



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO.5 – LEGAL AFFAIRS

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE PROPOSED CHANGES TO RURAL FIRE DONATIONS FUND**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**19 June 2020**

A parliamentary committee will be examining proposed amendments to the Rural Fires Amendments (NSW RFS and Brigades Donations Fund) Bill 2020. The Bill was introduced into the Legislative Council of NSW by Mr David Shoebridge, a Greens member. The amendments aim to overcome restrictions in how recent donations received by the Rural Fire Service may be used to support individuals and communities who were impacted by recent bushfires.

The donations, over \$50 million raised in relation to a call by Celeste Barber, were the subject of consideration by the Supreme Court recently, who held that the money can only be applied for the purposes of the RFS Donations Trust, which is to pay for equipment and training. The limitations of the Trust prevent the donations from being used more broadly, for example, to help individuals who have lost their homes or those impacted in other states.

The Chair of the committee, the Hon Robert Borsak MLC, said "This inquiry is a good opportunity to examine the implications of the proposed amendments and whether they address the barriers encountered in using the donation money to support those devastated by the recent bushfires".

The committee is inviting submissions from expert stakeholders and has launched a questionnaire to receive individuals' views on the Bill. To participate in the questionnaire: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LT6Q9J9>

There will also be a virtual public hearing held on 16 July, to enable the committee to report by 31 July. For more information, please see the committee's [website](#).

-ENDS-

*For further information please contact Committee Chair, Hon Robert Borsak MLC, on 9230 2573.*