



The Hon Fran Bailey MP Federal Member for McEwen

WEDNESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2010

Fire detection trials underway

Trials have started this week of fire detection technology after member for McEwen Fran Bailey secured Commonwealth funding to evaluate their use in bushfire-prone areas.

Fran said the trials were vital to better protecting our communities from bushfires.

"Advanced technology is being successfully used in Europe and the United States to detect fires much earlier," Fran said.

"The technology available overseas operates 24 hours a day and unlike spotter planes or satellites, can constantly scan an area to immediately detect fires at their earliest stage, a plume of smoke.

"The trials being conducted in the Otways and at Tumut in NSW will allow governments and fire fighting agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of new technology under Australian conditions."

The three technologies on trial over summer are Firewatch, Forestwatch and Eyefi.

Fran visited Europe after the Black Saturday fires to investigate Firewatch, developed from technology used for the Mars Space Program.

Firewatch uses digital sensors that can scan about 40km and detect more than 16,000 shades of smoke.

Firewatch also uses weather conditions, including wind, velocity, humidity and temperature to predict a fire's expansion and threat to communities.

Following her investigations, Fran lobbied the Federal Government to fund trials this summer.

"Victoria has a tragic history of bushfires since European settlement," Fran said.

"We must learn the lessons of Black Saturday, so eerily similar to those of 1851 and 1939, and better manage our environment and protect our communities.

"The technology now being trialled has the potential to significantly improve fire prevention and detection in Australia."

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