NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE DEMONSTRATES AIR ATTACK CAPABILITIES

News / Airlines

The **NSW Rural Fire Service** (RFS) has **demonstrated** a range of its fixed wing and helicopter firefighting **capabilities** at the Sydney International Regatta Centre in Penrith, including an impressive display by the recently arrived McDonnell Douglas DC-10 Very Large Air Tanker (VLAT).

October 1 marked the official start of a two-year $9.8 million trial to allow the NSW RFS examine the effectiveness and feasibility of engaging VLAT and Large Air Tanker (LAT) assets around the state in the future.

Watched on by new Defence Minister Senator Marise Payne, the aerial demonstration started with a showcase of helicopter assets with one of NSW RFS's own BK117-850-B2s, Helitack 201, delivering 900 litres of water from its under slung Bambi Bucket.

Erickson S-64E Aircrane *Gypsy Lady* followed next to show what the helicopter has been doing around the country for the past 13 years – dropping 7,560 litres of water, having just collected it from Penrith Lakes in under 40 seconds.

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Airborne in support of the fire attack helicopter display were the RFS's newest BK117, Helitack 202, which it recently acquired from the NSW Police Force's Aviation Support Branch, and its AS350B2 Squirrel, Firebird 200.

Making its second public display, *Thor*, the Lockheed L-100-30 Hercules LAT was the first of the fixed wings to be displayed.

Callsigned 'Bomber 132?, the Herc launched from the near by RAAF Base Richmond and made a reconnaissance pass in close company with an Aero Commander spotter aircraft, before dropping a line of over 15,000 litres of water.

The highlight of the display was the VLAT, callsigned 'Bomber 910?, one of three DC-10-30s operated by 10 Tanker Air Carrier.

Named *Southern Belle* while operating in Australia, in tribute to all Australian female fire fighters, the converted ex-Northwest Airlines DC-10, based at RAAF Base Richmond, flew in at just 200ft AGL and 150kt for a reconnaissance pass.

Dwarfing everything else in the sky above Penrith, *Southern Belle* returned to unleash its 43,900-litre load that stretched over a kilometre long before returning to Richmond.

Thor will conclude its part in the LAT/VLAT trial on December 9, while *Southern Belle* will be on call until at least January 20 2016. Both will return to Australia in 12 months time.

N612AX at Penrith Lakes. (Paul Sadler)

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N405LC showcases its capabilities. (Paul Sadler)

A Helitack 202 and Firebird 200. (Paul Sadler)

Erickson Air Crane N189AC. (Paul Sadler)

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