

# VFFA Media Release



## **GREEN TAPE PREVENTS VOLUNTEER RURAL FIREFIGHTERS FROM REDUCING BUSHFIRE RISK**

The Volunteer Firefighters Association (VFFA), the body representing the Voice of Volunteer Rural Firefighters in NSW refutes the claim by green alarmists that climate change is the cause of the recent bushfires in New South Wales.

It's ridiculous to blame climate change when we know there has been far worse bushfires stretching back to the earliest days of European settlement in Australia including the Black Saturday Victoria 2009, NSW Bushfires 1994, Ash Wednesday Victoria 1983, Blue Mountains NSW 1968, Black Tuesday Hobart 1967 and Black Friday Victoria 1939, said Peter Cannon, President of the VFFA.

The VFFA is angered by comments from the green lobby groups that tackling climate change was more important than prescribed burning of forest fuels to reduce bushfire risk. The real blame rests with the greens and their ideology as they continue to oppose and undermine our efforts to conduct hazard reduction in the cooler months and to prevent private landowners from clearing their lands to reduce bushfire risk.

Hazard reduction is the only proven management tool rural firefighters have to reduce the intensity and spread of bushfires and this has been recognised in numerous bushfire enquires since the Stretton enquiry into the 1939 Victorian Bushfires.

The amount of 'green tape' we have to go through to get a burn approved is beyond frustrating; says Peter Cannon. The VFFA is calling on the NSW State Government to reduce the amount of green tape involved in planning and conducting hazard reductions, so that our Volunteer Firefighters can get on with the job of conducting fire prevention works in the cooler months to prevent the inevitable summer bushfire disasters that are now becoming a more regular feature.

The NSW State Government must also provide sufficient funding for bushfire hazard reduction works on a planned and sustained basis, including the creation of asset protection zones and upgrades of all fire trails in high bushfire risk areas.

Remember that it's far more cost effective, say around 66 to 100 times more cost efficient, to prevent wild fires through hazard reduction than it is to have reactionary fire response, which is what we have at the moment. With the great number of lost homes and decreasing property values through these wild fires, what then will the total fiscal amount be.....when it could have all been prevented by effective Hazard reduction!

To increase the area treated by prescribed burning on bushfire prone lands from the current level of less than 1% per annum to a minimum of 5% per annum, as recommended by the Victorian Royal Commission and many leading bushfire experts.

Hazard Reduction by prescribed burning has been identified as a key management tool to reduce the intensity and spread of bushfires in national bushfire enquiries since the 1939 Stretton Royal Commission. In this regard the VFFA supports:

- a) Strategic and targeted hazard reduction by prescribed burning to reduce forest fuel levels and bushfire threat to human life (including fire fighter safety), property and the environment in areas identified as high bushfire risk.
- b) Bushfire risk management planning approach based upon the 'Canobolas' Model in NSW.
- c) Integrated hazard reduction by prescribed burning and complementary methods such as slashing, grazing and cultivation.
- d) The provision of adequate recurrent state and commonwealth funding to rural fire agencies, land management agencies and local government for the creation and maintenance of asset protection zones and fire trails in high bushfire risk areas on a planned and sustained basis.
- e) Ongoing relevant research on fire behaviour, prevention and management and the effects of fire on biodiversity through the bushfire Cooperative Research

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