

NPWS stimulus package

Following lobbying from the PSA and community groups around the importance of adequately funding NPWS, the NSW State Government has announced a stimulus package of \$400 million over 3 years for NSW National Parks.

This package of funding will also include the establishment of 160 temporary roles. The package is provided to enhance access; recovery funds for fires and boost regional communities with the provision of jobs and funds to spend in regional communities.

The funds include \$275 million to be invested in new facilities including more than 750 kilometres of new and upgraded walking tracks; upgrades of 38 campgrounds and 61 new and improved picnic areas.

While we welcome the boost to the NPWS and the NSW economy, the PSA has concerns that the stimulus package does not address the current vacant roles within NSW National Parks. The PSA was NOT consulted about the composition and numbers of the new roles. Members believe that if current vacancies were filled permanently the maintenance work that has been identified could be undertaken.

Since being announced, the PSA has met with DPIE industrial staff to consult and raise concerns about the roles being advertised, number of specific roles and location of the roles. As stated above, while new roles are welcome, NPWS must fill the current vacancies which NPWS claimed to have been fully funded and accounted for during the Future Parks restructure.

There is a significant increase in field staff (with an emphasis on recruiting FOGO's and FO 1/2's). 85 of the new roles (more than half) are FOGO's and FO 1/2's i.e. roles which it's assumed require constant supervision. However there also needs to be a similar increase in Rangers and Project Officers who are already being assigned the task of managing the new projects. Similarly, administrative roles also need a boost to cover the significant increase in their workloads as a flow on from the new projects.

At this point in time it would appear that there will be more work for these staff with only one additional Ranger; 7 TLR's and a handful of Project Support Officers and administrative staff being recruited. The PSA believes this needs to be adjusted as these staff are already suffering from significant increases in workloads even before these projects commence.

The PSA is also advocating that these roles should be ongoing consistent with other such roles, such as EBMP, which are all ongoing. This will enable NPWS to manage the ongoing maintenance liability of any new project infrastructure. It is counterintuitive to recruit, train and ensure that the new roles gain experience only to see them leave the NPWS after 3 years. Also all vacant Field Officer 1/4 roles should be filled before putting on more unskilled and untrained FOGO and FO 1/2 roles.

The PSA would also encourage its members to apply for any role that will enhance their career prospects and promotional opportunities within the agency.

