

## National Parks and Wildlife Service September bulletin

Your PSA delegates and Industrial staff attending a Joint Consultative Committee meeting with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) on Wednesday 9 September. The following is an update on what was discussed.

### Recommendations of the bushfire inquiry

Deputy Secretary NPWS, Atticus Fleming, spoke in relation to the outcomes of the inquiry. He indicated that recruitment for the 125 new fire fighters was almost complete and that training would soon commence. He stated the new positions were not to be used for the backfilling of existing vacant Field Officer roles. Additional vehicles would be provided for the new staff on a ratio of one vehicle per three new staff. He also thanked the PSA for its submission as it assisted with the delivery of some of the outcomes such as the additional fire fighters for NPWS.

### Threatened species management

The PSA indicated its concern in relation to the future management of threatened species on park. This included the cost of constructing predator-proof enclosures over large tracts of land; ongoing maintenance of fences and the apparent contracting out (or privatisation) of NPWS land and land management responsibilities at these locations. The PSA also indicated that NPWS needs to adopt a 'whole of landscape' approach to vertebrate pest control, as is the case with some of the successful breeding programs for Brush Tailed Rock Wallaby colonies managed by NPWS staff on park without enclosures.

The PSA stated that the expertise for such work was already in house and there was no need to contract out such work. The Deputy Secretary stated there were more proposals being considered, however the management model for these may differ to that used at the existing three sites. He gave an undertaking to discuss these proposals with the PSA over the coming weeks.

### Delay in resolving issues with Ranger progression

Yet again NPWS was reminded that the continuing delays in the handling of ranger progression applications was unacceptable. The PSA indicated that it required resolution expeditiously. DPIE industrial staff advised that there is an intention to meet on this matter soon. The PSA will continue to pursue this matter until it is resolved.

### HSR elections

Due to the protracted fire season there was not a great deal of uptake for HSR roles when nominations were formally requested last year. DPIE advised that staff can nominate to be a workplace HSR at any time. However, a memo will be circulated once again inviting nominations. The PSA encourages members to consider nominating for these extremely important roles.



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### WHS committee representation for Park Programs and Business Delivery staff

It was confirmed at the meeting that Park Programs and Business Delivery staff based in regions would best be represented in the WHS committees established for the local Park Operations staff. It was agreed that a WHS committee will be formed for all NPWS staff based in 4PSQ and that this should occur despite the COVID work-from-home conditions. Members should approach their managers if they are interested in being part of this committee.

### Post fire recovery resources

Twenty-four roles to assist with post fire recovery will be rolled out across the state. The majority will be based in the Branches most impacted by fire, with West and Greater Sydney branches getting one role each. These roles will be a mix of Ranger and Technical Officer roles, as the greatest need was identified for planning and assessment roles.

### Future fire training

The PSA raised this issue in light of the new fire staff coming on board and the fact that there are issues with trainers not being released from normal duties and/or their roles being backfilled. The PSA was seeking an undertaking from NPWS that this would occur without issue. NPWS stated that four staff had been taken off line to deal with the additional staff requiring fire training. They will develop content and deliver training. Backfilling is being provided.

### Law enforcement training

As requested by the PSA, NPWS gave an update at the meeting on progress being made on delivering additional training. Two courses have been held in Northern Inland Branch and Level 2 training is planned post fire season. Due to the significant increase in visitation, the PSA requested the re-instatement of a 'Duty Solicitor'. Further to this, the PSA also requested an Investigator to be made available and quarantined to work in NPWS Greater Sydney Branch to deal with the significant increase in illegal activities across the reserves in the Branch. The NPWS acknowledged that COVID had 'raised the bar' on both visitation and the need for more law enforcement resources and would consider all the PSA proposals.

### Incident payments and other allowances

There have been ongoing meetings to resolve a number of issues relating to the payment of allowances and payment for incidents. Interim measures developed by Payroll to resolve such issues will be discussed at a meeting planned for next week. Further to this the department acknowledged that a broader review of the payment of allowances (boot, meal, etc.) is ongoing.



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### Payment rates for additional incident roles

Agreement has been reached on the rates of pay for additional incident roles (as stated in the 2006 MoU attached to the current NPWS Award). Such roles include (but are not limited to) Deputy Incident Controller; Situation Officer; Safety Officer; Aircraft Officer; Air Attack Supervisor; Air Observer and Air Base Manager. Payment of the rates will be conditional on the Award being varied and the 'Wages Policy Taskforce' agreeing to the possible additional cost of such an Award variation.

