



**David Elliott**  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Wednesday, 22 July 2020

### **NSW LAUNCHES COVID-SAFE EVACUATION PLAN**

The way large scale evacuations in NSW are carried out is set to change with the introduction of a number of safety initiatives to protect the health and lives of the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services David Elliott said the crisis has required the Government and emergency services agencies to be agile and rethink how they would undertake any future evacuations.

“Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as masks, will be used as appropriate at evacuation centres, with screening for symptoms in place when required. We will also be encouraging evacuees to stay with family or friends where possible to prevent overcrowding,” Mr Elliott said.

“Coordinating a potential large scale evacuation during the COVID-19 pandemic carries significant additional risks including person to person transmission not only to evacuees but also to our dedicated emergency services volunteers.”

“NSW has done an stellar job slowing the spread of the virus and these measures will further protect the community when they are most in need, especially heading into the next bushfire season.”

A new evacuation assistance hotline is in the final stages of creation and will be activated during emergencies to assist with registering evacuees and providing immediate welfare requirements. Importantly, the hotline will be used to arrange temporary accommodation for those who need it, which will reduce the need for, or attendance at evacuation centres.

Commissioner of Resilience NSW Shane Fitzsimmons said challenging circumstances require adaptation and innovation.

“We have collaborated closely with the emergency services and agencies to ensure we can protect displaced people when emergency strikes,” Mr Fitzsimmons said.

“As always, the first port of call if you need to evacuate during an emergency should be to stay with family and friends. We are ready to support people make arrangements should that not be possible.”

The new evacuation initiatives will be introduced in all evacuation centres including for bushfires and floods.

**MEDIA: Mike Morrow | 0408 937 179**