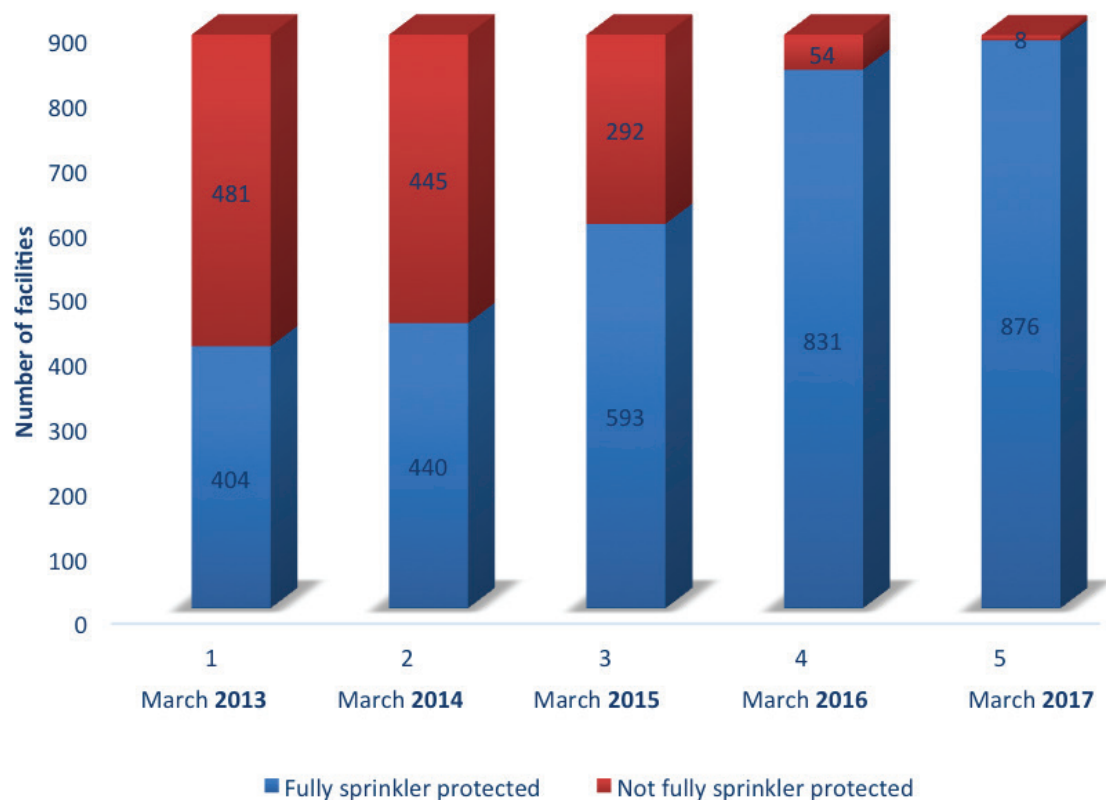
- 438 facilities have completed a fire sprinkler retrofit
- 8 facilities are due to complete sprinkler installation in the next few months, to comply with council fire safety order deadlines in some cases, or are finalising compliance documentation
- 35 facilities closed over the four-year period.

All 885 facilities and those with and without fire sprinklers as at end April 2017 are shown below.



Staged implementation

- 128 facilities nominated to install sprinklers by 1 September 2014
- 353 facilities nominated to install sprinklers by 1 March 2016
- Extensions of up to one year were available. 68 postponements granted by the Fire Sprinkler Systems Implementation Committee ranged from 3 to 12 months. One application was refused and sprinklers were installed within the required time. Postponements were conditional on fire safety reports, progress reporting and, for some, additional fire safety measures in the temporary absence of sprinklers
- Some regional facilities received an extension of time from the Implementation Committee and Commonwealth Government grant funding to install the sprinklers.



Enforcement actions

The Fire Sprinkler Systems Implementation Committee fostered close relations with all tiers of Government to ensure program outcomes resulting in:

- 29 Fire Safety Orders were issued by local councils
- 7 facilities were inspected by Fire & Rescue NSW to assess fire safety risks
- 7 facilities installed sprinklers to avoid enforcement action.

