



Robyn Preston MP

Member for Hawkesbury

MEDIA RELEASE

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HAWKESBURY FIRE BUG CRACKDOWN: STANDARD NON-PAROLE PERIOD ALMOST DOUBLES

In a further crackdown on dangerous bushfire bugs, the standard non-parole period for convicted arsonists has increased from five years to nine years to help protect lives and property across Hawkesbury community.

Member for Hawkesbury, Robyn Preston MP said the Government has passed legislation to implement the recommendation of the Sentencing Council to help ensure those who commit bushfire offences spend more time behind bars.

“With another hot and dry summer around the corner, it is important there are strong laws in place to protect farmers and communities who are already battling drought,” Ms Preston said.

“My message to would-be firebugs is to stop and think about the children and families who could be killed or injured and the huge economic and emotional toll of being homeless and having to rebuild homes and farms from scratch,” Ms Preston said.

In 2018, Attorney General Mark Speakman asked the Sentencing Council to review the standard non-parole period.

As a result of the review, the *Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999* has been amended to increase the standard non-parole period for the bushfire offence under section 203E of the *Crimes Act 1900*. The offence applies to the charge of intentionally causing a fire and being reckless about it spreading on public land or someone else’s property.

“The tougher standard non-parole period builds on the Government’s introduction of a tougher penalty for the bushfire offence, which increased the maximum penalty from 14 to 21 years in November last year,” Mr Speakman said.

Police and Emergency Services Minister David Elliott said one act of stupidity could bring a community to its knees.

“There is no excuse for starting a bushfire, which is why the longer standard non-parole period, on top of tougher maximum sentences, reflects the seriousness of the crime,” he said.



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Acting NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Rob Rogers welcomed the latest reforms that will make firebugs more accountable.

“Our firefighters already have a difficult and dangerous job responding to fires and keeping people safe, let alone having to risk their lives because of reckless behaviour,” he said.

“The drought means the state is on high fire alert, so it is important people remain vigilant.”

As part of its review, the Sentencing Council received submissions from stakeholders including the Law Society of NSW, Legal Aid NSW, NSW Police Force, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Rural Fire Service Association. The majority of which agreed the bushfire offence’s standard non-parole period should be increased.

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