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MEDIA RELEASE

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IMPROVED 10/50 SCHEME OFFERS GREATER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Minister for Emergency Services David Elliott, Minister for the Environment Mark Speakman and NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers today announced a strengthened 10/50 scheme would provide better environmental protection and minimise tree clearing for views.

A review of the 10/50 scheme by the NSW RFS, the Office of Environment and Heritage and the Department of Planning concluded that residents in bushfire-prone areas should retain the right to protect their homes from bushfire, and made 30 recommendations to tighten the scheme.

The 10/50 scheme introduced after the devastating 2013 bushfires enables residents in bushfire-prone areas to remove trees within 10m and vegetation within 50m of their house without seeking approval.

Mr Elliott said the NSW Government accepted all 30 recommendations and would introduce legislation to Parliament today to amend the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and separately tighten the NSW RFS 10/50 Code of Practice.

The amendments also include measures to protect firefighters and other people who are carrying out hazard reduction activities or clearing vegetation under the scheme.

"This Government strongly believes that property owners should be empowered to protect their property, but it was clear that some people were clearing trees for reasons which had nothing to do with bushfire protection," Mr Elliott said.

It maintains the reduced entitlement area of 100m from higher risk vegetation (originally 350m), covering 85 per cent of properties historically destroyed in a bush fire.

Mr Speakman said the strengthened scheme would introduce stronger environmental protections such as excluding koala habitats, littoral rainforests, Aboriginal places, and trees within 100m of the coastline and mapped estuaries.

"The scheme will now also exclude critically endangered plants, critical habitats, all mangroves and saltmarshes and a range of critically endangered ecological communities," Mr Speakman said.

"About half of the 30 recommendations introduce greater environmental protections."

Deputy Commissioner Rogers said the review encourages councils to take greater responsibility of their bushfire prone land. The RFS can exclude low-risk pockets of bushland from the scheme if it is satisfied that council has appropriate mitigation strategies in place.

“This review has not been an easy task but we think we have the balance right. We thank the more than 3,500 residents, councils, community groups and other stakeholders who took the time to make a submission,” he said.

Residents can check their eligibility for the 10/50 scheme and view a copy of the report at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/1050.