



# **Robyn Parker MP**

## **Minister for the Environment**

## **Minister for Heritage**

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Saturday, 23 March 2013

#### **HUGE NPWS HAZARD REDUCTION PROGRAM UNDERWAY**

Regional communities in NSW have been warned to expect smoke in coming weeks, including Easter, as the National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS) continues one of its biggest ever planned autumn hazard reduction programs.

Environment Minister Robyn Parker said NPWS crews have scheduled 72 hazard reduction burns treating thousands of hectares around the State over the next two weeks.

Ms Robyn Parker said NPWS crews were taking every opportunity while weather allows to complete hazard reductions postponed because of bad weather last spring and to carry out burns scheduled for the autumn.

“More funding and new specialist hazard reduction crews through the Government’s \$62.5 million national park bushfire package will allow crews to carry out a huge program across NSW while the weather lasts,” Ms Parker said.

“I appreciate community concerns about smoke but I ask people to understand that controlled burning is critical to protect life, property and the long-term ecological health of protected areas.

“Scheduled burns over the next week are concentrated on national parks in southern and western NSW and the Blue Mountains which traditionally has much better, drier conditions for hazard reduction during early autumn.

“A series of very large burns totalling about 4,000 hectare is planned for Kosciuszko National Park with a number of burns also planned for South East Forest and Morton national parks.

“In western NSW hazard reduction is planned for national parks near Walcha, Tenterfield, Glen Innes, Forbes, Cowra and Grenfell.”

Crews on the north coast, central coast and Sydney regions are busy preparing burns for later in April and into winter and spring.

Ms Parker said hazard reduction burning was entirely weather dependent and would only go ahead if safe.

More burns may be scheduled at the last minute if weather conditions and resources allow while scheduled burns may also be postponed at short notice due to the weather.

“People can find out what hazard reduction is planned on the NPWS park closures page or through the RFS website,” Ms Parker said.

“However crews are keeping a very close eye on conditions and the weather so people living near national parks should expect that burns may happen with very little notice in the next few weeks.

“It may be smoky but it is vital that crews get these operations done where and when they can to reduce fuel loads before the summer bushfire season. I would also like to thank the RFS and its volunteers whose help NPWS relies on to implement the program.”

Hazard reduction facts:

- Since July 1 2013, NPWS has undertaken **137** hazard reduction burns covering **37,167** hectares.
- As at 18 March 2013, NPWS had achieved 65 per cent of the total area treated by hazard reduction burning in NSW, while only managing 9 per cent of the land and 25 per cent of the fire prone land in NSW.

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