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page 1 of 1

AI mate, that looks like a fire

EXCLUSIVE
Alex White

New cameras alert to blazes in remote bush

Cameras that use artificial intelligence to spot bushfires are helping authorities fight blazes and could soon roll out across the state to help identify blazes before they get out of control.

Seven cameras deployed in pine plantations in the state's west have helped spot dozens of fires on private and public property, and in some cases up to six minutes before people see them, meaning they may be game-changers for bushfire prevention.

Images from the network of cameras, which can see blazes

up to 20km away, are analysed by computers using artificial intelligence, which then alert authorities.

Victorian Forest Products Association chief executive Andrew White said the cameras had helped spot scores of fires in remote areas that could have turned into infernos.

"Last bushfire season the cameras in the Green Triangle Fire Alliance detected 40 unplanned fires," he said.

"That includes 21 (fires) on private land, 11 on public and eight in the plantations."

He added that the cameras

were able to take and analyse hundreds of thousands of images of areas up to 20km distant.

The system has a human element as a person is required to confirm the photos flagged by the system are of fires and not clouds or dust.

Mr White said the AI cameras could be used in remote areas or areas too dangerous for people to be in on high-risk fire days.

Cameras are deployed on private pine plantations, but overlook the Budj Bim and Lower Glenelg national parks.

They also view Rennick State Forest, Tooloy-Lake Mundi Wildlife Reserve, Dergolm State Park and Roseneath State Forest.

The operators liaise with the CFA and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action to respond to alerts triggered by the cameras.

It's understood the success of the program prompted the maker of the cameras, Pano AI, to approach the state government to discuss use of the resources on public land in high-risk areas.

Pano AI head Andrew Pro-

lov said the cameras had many uses and were hugely beneficial to the community.

"With 24-7 monitoring, Pano AI provides live imagery of incidents, empowering first responders to make informed, objective decisions on the most appropriate course of action," he said.

"This ensures scarce resources in regional areas are allocated efficiently, directing attention where it's needed most.

"Our cameras aren't just monitoring assets for fire hazards; they're also providing

broad community protection to help keep everyone safe."

Firefighting authorities have become increasingly aware of the potential to counter bushfire risk by using AI.

Last month the federal and state governments jointly announced they would contribute \$15m to a Remote Sensing Bushfire Detection project.

The program uses smoke-detecting AI software employing ground cameras mounted on specific fire lookouts across the state. The cameras will boost the effectiveness of skilled fire lookout observers, especially when there is no one on duty at the 64 fire lookouts.

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