



Media Release

6 August 2015

PR/079/15

Farmers urge government to adopt all fire inquiry recommendations

NSW Farmers has urged the government to adopt all 29 recommendations from the NSW Upper House inquiry into the January 2013 fires at Wambelong, near Coonabarabran.

The call by farmers comes ahead of the government's anticipated response on 20 August to the inquiry's recommendations.

Rod Young, a sheep and grain farmer from Coonabarabran, said: "The fire was devastating for the local community. It has traumatised those in its path, taking an enormous financial and mental toll."

The fire burned over a period of 41 days, scorching more than 56,000 hectares of land, destroying 53 homes and more than 1100 livestock.

Key recommendations of the Upper House inquiry included:

- more frequent and structured hazard reduction burns on public land
- an enhanced network of fire trails in national parks
- greater respect for the volunteer fire-fighters in the Rural Fire Service, and greater use of local knowledge in fire fighting efforts
- standardised communications equipment across different government agencies fighting fires

The inquiry also recommended the relocation of the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) headquarters to a regional location.

NSW Farmers passed a motion expressing full support for the inquiry's recommendations at its recent annual conference in Sydney. In addition to supporting the inquiry's recommendations, a motion specifically calling for the NSW RFS headquarters to be moved to the Central West of NSW was also passed.

Mr Young said it is important that these recommendations be implemented as soon as possible to prevent the next mega-fire.

"People's homes, businesses and lives are at stake. This issue is too important to move slowly or half-heartedly."

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