



Media Release

Hazard Reduction Burning

- Vegetation management a burning issue for forestry (140102)

Mrs Heather Crompton, President of the Institute of Foresters of Australia, today urged communities and government to seek the advice of professional foresters on the issue of hazard reduction burning.

“Professional forestry is a balance between the social, environmental and economic interests of communities”, Mrs Crompton said. “Communities rightly demand this in today’s society.”

“Professional foresters are trained in forest science which includes forest ecology, fire science and land management. They are well placed to assist parties to make informed choices.”

“There are a range of management practices available to land managers today and professional foresters will make their recommendations on the attributes of each forest block. Their recommendations will be ecologically sustainable and take into account social and economic impacts.”

“Hazard reduction burning for fuel reduction is an appropriate management practice for many forest types that needs to be applied in a planned and scientific way. It is the only method of fuel management that is ecologically and economically sound and can reduce the impact of bush fires under extreme fire weather and make firefighting safer and easier. It is difficult to see how the social impacts of failing to do so can be justified either socially, environmentally, or economically,” Mrs Crompton said.

Years of experience by on ground fire fighters has repeatedly demonstrated that fire suppression is easier when fuel has been reduced within the last 6 years. Research within State government agencies and the CSIRO show that fire intensity is directly related to fuel loads. Fire behaviour, notably crown fire and consequent spotfire ignitions, is strongly influenced by fuel load and the fuel’s spatial arrangement. Heavy fuels produce hot fires; vertically arranged fuels lead to crowning and spot fires. Both lead to conflagration. Hazard reduction burning significantly minimizes both factors.

Fires burning under extreme weather conditions such as those on Christmas Day in New South Wales will not be stopped on fuel reduced areas more than a year old, but they will be slowed and are less likely to crown and produce spot fires. This means they are more manageable, allowing flank attack, either directly or from existing firebreaks, allowing faster backburning and giving fire fighters more time to organise containment as soon as weather conditions ease.

The Institute of Foresters is the national body for professional foresters. It advocates better forest management in Australia, high professional standards in forestry, and the active management of forests for all their values.

The IFA was originally set up in 1935 out of concern for the widespread destruction of native vegetation, and now represents more than 1300 foresters who work in forest research, education, management and operations throughout Australia.