Stakeholder engagement

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment, with the assistance of the Fire Sprinkler Systems Implementation Committee, provided significant support to aged care providers, certifiers, installers and local councils throughout. This included:

- responding to about 4,000 calls to a dedicated phone line
- responding to about 5,000 emails to a dedicated email address
- dedicated web site, advisory information, e-bulletins, teleconferences, individual meetings and forum for aged care providers in July 2013 with case studies and an expert panel.

The Department and the Committee received a high level of cooperation and support from the aged care industry, building certifiers, fire safety practitioners, local councils, water authorities and the Commonwealth Department of Health.

Additional information

In response to the tragic fire at a Quakers Hill nursing home on 18 November 2011, the Government introduced laws, effective from 1 January 2013, to require automatic fire sprinkler systems to be installed in both new and existing residential aged care facilities in NSW.

In March 2013, aged care providers could nominate to retrofit sprinklers by 1 September 2014 (18-month group) or by 1 March 2016 (three-year group). Limited extensions of time of up to one year were available subject to decision by the Fire Sprinkler Systems Implementation Committee.

The staging of the program into two tranches was designed to minimise adverse impacts on service provision by providing lead-in time for aged care providers to plan the work, raise funds and minimise disruption for residents and families.

Sprinkler installations must comply with the Department of Planning and Environment's (DP&E) Fire Sprinkler Standard which sets the technical specifications for sprinkler systems in these facilities.

The Fire Sprinkler Systems Implementation Committee was established by the NSW Government to, amongst other things, monitor the progress of the installation of fire sprinkler systems in existing residential aged care facilities.

Under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000, the Committee must provide an annual report of its operations during the preceding year to the Secretary, DP&E.

It is estimated the aged care industry has committed about \$200 million in new investment to deliver the new level of fire safety required by the sprinkler retrofit program. Some installations were combined with facility refurbishments. Since 2015 cost information was sought from aged care providers following completion of the sprinkler installation. 134 facilities provided cost information. The median cost to install sprinklers was \$4,860 per bed. The median cost to install sprinklers was generally higher for facilities outside major cities.

Thirty-five (35) facilities have closed since the 1 January 2013 program start: 26 facilities in metropolitan areas; 6 in inner regional areas; 3 in outer regional areas. 23 facilities that closed have been replaced by a new facility building with additional beds. The 12 facilities that closed without a replacement facility cited financial viability and end of lease reasons for the closure. Only one facility in an outer regional area closed without a replacement facility however all residents were relocated to another facility in the same area.

The membership of the Committee is as follows:

- *Chairperson – Ivan Donaldson (formerly General Manager Australian Building Codes Board).*
- *Department of Planning and Environment representatives – Luke Walton (Director, Environment and Building Policy); Stephen Durnford (Team Leader, Environment and Building Policy) and Helen Ting (Principal Policy Officer, Environment and Building Policy) as alternatives [Department to be Deputy Chair].*
- *Fire and Rescue NSW's representatives – Greg Buckley (Chief Superintendent); Mark Whybro (Assistant Commissioner) as alternative.*
- *Aged care industry representatives – Colleen Rivers (Policy and Consultancy Manager Aged and Community Services NSW-ACT; Brendan Moore (State Manager Leading Aged Services Australia NSW-ACT) as alternative.*
- *Fire protection system design and installation experts – Mark Cummings (Member Executive Committee Association of Hydraulic Services Consultants Australia (NSW)); Bill Lea (Director Fire Protection Association Australia) as alternative.*
- *Expert in representing seniors in community organisations – Sarah Davidson (Co-Acting CEO Council of the Ageing NSW); Lisa Langlely (Policy Manager COTA NSW) as alternative.*

The Committee wishes to thank former Committee members for their valuable contributions to the Committee's work: Ms Illana Halliday, member of the Committee representing the aged care industry from April 2013 until February 2017; Mr Ian Day, member of the Committee representing seniors in community organisations from April 2013 until December 2016. The Committee also acknowledges the strong support received from the Department officers Helen Ting, Matthew Wunsch and Liz Skerrett.

May 2017