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Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government
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Media Release

\$10 million boost to prepare for bushfire season

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Hazard reduction burns are underway across the state as rural firefighters try to take advantage of favourable conditions to help keep local communities safe ahead of the 2023-24 bushfire season.

Only 20 per cent of planned hazard reduction burns were able to be completed during the past year due to the prolonged wet weather and severe flooding across large areas of NSW.

The NSW Government and its fire services are working to complete as much hazard reduction as possible with a \$10 million program to develop a statewide mobile workforce to accelerate this critical work ahead of the coming fire season.

The funding will enable the Rural Fire Service (RFS) to employ an additional 100 mitigation crew members to carry out vital hazard reduction and mitigation works in identified high risk areas of the state.

The extra mitigation crew members will be based mainly in regional areas of NSW to help take advantage of every possible opportunity to conduct hazard reduction work.

The crews will help prepare areas for hazard reduction, such as preparing trails and establishing control lines, and assist with burns during the week when volunteers may not be as readily available.

The Bureau of Meteorology has declared an El Nino Alert, meaning a likely return to hot, dry and windy conditions this summer. Under these conditions, NSW can expect a return to a more traditional fire season compared to the last two summers which have been extremely wet.

The roles will include a mix of casual and temporary roles, starting with existing RFS members who are trained and able to travel to any part of the state where hazard reduction is taking place.

Quotes to be attributed to the Minister for Emergency Services, Minister Dib:

“With warm, dry conditions expected to return in coming months, we are potentially looking at a serious fire season and it’s important we do everything we can to support our fire services and land managers to prepare.”

“Due to recent rain over the past few months, we are facing a significant backlog in hazard reduction burns, so we need to accelerate our efforts heading into the next fire season and these additional crews will help make a difference.”

“It is important to plan ahead and come up with a proactive approach to maximise our narrow window for hazard reduction, as a result of unfavourable weather conditions.”

“We are implementing a range of hazard reduction options, this is just one way we can complement existing efforts and enhance our ability to respond to future fires.”

“I want to thank our hard-working RFS mitigation crew members and volunteers for their efforts as they work hard to keep each of us safe.”

Quotes to be attributed to the Rural Fire Service Commissioner, Rob Rogers:

“With the change in weather systems seeing an end to frequent rain and the return of dry, windy conditions, we need to get our teams out there doing hazard reduction burns at every opportunity.”

“Over the last three months, almost 55,000 hectares of work has been completed, work critical to protect more than 50,000 properties and safeguard lives.”

“There is plenty more to be done and this boost in mitigation personnel will enable even more vital work to be undertaken.”

“While we are doing what we can, home and property owners also need to assess what they can do to prepare for the upcoming fire season as well.”

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