



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Current conditions pose real threat from grass fires**

**9 January 2017**

Following above average rainfall across the state last year and some of the hottest weather on record, NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons is warning residents of the very real threat from grass fires.

“After a wet and warm 2016, increased vegetation growth has dried out and that is now causing real concern,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

“Grass lands cover around 80% of NSW. After warm and windy conditions over recent weeks, particularly west of the Divide, the landscape is now very much susceptible to fire.

“Grass and crop fires can be especially dangerous because they start easily and spread rapidly. They can destroy not only homes and stock, but also lives and livelihoods.”

Commissioner Fitzsimmons said recent fires around the state have brought home the need to be prepared.

“Recent fires near Cootamundra, Urana and West Wyalong burned thousands of hectares and we saw devastating loss following the Paynes Road fire near North Yalgogrin. Over 5500 hectares burned with an estimated \$650,000 in crop losses, 300 sheep killed and destruction of fencing.

“Grass fires can move more than three times as fast as a bush fire. As we’ve seen, they can take hold rapidly and lead to much devastation.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons said there are couple of steps people can take now to prepare for the increased risk.

“Farmers can help protect their properties by establishing firebreaks around paddocks, homes and other valuable assets like sheds and equipment. Firebreaks can assist in slowing a fire’s spread and also help stop a fire from entering or leaving a property.

“We’re also asking motorists and those travelling to avoid driving through or stopping in long grass, even if it’s just for a few minutes, as the heat from a car’s exhaust can be enough to start a fire.

“People living in areas near crops and grass growth should have a plan for what they will do if there is a fire. Make a bush fire survival plan and discuss it with your family.”

Commissioner Fitzsimmons has stressed the importance of reporting unattended fires to Triple Zero (000) as soon possible.

“The earlier we can respond, the better chance we have to significantly reduce the damage caused by fire.”

“Grass fires can move more than three times as fast as a bush fire. Act now, be prepared and survive.

For more information on grass fires visit [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/grassfires](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/grassfires)