

Tuesday 4 February 2020

Royal Commission into bushfires must look at mechanical fuel reduction to complement prescribed burns

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) has welcomed the announcement in parliament today by Prime Minister Scott Morrison that he has proposed former Defence Chief Mark Binskin lead a Royal Commission into Australia's bushfire disaster, and reiterated that using mechanical fuel reduction in all forest areas must be investigated as part of its proceedings.

Mr Morrison told parliament he has asked state and territory leaders to provide feedback on the draft terms of reference of the inquiry.

CEO of AFPA Ross Hampton has welcomed Mr Morrison's announcement.

'As this catastrophic bushfire season continues it was clear that business-as-usual is not an option, and that a new approach to reducing fuel loads across all our forests is needed to mitigate against these devastating fires.

"With state governments already failing to meet modest prescribed burn targets, it is time to adopt the internationally proven effectiveness of mechanical fuel reduction to complement controlled burns to better fire-proof regional towns and assets.

This week AFPA released a new report [*Using Fire and Machines to Better Fire-Proof Our Country Towns*](#), which makes the case for mechanical fuel reduction to complement prescribed burns in a national bushfire strategy.

Mr Hampton has emphasised there is a difference between mechanical fuel reduction as a bushfire mitigation method and bushfire recovery harvesting, which is sometimes called 'salvage logging'.

Mr Hampton said: "It is understandable that some unfamiliar with forestry appear to be mixing these two matters together. While both arise because of the bushfires they are very different issues. Bushfire recovery harvesting refers to the harvesting of dead, or nearly dead trees for production purposes from our regulated sustainably managed, multiple use forests. It is an unremarkable and standard practise which has been followed at every major bushfire event."

"The proposal from AFPA now is that other land managers, for example those who look after our national parks, may also seek to use forestry's expertise to remove 'killer' trees from along roads and around camping grounds of burnt over parks to enable the public to access them more quickly. But this is entirely a matter for the environmental managers of the parks."

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