



Backing our emergency service workers and volunteers

March 2011



Emergency Services – backing our workers and volunteers

The protection and wellbeing of our people, cities, towns and neighbourhoods are essential when disasters occur.

In government, we've ensured that our communities are safe and well prepared for such emergencies. Our emergency crews, both paid and volunteer are ready around the clock to protect lives and minimise damage when disaster strikes.

Storms, floods and bush fires threaten our safety and livelihoods. Over the years, the people of Australia have faced many such severe events.

Just recently, bush fires in Victoria, cyclones in Queensland, and flooding that has hit Queensland and crossed into NSW have reminded us all of the pain and destruction that can be caused by nature's ferocity.

We understand the challenges these disasters bring to New South Wales and the demands on our emergency services personnel to save lives, minimise injuries and protect homes, businesses and vital infrastructure.

When natural disasters and other life-threatening events occur, our emergency services are the first on the scene. They often risk their own lives to protect our community and their dedication and skill are crucial to minimising the level of damage caused and hardship suffered.

These men and women work tirelessly when disaster strikes, but their commitment to their communities extends far beyond fighting fires, rescuing people in peril and assisting people hit by storms and floods.


The community education and awareness campaigns and precautionary activities these personnel undertake every year help ensure our communities are well prepared for whatever disasters may strike.

I am proud of this policy and the additional \$100 million we will spend to continue to protect and provide security for communities across New South Wales.

We will provide new and upgraded fire stations, more trained firefighters and flood rescue personnel and more support to our valued volunteers.

The Rural Fire Service is supported by 70,000 committed volunteers, whilst the State Emergency Service has up to 10,000 hardworking volunteers. We also have 6,200 volunteers who give up their time at community fire units, 3,000 volunteers at Marine Rescue and over 1,000 volunteers at the Volunteer Rescue Association. Volunteers are the backbone and they will be supported by the Labor Government.

You can be assured a re-elected Labor Government will continue to back our emergency services, making our community's safety our number one priority.



Kristina Lenneally

What this policy means for NSW

The people of New South Wales deserve the highest standard of service and protection in times of emergency. Our emergency services play a crucial role in helping to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters and other emergencies.

The Keneally Government values all our emergency services and will continue to support their efforts by continuing our productive partnerships with Fire and Rescue New South Wales, the Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service and Emergency Management NSW, as well as the community-based volunteer services, the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association and Marine Rescue NSW.

If re-elected, we will deliver the community new and upgraded fire stations in our regional centres and more trained firefighters and flood rescue personnel.

We will work in close partnership with the volunteers from the Rural Fire Service (RFS) and State Emergency Service (SES) to strengthen their operations and infrastructure.

We will continue to support the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association and Marine Rescue NSW who provide rescue services across the State and on our waters.

Our emergency services are renowned for their skill and experience. The Keneally Government, if re-elected, will continue to provide them with the training and resources they need to respond rapidly and expertly when fires, floods, storms and other emergencies strike.

ACTIONS:

Better Fire Services for Regional NSW

- 24/7 firefighters at Nowra and Bathurst Fire Station
- \$7.3 million for a new Fire Station at Broadmeadow
- Nowra Fire Station Upgrade

Training World-Class Emergency Services

- A new, world-class \$73 million Emergency Services State Training Academy at Richmond to provide comprehensive training in firefighting, hazardous materials protection, counter terrorism, rescue and other emergency response

More Fire Protection for our Communities

- \$84 million in hazard reduction burns and measures:
 - Of this \$62.5 million will be spent over five years to double the amount of bushfire prevention and suppression in National Parks
 - \$9.96 million per annum to strengthen the Rural Fire Service mitigation crews program
 - \$8 million a year for the Rural Fire Fighting Fund for trail maintenance and hazard reduction grants programs
 - \$3 million for increased hazard reduction in State Forests
- \$3.4 million a year for Neighbourhood Safer Places – a place of last resort for people caught in a bush fire

