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POLITICS NSW STATE PARLIAMENT

Furies reach for the sky as more Sydneysiders move into apartments

By Lisa Visentin

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With more and more Sydneysiders living in apartments, NSW's firefighting service will be equipped with new aerial machinery designed to extinguish fires in high-rise complexes and rescue residents from buildings.

The eight new aerial appliances, comprising two aerial ladder platforms with a reach of up to 44 metres and six aerial pumpers, will cost \$6.8 million and will be deployed to areas with high-density populations and high-rise buildings.

It is a significant boost to Fire and Rescue NSW's existing aerial fleet, which consists of 22 appliances predominantly deployed in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong.

Minister for Emergency Services Troy Grant said the investment aimed to improve the agency's capacity to respond to large-scale operations such as the outbreak of major fires in shopping centres and industrial complexes, as well multistorey unit blocks.

“There is no question our state is undergoing a massive building boom, there are cranes across our cities, and we must ensure our firefighters have the tools they need to support



Fire and Rescue NSW will be equipped with \$7 million in new aerial machinery, including two new ladders similar to those pictured here.

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"We need to ensure our firefighting equipment has the capacity to extinguish fires should they break out anywhere, from modern building developments to transport and road infrastructure."

The investment [follows a decision by Fire and Rescue NSW in 2016](#) that because of budget cuts it would remove from operation a number of its ageing specialised "Brontos" trucks, which were capable of reaching 37 metres.

The Brontos were retired from local fire stations at Hornsby and St Andrews, near Liverpool, and replaced with smaller trucks with 15-metre ladders, sparking concern in those communities about the capacity of firefighters to respond to high-rise fires.



Fire and Rescue NSW ladder machinery in operation.

Photo: Supplied

FRNSW Commissioner Paul Baxter said the additional resources meant firefighters were better prepared "for anything and to help anyone, anywhere, any time".

"FRNSW is always looking for new technologies to enhance incident response effectiveness and safety in accordance with risk factors, population demographics, and environmental conditions," he said.

The NSW government, along with governments around the world, was prompted to reassess fire safety in apartment buildings after the deadly Grenfell Tower fire in London in 2017, which claimed the lives of 72 people.

In December, the Berejiklian government passed new fire safety laws, which included fines up to \$1.1 million for corporations found to be using banned building products, such as the style of flammable cladding widely blamed for exacerbating the Grenfell Tower fire.

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Lisa Visentin is state political reporter. She has previously covered urban affairs, and worked in federal parliament.

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