



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Commissioner calls on landholders to take extra care when lighting fires**

**4 August 2014**

NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons is reminding landholders to exercise extra care when conducting private hazard reduction burns, following a number of escaped fires during the past week.

Since Friday 1 August, NSW RFS volunteer firefighters have responded to 444 bush and grass fires across NSW, including 64 fires in the Clarence Valley area.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons said a number of these fires were caused by escaped private hazard reduction burns, including some fires in the Clarence Valley.

Preliminary investigations by NSW RFS Building Impact Assessment teams have so far confirmed the loss of:

- Four homes at Kremnos (Clarence Valley LGA)
- One home at Collombatti (Kempsey LGA)
- Seven outbuildings at Kremnos
- Four vehicles at Kremnos.

An additional four NSW RFS Fire Investigators have been sent to assist Clarence Valley investigators to determine the cause of the fires.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons said any landholder who lights a fire without a permit, or when permits have been suspended, now faces an increased penalty of \$1100.

“Local volunteers have indicated to me that they are fed up and frustrated about having to attend incidents started by the careless and irresponsible use of fire,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

“It not only endangers the local community that finds itself in the path of the fire, but it also risks the lives of our firefighters who have to deal with them.

“While it is important that landholders prepare their properties for the bush fire season, it is important that they carry out hazard reduction burns in a safe manner.”

The Bush Fire Danger Period is now in effect across the 22 Local Government Areas in north east NSW, due to continuing dry conditions, meaning landholders must now obtain a fire permit in order to conduct private hazard reduction burns.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons said anyone planning to conduct a private burn should contact their local Fire Control Centre first, as permits may be suspended at short notice due to weather conditions.