



Stuart Ayres MP

Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Minister for Sport and Recreation

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CRACKING DOWN ON RECKLESSNESS DURING TOTAL FIRE BANS

Tough new penalties will empower the New South Wales Police Force and the NSW Rural Fires Service (RFS) to bring those who deliberately and recklessly disrespect Total Fire Ban warnings before the courts after NSW Parliament passed the *Rural Fires Amendment Bill 2014*.

Under these strong new measures, offenders can be prosecuted under a new offence and face a fine of up to \$132,000 and/or seven years jail time if they deliberately light or allow a fire to escape their property on a Total Fire Ban day.

In what is predicted to be a difficult bushfire season ahead, Minister for Police and Emergency Services Stuart Ayres said the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government has responded by targeting those who blatantly ignore the Total Fire Bans and the safety of others.

“There new laws ensure fire bugs will have to face the consequences of their actions,” Mr Ayres said.

A jury can still find someone guilty of the existing offence which carries serious penalties of up to \$110,000 and up to five years jail time, if they think the person did not have enough warning that a Total Fire Ban was in place.

Other changes allow NSW Police and RFS to penalise less serious offenders with fines up to \$2,200 effectively covering off on penalties for would-be firebugs as we move into bushfire season.

“We are seeing a lot of people ignore warnings and conducting burns on their own properties with complete disregard for Total Fire Bans,” Mr Ayres added.

“Out of control fires have a devastating impact on life, property and communities.

“It’s only right that those who cause this devastation should have the book thrown at them,” Mr Ayres said.

Other amendments to the *Rural Fires Act 1997* will streamline fire permit requirements and ensure those who throw lit cigarettes, matches or other “fire objects” from a vehicle will be held accountable, not just the registered owner.

“Those idiots who throw lit cigarettes or matches from cars during a Total Fire Ban can already be hit with double the penalty, but will now be unable to blame it on someone else,” Mr Ayres said.

“These tough changes aim to not only deter, but put an end to such reckless behaviour.”