



The Hon Michael Keenan MP
Minister for Justice

The Hon Stuart Ayres MP
NSW Minister for Police and Emergency Services

MEDIA RELEASE

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Ichabod Crane rides into Sydney for fire season

Firefighting Air-Cranes ‘Ichabod’ and ‘Gypsy Lady’ have returned to Sydney in preparation for the 2014/15 bush fire season.

Commonwealth Minister for Justice Michael Keenan said the Australian Government was committed to helping fund the annual costs of specialised firefighting aircraft through the National Aerial Firefighting Arrangements.

“The Commonwealth is investing \$14.8 million over 2014/15 to ensure Australians are protected by the best aerial firefighting equipment possible,” Mr Keenan said.

“The National Aerial Firefighting Arrangements, now 11 years old, are a terrific example of how a cooperative national approach allows the sharing of specialised resources that otherwise might be out of reach.”

Minister for Police and Emergency Services Stuart Ayres said the NSW Rural Fire Service was pleased to again welcome both Air-Cranes to boost the aerial water-bombing capability this summer.

“The Erickson Air-Cranes are a well-known sight in the skies, with both ‘Ichabod’ and ‘Gypsy Lady’ returning for the second season in a row. They provide valuable assistance to our firefighters as they battle fires every bushfire season,” Mr Ayres said.

“They are brought to Australia each year because of their huge water carrying capacity and the ability to refill in less than 60 seconds provides the capability to drop a lot of water quickly and accurately.”

Mr Ayres said the cost of the Air-Cranes in NSW was jointly met by the State and Commonwealth Governments and allows major resources to be shared between States.

“These Air-Cranes are an investment in protecting lives and property in NSW; an investment this Government has no hesitation in making,” Mr Ayres said.

‘Ichabod’ will be available for firefighting operations from today. ‘Gypsy Lady’ flight crew will begin work on Monday 1 December, unless required earlier.

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 or interstate if needed.

“With warm and dry conditions seen over the past week set to continue throughout the season, these aircraft are an important asset in our firefighting arsenal,” Mr 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.

“People should not delay their preparations any longer. A well prepared property and a completed Bush Fire Survival Plan are both vital in protecting lives and properties in the event of a bushfire,” Mr Fitzsimmons said.

Federal Member for Macquarie Louise Markus has welcomed the arrival of the Air-Cranes.

“As we approach the one year anniversary of the devastating October 2013 Blue Mountains bushfires in the electorate of Macquarie, the addition of the Erickson Air-Cranes to the National aerial firefighting fleet is most welcome,” Mrs Markus said.

“The Air-Cranes will greatly assist in the capacity of our fire services to counter the threat of bushfires as we once again enter the fire season.”

NSW Member for Blue Mountains Roza Sage says her community will always be grateful for last year’s aerial response.

“The people of the Blue Mountains remember what a reassuring sound it was last year to have these helicopters in the air providing invaluable support to the dedicated teams fighting the fires on the ground,” Mrs Sage said.

“I hope that they are not needed in the Blue Mountains this fire season but it is great news to hear that they are again available to combat any threats that may arise.”

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