



Media Release

Ongoing action required to control fires (230209)

The President of the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA), Dr Peter Volker, has called for ongoing fire management action instead of the 'on/off' attitude adopted by governments.

"The Institute of Foresters of Australia welcomes the establishment of a Royal Commission as such inquiries inevitably lead to better planning, procedures and preparedness." "However we have had many Inquires and a Royal Commission in the past and the consistent findings about communications, prescribed burning, and overall good forestry management practices have been extensively and repeatedly accepted. "The lack of ongoing implementation is the main problem" Volker said.

"There is a tendency though, for the outcomes of such inquiries to be forgotten over time, such that we seem to need another major catastrophe to remind us what we already know". The IFA urges those participating in the Royal Commission Inquiry to learn from the past and look forward. Volker said "IFA will use all its resources and knowledge of its members to contribute to a positive outcome for the protection of forests and the people who live and work in them".

Foresters have played a vital role in forest and fire management in Victoria for the last hundred years. Many Victorian IFA members are currently directly involved in the fire fighting effort and colleagues from interstate have joined them.

Fire management is an integral part of the training of foresters at tertiary and technical levels. Unfortunately, over the past 20 years the IFA has witnessed a decline in enrolments in tertiary forestry programs so that the next generation of forest and fire managers is not as great in numbers as it has been in the past. This has combined with different approaches to forest management, which preclude timber harvesting, reduce the role of professional foresters and result in a reduction in the experienced in-forest workforce and availability of equipment and manpower.

Dr Volker also endorsed the National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) call to the Prime Minister for a National Bushfire Summit, providing all governments agree to commit to the Summit and its outcomes.

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