

\$1.3m to help cut bushfire risk

By MICHELLE WISBEY

AS BUSHFIRE season approaches for another year, Tasmania has received \$1.3 million to be put towards preventative measures.

Police and Emergency Management Minister Rene Hidding announced on Sunday that the state had been awarded the federal funding, to be delivered over the next three years as part of the \$15 million National Bushfire Mitigation Program.

The majority of the funding will go towards programs committed to improving community safety

through bushfire prevention.

Tasmania Fire Service acting deputy chief Jeff Harper said that fuel reduction burning would be crucial this year as dry conditions had created an increased risk of bushfire on the state's East Coast and Northern Midlands region over the summer.

The first round of grants will go to Cradle Coast Natural Resource Management, the Antarctic Climate Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre, and the University of Tasmania.

Each of the three projects are able to use the funding to decrease

bushfire risk through research, training and community engagement.

The fuel reduction program has already seen of 28,419 hectares of land burnt last season – a nearly 40 per cent increase from the 2013-14 season. Mr Harper said that the hazard reduction burning program was critical to making communities safer.

“Tasmania sits in the South-East corner of Australia and that’s recognised as one of the most bushfire-prone areas in the world,” he said.

“We can’t have enough resources to put a fire truck or firefighters in



Police and Emergency Management Minister Rene Hidding (centre) with acting regional chief Ian Bounds and acting deputy chief Jeff Harper.

everyone’s backyard so the preparation we do before hand does aid us immensely in reducing the risk.”

Mr Hidding said that the fuel reduction program had already made a significant contribution to reducing bushfire risk.

“Rather than paying money to clean up afterwards, it’s deliberately putting in more money at the front end to prevent emergency disasters,” he said.