



The Hon Barry O'Farrell MP

Premier of NSW

Minister for Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW GOVERNMENT PROVIDES \$1.5M BOOST TO WESTPAC LIFE SAVER RESCUE HELICOPTER

NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell and Minister for Police and Emergency Services Michael Gallacher today announced \$1.5 million in funding for Surf Life Saving NSW to assist the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter.

"This funding will ensure this vital search and rescue helicopter service continues to provide a 24/7 service in the Greater Sydney Region and a second service on the NSW south coast, operating daytime, year round," said Mr O'Farrell, who was joined at the announcement by Minister for Sport and Recreation Graham Annesley, Member for Coogee Bruce Notley-Smith, Member for Bega Andrew Constance and Surf Life Saving NSW CEO Phil Vanny.

"The Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter plays an important role in the NSW community by providing a specialised search and rescue service, as demonstrated by the chopper's role in today's search for the missing rock fishermen," he said.

"It also has the capability for inland search and rescue, hazard response and emergency management support.

"The Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter has been involved in over 22,000 rescue operations, 337 last year alone, saving lives and providing invaluable intelligence to those protecting our beaches."

Mr Gallacher said the search and rescue service has saved countless lives in almost 40 years of operation.

"The search and rescue service has been integral in major operations in our history including the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race, the Waterfall train disaster and the Thredbo landslide in 1997," Mr Gallacher said.

"The helicopter also played an important role during the floods in Moree, the South Coast and Wagga Wagga earlier this year," he said.

"Surf Life Saving NSW and the Rescue Helicopter Service works closely with other emergency service organisations such as the NSW Police Force, the State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service and Australian Search and Rescue in providing rapid response rescue services."

Surf Life Saving NSW CEO Phil Vanny welcomed the additional funding.

“This funding by the NSW Government will ensure that we are able to extend our Sydney operations to cover night-time operations, which make up nearly half of all missions,” Mr Vanny said.

“The rescue helicopter is an integral part of the Surf Life Saving Emergency Response System, which has had 1,046 callouts since its inception.

“The funding will ensure we are able to maintain our capabilities in delivering a 24/7 rescue helicopter service in Sydney and will enable us to continue our vital work in reducing drowning in the NSW community.

“It will also provide a valuable asset to NSW if needed to respond to natural disasters and other major emergencies.” he said.

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