- More than \$2.15 million annually for a bush fire public awareness campaign, to educate the community about the need for preparation before and during the fire season
- A new Vulnerable Communities Unit within the RFS to better plan for the protection of those communities particularly susceptible to bush fire
- Annual funding for the expansion of the Hotspots Fire Project to cover an additional 200 properties a year

Attracting a New Generation of Volunteers

- \$6.4 million over four years to recruit and train more young people to emergency service crews, providing the next generation of volunteers and leaders to carry on the important work

Greater Safety for our Volunteers

- \$11.2 million to accelerate the upgrade of RFS communications including radio and pager networks
- Equip 5,450 Defibrillators for RFS operational vehicles and 300 for the SES
- 1,875 Personal Location Devices (PLDs) for SES flood rescue personnel
- \$1.25 million to equip the SES with 20 new flood rescue and supply boats
- Legislation to protect emergency services workers who face abuse or threats while on duty

Valuing our Volunteers

- Maintaining the independence of the NSW Rural Fire Service and the NSW State Emergency Service
- Continue the roll out of a \$60 million investment, either spent or committed, in RFS brigade stations and fire control centres
- Continue the roll out of a \$130 million investment, either spent or committed, in RFS bush fire tankers
- \$4.45 million for the establishment of “Rapid Aerial Response Teams” to contract and staff 2 new aircrafts to fight fires

Support for the Volunteer Rescue Association (VRA)

- Continue to commit \$5 million over four years in support grants to the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association

Supporting Marine Rescue Volunteers

- Continue to commit core funding of \$1.44 million a year to Marine Rescue NSW, with the boating community to contribute an estimated \$5 million a year through boat license and registration contribution fees

Labor and Emergency Services

Safety has and always will be this Government's highest priority. Saving lives and reducing the number of injuries will continue to define our commitment to delivering strong and effective emergency services in New South Wales.

Labor has a solid history of achievement in providing the best emergency services in this State. These accomplishments are a testament to our close and long-standing partnerships with our state and independent community-based agencies.

We have a range of preventative measures and community awareness campaigns in place as well as the rapid, reliable and strategic emergency response of our highly-skilled and trained emergency personnel.

Labor believes strongly in equipping residents with the knowledge and support they need to protect themselves when disasters arise. We will continue to fund important campaigns to help residents prepare themselves for emergencies.

Campaigns such as the *Prepare.Act.Survive* bush fire awareness and education campaign, the Winter Fire Safety campaign and the SES FloodSafe and StormSafe activities have been successful in providing residents with the information they need to prepare themselves, their families and their homes for emergencies.

Being prepared is only one element of ensuring our communities are protected. Responding to emergencies swiftly and efficiently can help to significantly minimise the level of damage to homes, other buildings and infrastructure. Supporting our hardworking emergency services personnel and providing them with the training and equipment they need for this important work remains our top priority.

A re-elected Labor government will continue to work to safeguard our communities and minimise the impact of natural hazards and other emergencies.

Our Challenges

The Keneally Government believes that our community deserves the highest level of protection and needs expert emergency response and recovery teams swiftly on the scene when faced with potentially life-threatening disasters.

We always need more well-trained emergency services workers, both volunteer and salaried, and better facilities and resources. That is why we are building more fire stations, upgrading infrastructure and training more emergency services personnel so we can continue to provide our community with the safety and protection we need.

