



Gladys Berejiklian
Premier of NSW

Troy Grant
Minister for Police
Minister for Emergency Services

MEDIA RELEASE

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NANCY BIRD TAKES FLIGHT TO FIGHT FIRES

The waterbombing DC-10 Very Large Air Tanker (VLAT) tasked with protecting lives and property from bush fires this summer has been named “Nancy Bird”, in honour of renowned Australian aviator Nancy Bird Walton AO OBE.

Premier Gladys Berejiklian, Minister for Emergency Services Troy Grant and Treasurer and Member for Hawkesbury Dominic Perrottet today attended a naming ceremony at RAAF Base Richmond, where the VLAT completed a water drop test.

Nancy Bird Walton was the first woman in Australia to obtain a commercial pilot’s licence and founded an outback air ambulance service.

“We are indebted to the 74,000 NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers who protect this state and our government is determined to support them by ensuring they have the equipment they need,” Ms Berejiklian said.

“We know how quickly bush and grass fires can spread and devastate communities, which is why large capacity aircraft like “Nancy Bird” are vital to provide heavy duty support to firefighters on the ground.”

Mr Grant said the bush fire season has already been demanding, with more than 6,200 NSW RFS volunteers responding to 2,500 fires in September.

“Our volunteers face walls of fire and step into hellish conditions to keep us safe. They need all the help they can get. We want them to be reassured knowing “Nancy Bird”, “Thor”, and a 100-strong aircraft squadron are ready to respond,” Mr Grant said.

“Along with these resources, part of a \$38 million investment over four years, we’re investing in 140 new firefighting vehicles and almost 100 projects that will see new or upgraded RFS infrastructure built across NSW this financial year.”

Mr Perrottet said the aircraft will continue to be valuable assets in fighting bushfires in the Hawkesbury and elsewhere.

“Residents in bushfire-prone areas like the Hawkesbury can have the confidence this government will continue to invest in world-class firefighting resources to help protect lives and homes,” Mr Perrottet said.

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said recent rain has provided some respite, but the public should not be complacent.

“Large areas of the state remain drier than average and it will only take a few days of hot, windy weather to dry out regions,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

Video: [VLAT dropping retardant on Cessnock fire \(November 2016\)](#)

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