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MEDIA RELEASE

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SMOKE ALARMS NOW COMPULSORY IN CARAVANS AND CAMPERVANS

The NSW Government has improved the safety of tens of thousands of residents and holiday makers by making smoke alarms compulsory in caravans, campervans and other moveable dwellings where people sleep.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said the regulation change takes effect from today and also applies to holiday vans, park van annexes and associated structures but not camping tents.

“Smoke alarms cost as little as \$15 but will save something more precious than money – human life,” Mr Kelly said.

“Caravans and campervans typically have limited escape options in the event of a fire, along with lightweight and combustible fittings, so a smoke alarm can mean the difference between life and death.”

Minister for Emergency Services, Steve Whan, said NSW fire fighters have attended more than 692 blazes involving moveable accommodation vehicles over the past 10 years, which resulted in 12 deaths and 72 injuries.

“We want and need to bring this injury and death toll down,” Mr Whan said.

In NSW alone, around 40,000 people live in moveable dwellings on a permanent basis while tens of thousands are used for short-term holiday or other accommodation each year.

Mr Kelly said the Government changed the law in 2006 to make smoke alarms compulsory in all homes where they were not already installed, and this policy has now been extended to moveable dwellings.

“We placed these proposed changes on public exhibition last year and there were just 12 submissions which were generally supportive or suggested improvements,” Mr Kelly said.

“Changes to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation will apply to all new and existing moveable dwellings where people sleep, regardless of whether they are registered for road use or not.

“The Government will primarily rely on education to encourage moveable dwelling owners to install the smoke alarms, rather than inspections, and there will be no new powers for council or police.

Under the regulation:

- Owners of caravans and mobile homes will have six months to install a smoke alarm before on-the-spot fines of up to \$200 (or up to \$550 if the matter proceeds to court) will apply;
- Penalties will apply from today where people remove or interfere with a smoke alarm already installed in a caravan or mobile home;
- Dwellings which are not regularly moved but still used for sleeping (such as site vans and caravans in backyards) are covered by the regulation;
- Smoke alarms installed in moveable dwellings must have a ‘hush’ button to reduce the nuisance of false alarms from cooking or other smoke; and
- Owners of the moveable dwellings (as distinct to the tenant or the owner of the land where the dwelling is based) will be responsible for installing and maintaining or replacing the alarm.