Our Record

LABOR

- \$9.5 billion invested in Emergency Services since 1995/96.
- \$972 million for Emergency Services in 2010/11 Budget.
- Committed to delivering the \$106.9 million Bushfire Protection Package (BPP) in November 2010 - included \$84 million for strategic hazard reduction.
- The BPP is in addition to the commitment of \$17 million to the RFS for bush fire mitigation works in 2010/11.
- In 2009/10, bush prevention and mitigation activities, including hazard reduction burning afforded protection to more than 263,000 properties, worth more than \$127 billion.
- Seasonal work crews are being rolled out around NSW to prepare sites for hazard reduction giving more RFS volunteers more time on the ground to do more burning and clearing.
- Thanks to NSW Government investment and our 70,000 hardworking volunteers, the RFS is one of the world's most respected fire agencies.
- More than \$6.9 billion invested in the NSW Fire Brigades – now Fire and Rescue NSW – one of the world's largest urban fire and rescue services since 1995/96.
- This includes more than \$256 million for fire engines and specialised vehicles and more than \$130 million for new and upgraded fire stations.
- Introduced New Fire Danger Ratings.
- Introduced the identification of more than 800 Neighbourhood Safer Places.
- Introduced the Emergency Alert telephone system.
- Improved availability of information during fires – including higher capacity phone lines and more online information.
- More than \$547 million invested in the State Emergency Service, upgrading emergency response vehicles, flood boats and information technology, with a \$5 million boost in 2010/11 for new staff to support volunteers and help build community resilience.
- Since 1998 has invested more than \$14 million in volunteer marine rescue groups.
- Marine Rescue NSW began operating as the state's single rescue organisation on January 1 2010, following \$3 million from the NSW Government for its establishment in July 2009.
- A total of \$6.4 million in annual funding for Marine Rescue NSW.
- Increased funding for the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association from a direct grant of \$270,000 in 1995 to \$1.29 million in 2010/11.

OPPOSITION

- No guarantee that record funding for the emergency services will be maintained.
- Propose a percentage-based approach to hazard reduction burning which is more about filling quotas than about protecting lives and property.
- Propose a one-size-fits-all approach from the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission report instead of carefully examining and adapting these recommendations to the NSW environment.
- Fails to understand the structure of the RFS in proposing a council of volunteers to “put volunteers back at the heart of the RFS”. There is already volunteer representation at every level of the organisation.
- Propose an independent panel for hazard reduction, undermining the expertise of the RFS as a whole and ignoring the State Bush Fire coordinating Committee, which comprises representatives from a range of state agencies, Local Government representatives and independent expert groups.
- In the 7 years it was last in Office, the Liberal-National Coalition spent just \$197.1 million on the RFS. Since coming into office 16 years ago NSW Labor has spent over \$2 billion on the RFS. That's just over double the time in office but TEN TIMES the amount allocated to the RFS by the former Coalition Government.
- During the last year the Coalition was in Government just \$169,000 was allocated to the Rural Fire Service towards hazard reduction, compared to \$17 million allocated last year by the NSW Labor Government for bushfire mitigation programs. This is more than 100 times the amount allocated by the previous Coalition Government.

- Appointed the State Emergency Recovery Controller to assist communities to recover from the impacts of natural disasters and emergencies and established Emergency Management NSW.
- Established Marine Rescue NSW, drawing together members from the existing volunteer marine rescue agencies – the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association and Volunteer Rescue Association - into a single, coordinated service dedicated to the safety of the boating community.

Better Fire Services for Regional NSW

Our fire services play a crucial role in protecting our communities in regional NSW. This year the Government has invested \$637 million in the Fire and Rescue NSW.

We must – and will - continue to invest in our country towns and communities.

Firefighters ready around the clock

Labor will commit to providing full-time Fire and Rescue NSW firefighters, ready for action 24 hours a day, at Nowra and Bathurst. These are significant regional centres for our State, with populations of more than 30,000 and growing.

- Nowra is a major regional centre for the South Coast, with continued residential, commercial and industrial expansion.
- Bathurst is one of the fastest growing inland cities with a growing industrial sector and a proposed major transport interchange for road and rail freight.

New and upgraded fire stations

In times of emergency, an organised and rapid response is crucial. That's why we will provide new and upgraded fire stations.

A Keneally Government will commit to building a new fire station Broadmeadow and upgrade the existing fire station at Nowra.

- Broadmeadow in Newcastle is critical to integrating Fire and Rescue NSW services in the broader Newcastle area, including Hamilton and New Lambton.
- Nowra fire station will receive an upgrade to ensure the highest emergency service available to this important and expanding regional centre.

By investing in new and upgraded fire stations and more Fire and Rescue NSW firefighters, a Keneally Government will increase community safety and resilience when emergencies occur.

