



Robyn Parker MP

Minister for the Environment

Minister for Heritage

MEDIA RELEASE

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NPWS FIRE FIGHTERS RECOGNISED FOR SERVICE

AS NSW GETS 10 YEAR FIRE PLAN

NSW Environment Minister Robyn Parker today unveiled the State's first ever 10 year plan for managing bushfires in national parks during a National Medal Ceremony recognising 34 of the State's most experienced fire fighters.

Ms Parker released the strategy at Parliament House saying that the *Living with Fire in NSW National Parks Strategy* provides a clear way forward on how to prevent, manage and fight fires so that we best protect local communities and the environment.

"This is the first ever state-wide 10 year plan for how to manage fuel reduction and fire fighting in NSW national parks," Ms Parker said.

"Of course we cannot bushfire proof our State, but we can make sure the National Parks and Wildlife Service works alongside all government agencies, our communities and park neighbours to minimise the threat of bushfire where possible and focus our efforts where it counts most.

"The NSW Government had made fire management in NSW national parks a priority – with more funding, more fire fighters and more hazard reduction than ever before.

"This year already the agency has conducted over 110,000 hectares – the biggest Hazard Reduction Campaign seen in the State's National Parks and reserves ever.

"We are more ready than ever to respond quickly and efficiently to protect homes and communities, and stop the spread of fire where possible.

"And the people who will be implementing this strategy are people like these 34 men and women receiving National Fire Medals today.

"Between them, they have almost 700 years experience protecting the State, including fighting during some of the toughest, longest and most frightening bushfire campaigns.

"The National Medal recognises more than 15 years of service to protecting life and property and 11 of today's recipients have been awarded the 1st clasp for more than 25 years' service and 3 have received the 2nd clasp for more than 35 years' service.

"I thank them on behalf of the entire NSW community for their effort and their dedication," she said.

Ms Parker said long term planning in co-operation with all agencies was vital, with more communities living on the edge of bushland, an aging population and more days of extreme fire weather predicted.

“Fire is part of the Australian landscape and has been for millions of years,” Ms Parker said.

“However with more and more people living close to our bushland areas, it is more important than ever before that we plan strategically, rather than on a year by year basis, or when we are staring down the barrel of a major emergency.”

NPWS has more than 1300 trained and fit fire fighters, a well maintained fleet of fire fighting vehicles, and a specially fitted helicopter fleet and crew.

The Government has provided an extra \$62.5 million over five years to help NPWS double hazard reduction operations where the weather allows and employ new fire fighters.

Living with Fire in NSW National Parks – A strategy for managing bushfires in national parks and reserves 2012-2021 will be reviewed every year. It is available at www.environment.nsw.gov.au.