



David Elliott
Minister for Police and Emergency Services

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW LAWS TO EMPOWER LANDOWNERS AND NSW RFS TO MANAGE BUSHFIRE RISK

The NSW Government has today announced that it will introduce laws to simplify rules for landowners seeking to mitigate bushfire risks on their properties and give the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Commissioner sweeping new powers to direct hazard reduction activities.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services David Elliott said the Rural Fires Act 1997 would be amended to allow rural landowners to clear up to 25 metres on their property from the boundary without onerous approvals.

A Code will be developed and will have regard to issues such as clearing in endangered and threatened species habitat as well as clearing for non-bushfire risk mitigation purposes.

“The NSW RFS will also be given stronger and clearer powers to audit and address bushfire risks, ensuring public lands are treated the same way as private land holders,” Mr Elliott said.

“A new statutory obligation will be created requiring all complaints about hazard reduction activities, including those relating to public authorities, to be forwarded to the NSW RFS Commissioner for assessment and action.”

The NSW RFS Commissioner will have the power to issue Bushfire Hazard Reduction Notices to public authorities in circumstances where vegetation should be cleared to protect lives or property.

Mr Elliott added that if mitigation works are not undertaken in a timely manner, the NSW RFS can undertake such works and send the land manager the bill.

“The new laws are based on the expert operational advice of the NSW RFS, and will ensure that rural landowners are able to clear up to 25 metres of vegetation on their property without facing time consuming approvals,” Mr Elliott said.

“There will be stiff fines for people that leave their communities vulnerable to bushfires, with penalties set to be doubled for corporations and public landowners that fail to meet their obligations. If public authorities fail to clear lands, the NSW RFS will step

in.

“This is not only the most landowner friendly legislation, but it is putting public safety above all else.”

NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Rob Rogers welcomed the additional powers.

“These measures will empower community members to better protect their homes and property with as little bureaucracy as possible,” Commissioner Rogers said.

“The changes to the legislation reflect the clear recommendations from the NSW Bushfire Inquiry, and will help the NSW Rural Fire Service in its role to manage and better protect communities across the State from bushfires.”

New provisions will allow the NSW RFS to appoint and direct ‘industry’ brigades, and to allow for the appointment of a representative of Aboriginal Land Councils on the State’s peak Bushfire Coordinating Committee.

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