



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Bush fire season draws to a close**

**31 March 2016**

Today marks the end of the statutory Bush Fire Danger Period (BFD) in NSW after much of the state experienced a relatively quiet fire season.

With predictions of a long and difficult season due to a strong El Nino weather pattern in the Pacific, NSW was spared the worst after good rainfall at the right time across the season.

NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said there were early indications that the season would be a challenging one with the first bush fire emergency occurring in early August.

“There was unusual weather in the Blue Mountains in late winter when just two weeks after being covered in snow we saw homes under threat from a fast moving bush fire.

“I have heard many anecdotal stories from this event comparing the soaring heat of the fire front, with the freezing temperatures at the staging area,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

The season mostly focused on small bursts of activity with NSW RFS firefighters responding to over 6, 912 bush and grass fires since the 1 July.

Due to the mild conditions across the state, the NSW RFS were able to coordinate a number of interstate response teams to provide assistance to colleagues battling devastating blazes in Western Australia, Victoria and Tasmania.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons said that the fire season has been dominated by interstate deployments.

“Just under 800 RFS Members were part of the 1, 293 people deployed to work alongside their interstate colleagues assisting in Tasmania,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

“Across the season we have coordinated the deployment of many personnel to assist with firefighting operations.”

Commissioner Fitzsimmons said crews have now started hazard reduction burning and will conduct further burns when weather opportunities arise.

“Hazard reduction burns are very much weather dependent and traditionally there is only a small window of opportunity, sometimes as few as 20 or 30 days, during which these prescribed burns can be safely and effectively conducted,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

While Fire Permits are not required outside the BFD, property owners conducting private hazard reduction burns are usually required to have a Hazard Reduction Certificate before lighting up.

Hazard Reduction Certificates are free and can be obtained from NSW RFS Fire Control Centres.

Due to recent localised warm and dry weather conditions a number of Local Government Areas (LGAs) have extended their statutory Bush Fire Danger Period until 30 April 2016. These LGAs are:

- Mid Western Regional Council
- Upper Hunter Shire Council
- Liverpool Plains Shire Council
- Gunnedah Shire Council
- Tamworth Regional Council
- Armidale Dumaresq Council
- Guyra Shire Council
- Uralla Shire Council
- Walcha Shire Council

**To interview NSW RFS Commissioner Fitzsimmons, please call the NSW RFS State Duty Media Officer on 02 9898 1855.**

#### **2015/16 BFDP facts and figures**

- Total number of bush, grass and scrub fires – 6, 912
- Total hectares burnt – 64, 572
- The statutory 2015/16 BFDP began on 1 October 2015 and ends today, 31 March 2016
- Nine LGAs extended the BFDP until 30 April 2016 due to local ongoing dry conditions

#### **2015/2016 Interstate deployments**

	Tasmania	Victoria	Western Australia
<b>NSW Rural Fire Service</b>	793	23	79
<b>Fire and Rescue NSW</b>	24	4	2
<b>National Parks and Wildlife Service</b>	294	8	20
<b>Forestry Corporation</b>	21	0	2
<b>Ambulance NSW</b>	51	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1, 293</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>132</b>

