

Jihad Dib

Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government
Minister for Emergency Services
Minister for Youth Justice

Media Release

Australia's largest firefighting helicopter lands in NSW

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Rural Fire Service (RFS) aerial firefighting capabilities received a significant boost today with the arrival of a \$9 million high-capacity waterbombing helicopter at Richmond.

The new helicopter will allow for aerial firefighting at night and expand on existing air capabilities.

Minister for Emergency Services Jihad Dib was joined by Commonwealth Member for Macquarie Susan Templeman and Commissioner of the RFS Rob Rogers, to welcome the CH-47 Chinook at RAAF Base Richmond.

The impressive aircraft will carry up to 11,000 litres of water or retardant — a payload comparable to that of a Large Air Tanker — and will soon have the capability to support firefighting operations at night.

In its first year of operations, the Chinook will assist firefighters on the ground using a bucket of up to 10,000 litres. An 11,000-litre internal tank will be installed during the winter of 2024, which will allow it to commence night-time aerial firefighting.

The arrival of the aircraft comes ahead of the start of the Bush Fire Danger Period in six local government areas (Armidale Regional, Walcha, Uralla, Glen Innes Severn, Inverell and Tenterfield) on 1 August, and with fire conditions expected to return across NSW after three years of wet weather.

More information on the Bush Fire Danger Period is available at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/BFDP

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

“The RFS Chinook will be the first helicopter of its kind to be permanently based in Australia. This helicopter will be a valuable asset and is one of a number of proactive steps we are taking to ensure we are prepared for bushfires in the summer ahead.”

“The helicopter brings a new capability to the RFS, including the future ability to use it at night which means we can directly attack fires at times when weather conditions are more favourable and fire activity is typically lower.”

“The NSW Government is providing the resources and facilities to protect people across the state. The helicopter will be based in Richmond but can be moved around the state depending on the fire risk.”

Quotes to be attributed to Commissioner of the RFS, Rob Rogers:

“The Chinook carries a similar load to a 737 Large Air Tanker but can fill up and turn around faster, protecting people and homes from fires.”

“We’re very grateful to the Royal Australian Air Force, with which the RFS has had a strong working relationship for over a decade, for its assistance in delivering this helicopter in time for the coming fire season.”

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