



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Solid start to Top End fire season

Bushfires NT acting director Steve Sutton has congratulated Bushfires NT staff and volunteers for their sterling efforts in combating wildfires throughout rural and remote parts of the Territory so far this dry season.

Mr Sutton said a long and heavy wet season had contributed to a busier than usual dry season of prescribed burns and fighting wildfires, with annual and perennial grasses providing greater than average fuel loads.

“Bushfires NT staff have contributed more than 2131 hours this fire season to either prescribed burns or wildfires, with volunteers contributing more than 2789 hours,” Mr Sutton said.

“This effort has focused primarily in the Vernon region where 135 of the Territory’s 156 fires have taken place.

“Bushfires NT has 13 of its 21 brigades in the Vernon region where land tenures have increased by approximately 25 per cent to about 8000 in total.

“Fighting these fires this year hasn’t been easy, as the late wet season made it particularly hard for staff and volunteers to access certain fires and fire access trails, as the land was quite moist and not something our vehicles were able to handle with ease.”

Mr Sutton reminded landholders they must reduce bushfire risk by installing firebreaks and fire access trails that can be used for back burning operations or access for fire fighting vehicles.

He said fire trails also help in the protection of fire fighters as it gives them a clear area to contain a wildfire.

“It is an offence not to have fire breaks or access trails and there have been several prosecutions resulting in hefty fines and criminal records imposed on landowners who failed to meet the minimum standard,” Mr Sutton said.

“Where landholders fail to comply they may be fined and have a fire break installed by Bushfires NT at the landholder’s cost.

“But the major consideration in all of this is that running the risk of being fined means you are also running the risk of your property being damaged by fire, and surely no one wants that.

“Landholders must also clean up as much as possible around their properties to prevent their possessions going up in smoke.

“And it would be a tremendous help to Bushfires NT and other property owners if people contact us the moment they notice a wildfire, as timing is a critical factor when extinguishing such fires.”

Mr Sutton said the minimum standard for fire trails is four metres wide slashed with the slash removed, bare earth or graded, chemically treated or grazed. If every landholder fulfils their responsibility, there should be a strip eight metres wide at property boundaries from which to suppress wildfires.

He said landholders should also have a clear or green area around their home for the assets they want to protect in case of wildfire.

Ends

**Media Note – For more information contact Steve Sutton on 8922 0832**

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