

NEWS

Bushfire risk reduced with fuel burns

THE level of bushfire risk this season is still unknown but fuel reduction burns will now get under way to protect communities, the Tasmania Fire Service says.

About 60 planned fires will take place across the state in the lead-up to summer. The spring burns form part of the state government's \$28.5 million Fuel Reduction Program.

"It's a little bit too early to tell what the fire season will be, but we'll know in a couple of weeks," State Fire Management Council chairman Ian Sauer said.

"The program won't stop bushfires but as the program gets rolled out more communities, more assets and indeed more ecological areas will be protected from bushfires."

About 200 planned burns were conducted across Tasmania last year but dry lightning sparked blazes, which

burnt through about 100,000 hectares of land.

The TFS conducted the first burn for the season in more than six hectares of bushland near Hobart on Friday. Mr Sauer said the community was consulted ahead of the fire.

"The aim of the program is to make Tasmanian communities and assets safer," Mr Sauer said.

"Crews talk to the EPA, talk to the Asthma foundation and make sure everyone knows what's happening with the burning in their area."

The TFS is yet to confirm when the first fuel reduction burn will take place in the state's North but areas including Launceston, St Marys, George Town and Weymouth will be targeted in coming months. Visit www.fire.tas.gov.au for information.

— IMOGEN ELLIOTT