



# Media Release

7 August 2019

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## MINISTER'S RESPONSE – BUSH FIRE RISK REDUCTION

Following the devastating fires across our region in February 2019, the impact of which is still being felt financially and emotionally by many Shire residents, Council resolved to write to our Federal and State Members.

The aim of the Council motion was to request NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, NSW Forestry Corporation, and Local Land Services, as a duty of care, to undertake in future, an increased level of park and forest fire management activities, including increased hazard reduction burns and increased numbers of dams and water infrastructure points for firefighting purposes. The reasoning behind the request was the impact on rural residents, who during the fires, had their limited personal and stock water supplies removed to attack the fire, with the result that many have been left severely disadvantaged.

"The response from the State Minister for Energy & Environment has left me feeling somewhat underwhelmed", said Mayor Peter Petty.

"The Minister states, and I quote, *I can assure Mr Petty that the NSW Government is committed to managing bushfire risk in our community. The Government has committed more than \$76 million to increase hazard reduction in our national parks through the Enhanced Bushfire Management Program. The Government has extended the program, committing a further \$74 million until 2022. (Just \$24.6 million per annum for the entire drought ravaged State!)*"

"The Minister goes on to say, *that since 2011, the National Parks & Wildlife Service has undertaken 80% of all hazard reduction burning in NSW. This financial year around 109,000 hectares of parks and reserves has been control burnt. This work included 9 burns treating 10,600 hectares in parks and reserves across Tenterfield, Glen Innes-Severn and Inverell Shire Council areas with planning for the next round of burns underway. We have not been given any advice of hazard reduction burns of this nature, nor have we observed actions of this scale in our Shire. This apparent lack of attention led to the vast area that was impacted by the fires,*" Mayor Petty added.

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"With regard to increased water infrastructure within the parks and reserves, the Minister has assured me that the National Parks & Wildlife Service will continue to work with Council and the local Bush Fire Management Committee to ensure that risk planning, mitigation and fire protection measures are in place. This assurance has not been evident to date. National Parks & Wildlife Service staff have attended meetings with Council and the Rural Fire Service but no clear offers of water infrastructure assistance have been made

In this regard however, I wish to thank Michael Liebermann and his crew for providing the recent opportunity for Councillors to inspect the fire damaged areas and I can assure everyone that we will be pushing for an increased liaison process.

Council also presented this motion at the recent National General Assembly of Councils in Canberra where it was taken on board by the Australian Local Government Association and will be submitting it to the NSW Local Government Conference in Sydney in October 2019.

As the dry weather continues and the days become increasingly hot and dry, I encourage everyone to remain fire aware, delay lighting fires and to ensure you have a fire response/evacuation plan in place", the Mayor said.

Fire Permits are required from 1 August 2019 and are available from the RFS Control Centre, however land owners are urged to consult their local brigade if they wish to burn, for hazard reduction or other purposes, and be aware of the need to advise neighbours 24 hours before lighting up.

**ENDS**