ACTION:

- 24/7 Fire fighters at Nowra and Bathurst Fire Station
- \$7.3 million for a new Fire Station at Broadmeadow
- Nowra Fire Station Upgrade

Training World Class Emergency Services

The Keneally Government will establish a world-class Emergency Services State Training Academy at Richmond to ensure fire fighters are able to receive quality training and access state-of-the-art practical experiences.

Firefighters play an integral part in keeping the NSW community safe. They respond to emergency situations but also do a lot of work in prevention and education.

Fire fighters are consistently the first on the scene when major incidents occur, and as such there is a need for continual and high level skill development.

The current training facility at Alexandria is too small to support the most recent range of training requirements needed.

The new facilities, to be located on the Richmond campus of the University of Western Sydney, will enable us to provide the latest facilities for firefighting, hazardous materials, working at heights and search and rescue training.

The new facility will also be a centre of research excellence for all aspects of fire behaviour, science and firefighter training through partnerships with tertiary and associated institutions.

A re-elected Keneally Government will provide this much needed facility to strengthen the skills and experience provided to firefighters, and lead to cutting edge research to assist our prevention and education efforts.

ACTION:

- A new, world-class \$73 million Emergency Services State Training Academy at Richmond of the University of Western Sydney to provide comprehensive training in firefighting, hazardous materials protection, counter terrorism, rescue and other emergency response

More Protection for our Communities

Communities all over New South Wales will continue to receive the highest protection to ensure they are kept safe in times of emergency.

A re-elected Keneally Government will deliver a \$106.9 million bushfire protection package.

This package is a strong, coordinated and cohesive bush fire prevention and fire fighting plan. The Keneally Government will ensure that more than \$80 million in hazard reduction burns and other measures are carried out.

In addition, important projects for communities will provide an increase in the level of protection when bushfires threaten homes and lives. The Neighbourhood Safer Places initiative will provide a place of last resort for people caught in a bushfire and the Bush Fire Public Awareness campaign will help residents prepare for fires before and during the season.

Vulnerable communities who are especially susceptible to bush fires will receive special attention. The RFS will be provided with additional funding annually to design comprehensive plans to best protect these communities as well as funding for the Hot Spots Fire Project to cover an additional 200 properties per year.

ACTION:

- \$84 million in hazard reduction burns and measures:
 - Of this \$62.5 million will be spent over five years to double the amount of bushfire prevention and suppression in National Parks
 - \$9.96 million a year to enhance the RFS mitigation crews program
 - \$8 million a year for the Rural Fire Fighting Fund for trail maintenance and hazard reduction grants programs
 - \$3 million for increased hazard reduction in State Forests
- \$3.4 million a year for Neighbourhood Safer Places – a place of last resort for people caught in a bush fire
- More than \$2.15 million a year for a bush fire public awareness campaign, to educate the community about the need for preparation before and during the fire season
- A new Vulnerable Communities Unit within the RFS to better plan for the protection of those particularly susceptible to bush fire
- Annual funding for the expansion of the Hotspots Fire Project to cover an additional 200 properties a year

Attracting a New Generation of Volunteers

Rural Fire Service (RFS) and State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers carry out crucial work to ensure that our communities are safe. In order to sustain this important work, the Keneally Government will work hard to recruit more young people to the RFS and SES, providing the next generation of volunteers and leaders.

Cadet Programs are already carried out in more than 50 schools across the state, in locations such as Kelso, Bathurst, Tumut, Cooma, Monaro, and greater Sydney.

We will commit \$6.4 million for an additional 16 staff to focus on youth development and expand the Cadet Programs in regional growth centres such as Bathurst, Dubbo, Monaro, Tamworth and Bega.

This will provide young people with opportunity to build competencies and gain many important skills.

ACTION:

- \$6.4 million over four years to recruit and train more young people to emergency service crews, providing the next generation of volunteers and leaders

Greater Safety for our Volunteers

The Keneally Government places the highest priority on the safety of our emergency services personnel.

We will continue to accelerate the upgrade of RFS communication including radio and pager networks to ensure that they can effectively perform their selfless volunteer responsibilities.

Emergency Services staff and volunteers are often placed in situations of great stress and exertion, along with members of the public.

