



Troy Grant
Minister for Emergency Services

MEDIA RELEASE

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GUARDIAN ANGEL 'GAIA' TO HELP FIGHT FIRES AS MAJOR FUNDING FORTIFIES FLEET

A multi-million dollar funding boost will strengthen the Large Air Tanker (LAT) program across NSW as the world's first firefighting '737' aircraft known as 'Gaia' arrives in Sydney, Minister for Emergency Services Troy Grant said.

Mr Grant said \$26.3 million of NSW Government funding would allow the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) to purchase a LAT and two fixed wing scanning aircraft to bolster the overall fleet.

These new aircraft will be permanently based in NSW instead of being leased from overseas, providing greater reliability and flexibility for firefighting responses across the state.

"This major funding injection will fortify our fleet into the future and provide year-round long range aerial firefighting capabilities to complement our existing aviation resources," Mr Grant said.

"With longer bush fire seasons comes the increasing threat of severe fires, which is why the NSW Government is leading the way by providing our firies with the very best resources to help protect lives and properties."

Mr Grant said the addition of 'Gaia' to the current LAT fleet also represented another significant support for frontline firefighters as the bush fire season continues.

"These aircraft really are heroes in the sky when our firies are battling big blazes with little relief from the gruelling conditions," Mr Grant said.

NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers said the LATs have proven to be an incredibly important asset.

"Having these aircraft available to assist our firefighters on the ground is such an important tool to have in the kit all year round," Deputy Commissioner Rogers said.

"The new 'Gaia' aircraft can carry more than 15,000 litres of fire retardant to drop strategically over fire grounds as the frontline response continues, providing an invaluable support."

'Gaia' is the last of a record four LATs being used during this year's bush fire season, and has recently completed testing in the US so it can now be dispatched into the field when required.

It is the first '737' to be used for firefighting anywhere in the world, and will be used for direct attacks on both bush and grass fires, creating containment lines, and providing urban interface protection.

The additional LAT and fixed wing aircrafts that will be acquired with the new funding will join the fleet ahead of the 2019 bush fire season.

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