



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

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

**31 March 2017**

Following a challenging bush fire season that has seen the worst fire weather conditions ever recorded in NSW, today marks the end of the state's official bush fire season.

Marking the end of the statutory Bush Fire Danger Period, NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said last year's wet winter and spring, followed by the state's hottest summer on record, led to an increased risk of fires.

"The 2017-18 bush fire season will be remembered as one of the most dangerous and difficult on record, culminating with Catastrophic fire conditions across a large part of the state in February," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

"Throughout the season there have been a number of damaging and destructive fires such as fires at Llandilo and Londonderry in Western Sydney, and around Cessnock and Port Stephens in November.

"The Paynes Road fire to the west of West Wyalong burned through 7000 hectares of land in late November, causing extensive losses of crops, sheep and kilometres of fencing.

"While conditions eased slightly over Christmas, fire activity soon picked up with the Currandooley fire near Queanbeyan burning over 3,300 hectares, destroying a house, crop and livestock.

"In February we then faced two days of statewide Total Fire Bans and the very worst fire conditions ever seen in NSW when large areas of the state experienced Catastrophic weather conditions.

"Almost inevitably a number of large fires soon broke out, including the Sir Ivan, White Cedars Road near Mudgee, Barnards Road at Gloucester, Pappinbarra Road near Wauchope and Spring Hill Road near Dongdingalong.

"We saw considerable loss with 70,106 hectares burned, 56 homes destroyed, vast kilometres of fencing and thousands of stock lost across the weekend.

"As these communities rebuild and attempt to move forward, we must take comfort in the knowledge that no lives were lost fighting these fires.

"However, while we have seen communities come together in the face of adversity, unfortunately a resident who suffered burns trying to extinguish a grass fire at Caroona near Tamworth, and later died, has brought home how dangerous and volatile any fire can be. Our thoughts are with his family and community."

Commissioner Fitzsimmons also noted that while Bush Fire Danger Period (BFDP) was ending in most parts of the state a number of Local Government Areas (LGA's) have extended their statutory Bush Fire Danger Period, due to recent localised warm and dry weather conditions.

These LGA's are:

- Coolamon (extended until 7 April 2017)
- Junee (extended until 7 April 2017)
- Lockhart (extended until 7 April 2017)
- Wagga Wagga (extended until 7 April 2017)
- Mid Western(extended until 30 April 2017)

### **2016/2017 Bush fire season facts and figures**

- The statutory 2016/17 BFDP began on 1 October 2016 and ends today, 31 March 2017
- Total number of bush, grass and scrub fires (from 01/06/16 to 31/03/17) – 11,602.
- Total hectares burnt – 277,434
- Total number of total fire bans – 25 (including two state wide fire bans over the weekend of the 11 and 12 February).
- Five LGAs extended the BFDP until 30 April 2017 due to local ongoing dry conditions
- Total number of properties destroyed – 65
- Total number of properties damaged - 38

