



Barry O'Farrell MP

Premier of NSW

Minister for Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 15 October 2013

AIR-CRANE ARRIVES FOR NSW FIRE SEASON

NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell today welcomed the arrival of the 'Gypsy Lady' firefighting Air-Crane to NSW, further bolstering the Rural Fire Service's aerial water-bombing capability this summer.

'Gypsy Lady' arrived in NSW last week from Greece and it was immediately deployed to fight bush fires around Sydney on the weekend. A second Air-Crane 'Ichabod' will begin service next month.

"The Erickson Air-Cranes are an important investment to help our firefighters battle bush fires and save lives and properties," Mr O'Farrell said.

"They are brought to Australia each year because their huge water carrying capacity – and their ability to re-fill in less than 60 seconds provides the capability to drop a lot of water quickly and accurately.

"Having state-of-the-art equipment available to firefighters is essential – but so is ensuring authorities do all the preparation possible to reduce the risk of bush fires.

"The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government made a commitment to increase hazard reduction across the state by 45 per cent by 2016 - we're on track to achieve that. Last financial year hazard reduction burns occurred on about 281,000 hectares of land – more than two-and-a-half times the amount carried out two years ago.

"Our firefighters deserve our deepest gratitude for putting their own safety at risk to protect the lives and property of others – I thank each and every one of them."

The cost of the Air-Cranes in NSW is jointly met by the State and Commonwealth Governments and allows for the aircraft to be shared between states.

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said the two Air-Cranes will be based at Bankstown Airport and will be available for deployment across the state.

"With the warm and dry conditions seen this spring set to continue, these aircraft are an important asset in our firefighting arsenal," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

"In addition to the two Air-Cranes, the NSW RFS has access to more than 100 aircraft to help fight both bush and fast moving grass fires."

"Importantly, while aircraft provide valuable assistance in fire suppression, it's their integration with the hard work of firefighters on the ground, along with a well prepared community, that makes the difference.

"A well prepared property and a completed Bush Fire Survival Plan are both vital in protecting lives and properties in the event of a bush fire."

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