TERRITORY SHOULD GET MORE BUSHFIRE FUNDS

The Northern Territory’s share of the $15M National Bushfire Mitigation Fund should grow following today’s Emergency Services Ministerial Council meeting in Canberra, Minister for Emergency Services, Paul Henderson said.

“Until today the Commonwealth had proposed the Northern Territory would receive just $50,000 a year from the fund, despite making up 16 per cent of the nation’s land mass,” Mr Henderson said.

“I am pleased that Attorney-General Philip Ruddock has today agreed that Commonwealth Officials will re-examine the Territory’s allocation and engage with further discussion with NT officials.

“It’s not possible to pre-empt the outcome of the discussion, however I am optimistic that the re-assessment will produce an increase for the Territory.

“Today the Ministerial Council also considered a proposal to introduce a national wide tax rebate of $300 a year for Emergency Service volunteers in recognition of the valuable role they play in serving the community.

“I am disappointed that the Commonwealth rejected this proposal of what would have been concrete support for our volunteers.

“Positively, further work will now be carried out to investigate what other form of tangible support could be implemented in support of our volunteers, and the Northern Territory will play its part in this further work.”

Mr Henderson said further gains had also been made for the Northern Territory in relation to the Commonwealth’s Local Government Grant Scheme.

“Most Local Government bodies in the Territory have little or no emergency management role, meaning they would not be able to access the scheme’s $33M in funds,” said Mr Henderson.

“Today the Ministerial Council and Mr Ruddock acknowledged that this scheme will need to recognise the Territory’s unique local government arrangements when considering applications to the scheme which is a good outcome for the NT.”

Mr Henderson returns to Darwin tonight.

Contact: Rebecca Cass 0401 110 389