SENATOR THE HON MURRAY WATT

MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY
MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

MEDIA RELEASE

FREE BUSHFIRE RESILIENCE RATING APP TO HELP PROTECT HOMES

In a world-first, Australians now have access to a free app to better prepare their home from bushfire risk and help put downward pressure on insurance premiums.

The Albanese Government contributed $3 million to support the groundbreaking work of the Resilient Building Council (RBC) who launched their free Bushfire Resilience Rating app today.

The app enables Australians to assess their site-specific risk and take action to improve their bushfire resilience.

Households can now measure the bushfire resilience of their own home through a star-rating system and receive a customised action plan to make practical, evidence-based bushfire safety improvements to their homes.

As tasks are completed, their home becomes safer and the home's Resilience Rating is updated through the app.

The RBC received funding from the Australian Government's Disaster Risk Reduction Package, to develop the app.

Over 1,200 households from bushfire impacted areas helped co-design and trial the app, undertaking actions that resulted in an average 67% reduction in the likelihood of their home igniting in a bushfire.

The Bushfire Resilience Rating is calculated using the Bushfire House Loss Probability Model, bushfire information, and historical house loss data.

This is the first scientific model to calculate bushfire building performance.

RBC's Resilience Ratings were developed to improve the resilience and preparedness of households who have identified bushfire risk and plan ways to mitigate the risk.

The app was trialled in a number of different fire-prone locations across the country including in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

It was developed in response to a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

The next phase of RBC's Resilience Ratings program will be launched by mid-2024, providing expert on-site assessments for integrated bushfire, flood, storm, cyclone, heatwave, and energy efficiency ratings.

On-site assessors will be able to provide a detailed assessment of a home and verify Resilience Ratings to support industry initiatives, grants programs or advertising Resilience Ratings when selling or leasing a property.

This phase is jointly funded by the Australian and NSW Governments.

The app is available at rating.rbcouncil.org.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Emergency Management, Murray Watt:

"While governments have a role to play in preparing for this peak period for severe weather, it is a collective responsibility households also share.

"As more people use the app and take action - large or small - communities around Australia will be better prepared.

"We commend the Resilient Building Council for their innovative and collaborative solutions to help build national resilience and we are encouraged by discussions through the Hazards Insurance Partnership about insurers supporting this initiative with their customers.

"The Australian Government continues to explore and support ways to make Australia more resilient to natural disasters, including through the Disaster Ready Fund, which offers up to $1 billion over the next five years for projects that support Australians to manage the physical and social impacts of disasters."

Quotes attributable to RBC Founder and CEO, Kate Cotter:

"Measuring the resilience of individual homes is an exciting leap forward in science and technology.

"The app empowers all Australians to take effective action and immediately see the positive impact on their Rating."

Quotes attributable to RBC's Dr Ian Bennetts – lead project engineer:

"Bushfires exploit the weakest link in homes, whether they are old or new.

“There are often many low-cost actions that will improve the home’s resilience immediately, such as draught sealing and moving surf boards and caravans away from the home.

“People can get started today. The more homes upgraded in a community, the less risk of house-to-house fire spread, which can lead to the loss of whole townships.”

Quotes attributable to Insurance Council of Australia CEO, Andrew Hall:

“The Insurance Council of Australia congratulates the Resilient Building Council for the development of the Bushfire Rating App.

“This app is an important tool for homeowners in recognising and reducing bushfire risk.

“It seeks to make it easier for insurers to recognise and make reductions in insurance premiums based on retrofitting to high-risk households, informed by the App’s recommendations.

“The ICA is also pleased to have partnered with the Resilient Building Council to deliver the Multi-Hazard Resilience Ratings program, which will help insurers, and other industries, recognise effective actions taken by households.”

Quotes attributable to trial participant Sue Josephsen:

“Our home is more than just a building to us - it’s irreplaceable.

“Our Plan A is to leave early, it’s not worth risking our lives, but we want our home to be there we when return, so we’re doing everything we can to make it as resilient as possible.

“We’ve been sharing the app with everyone we know and giving our neighbours a hand. We’re getting ready together, rather than feeling hopeless.”

ENDS

Media contact:
Minister Watt’s office: Brock Taylor – 0499 779 387