

Media Release

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False claims linking fires and forestry is at odds with scientific consensus

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) has again rejected a recycled report falsely claiming a link between native forestry operations and increased bushfire intensity.

This latest claim comes from a so-called expert review of 51 previously published scientific papers by academics from ANU and Queensland's Griffith University. The report includes no new research, and in several instances the authors merely cite their previous work.

AFPA Chief Executive Ross Hampton said the scientific consensus is that there is no causal link between timber harvesting in Australia and overall increased bushfire severity.

"The authors' claims that reducing the fuel load in the forest through Mechanical Fuel Reduction increases bushfire severity, is at odds with the internationally-accepted best-practice bushfire management, and scientific studies from some of Australia's most esteemed bushfire experts," Mr Hampton said.

Mr Hampton said with native forestry using the equivalent of 6 trees out of every 10,000 annually, the proposition that timber harvesting is to blame for catastrophic bushfires is patently absurd and no more than anti-forestry activism masquerading as science.

"Just a few months ago, another study making similar claims was exposed as being authored by an anti-forestry campaigner employed by the Bob Brown Foundation, [condemned by the Australian Senate](#), and [withdrawn from publication](#) because its methodology was flawed.

Mr Hampton said the Black Summer bushfire season in which millions of hectares of National Park and reserves burnt showed that we need to better manage Australia's 132 million hectares of native forest, and that Mechanical Fuel Reduction should play a greater role in Australia.

"[Research](#) has found that in the eucalypt forests of south-eastern Australia, an annual reduction program of 5 per cent of the landscape could reduce the extent of bushfires by as much as 50 per cent," Mr Hampton said.

"Mechanical Fuel Reduction has been used effectively in many bushfire prone countries. In the United States, the Federal Government recently extended and doubled investment in an initial \$400 million, 10-year bushfire mitigation program after a mid-term evaluation found: *'Re-establishing desired vegetation conditions through mechanical thinning or prescribed burning makes landscapes more resilient to fire and reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire'*," Mr Hampton concluded.

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