That is why we have already started to roll out this policy to create a safer NSW. This month the Keneally Government provided 5,450 defibrillators to equip each RFS operational vehicle and 300 for the SES. Volunteers will receive training to provide emergency medical support for members of the community in the unfortunate event of an individual suffering a cardiac arrest. Defibrillators can be used to provide emergency intervention and care, revive and sustain life until a patient can be transported to hospital.

As the recent floods affecting the majority of NSW and neighbouring States have again illustrated, protection for our valuable SES workers is a priority.

We have this month already provided 1875 distress devices (PLDs) for flood rescue personnel to locate members who are in the water and at risk. In addition to this we have provided 20 flood rescue and supply boats.

A re-elected Keneally Government will continue to fight for the safety of volunteers and will enact legislation to protect RFS volunteers who face abuse and threats while on duty.

ACTION:

- \$11.2 million to accelerate the upgrade of RFS communications including radio and pager networks
- Equip 5,450 defibrillators for RFS operational vehicles and 300 for the SES
- 1,875 personal location devices (PLDs) for SES flood rescue personnel
- \$1.25 million to equip the SES with 20 new flood rescue and resupply boats
- Legislation to protect emergency services workers who face abuse or threats while on duty

Valuing our Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of our society and give up so much of their time to serve the community. That's why the Keneally Government has worked in partnership with the Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service to strengthen its operations and infrastructure and will continue to do so if re-elected.

We will ensure the RFS and the SES maintains its independent status and head office in order to effectively manage and coordinate its operations.

The Keneally Government will continue to invest in a \$60 million four-year program to ensure that RFS brigade stations and fire control centres across NSW are of the highest standard. Regions that have benefited from this roll out program include Bombala, Wollondilly, Hornsby, Illawarra, and Coffs Harbour. In addition, over the next four years, we will continue to spend \$130 million for bush fire tankers.

To further improve transparency, the RFS Commissioner will audit and report to the NSW Parliament regarding risk management and mitigation programs and progress.

ACTION:

- Maintaining the independence of the NSW Rural Fire Service and the NSW State Emergency Service
- Continue the rollout of a \$60 million investment, either spent or committed, in RFS brigade stations and fire control centres
- Continue the rollout of a \$130 million investment, either spent or committed, in RFS bush fire tankers
- \$4.45 million to establish "Rapid Aerial Response Teams" to contract and staff 2 new aircrafts to fight bushfires

Support for the Volunteer Rescue Association (VRA)

The provision of rescue services in rural and regional NSW is critical and often performed by volunteers, including the dedicated community members who provide their time and services by volunteering for the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association. The Labor Government has increased funding for the VRA from a direct grant of \$270,000 in 1995 to \$1.29 million in 2010/11.

A re-elected Keneally Government will provide \$5 million in grants over four years to support the work of the Volunteer Rescue Association across NSW, which operates in locations such as Bega, the Central Coast, Cessnock, Dubbo, Lithgow and the Tweed.

ACTION:

- Continuing to commit \$5 million over four years in support the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association

Support for our Marine Rescue Volunteers

Since 1998, the Government has provided funding of more than \$10.1 million to volunteer marine rescue organisations.

Following an independent inquiry into the State's volunteer marine rescue services, Marine Rescue NSW was formed on 1 July 2009, drawing together members from the existing volunteer marine rescue agencies – the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association and Volunteer Rescue Association - into a single, coordinated service dedicated to the safety of the boating community.

The Government provided a one-off establishment grant of \$3 million in 2009 to assist in establishing the new organisation.

The boating community supported the introduction of a contribution fee of \$7.50 (\$3 for concession holders) on boat licenses and vessel registrations to provide ongoing funding for the operation of the new marine rescue organisation. This was introduced on 1 September 2010, generating an additional \$5 million a year for MRNSW, in addition to more than \$1.44 million provided directly by the Government.

ACTION:

- Continue to commit core funding of \$1.44 million a year to Marine Rescue NSW, with the boating community to contribute an estimated \$5 million a year through boat license and registration contribution fees



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