

Len Foster, AO  
Board Chairman

28 July 2009

The Secretary  
Senate Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir / Madam

### **Inquiry into Bushfires in Australia - Submission on behalf of the Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre**

The *Bushfire CRC* welcomes the current inquiry by the Senate Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries into bushfires in Australia. It is pleased to have the opportunity to provide input and comment. The *Bushfire CRC* believes the review has the potential to become a valuable and timely contribution to current attempts to better focus on the nation's management of fire in the landscape.

After providing a brief general background in relation to the constitutional and institutional arrangements for managing rural fire regimes in one of the most fire-prone regions on earth, this submission briefly examines relevant issues likely to confront Australia over the next ten to twenty years. The document stresses the importance to the nation of an on-going commitment to fire related research.

Comments on 'future options' for maintaining the nation's bushfire-related research and development capacity are followed by a consideration of the increasing international context within which wildland fire related research is now seen. The submission concludes with a brief background to the current *Bushfire CRC*.

As such, this submission should be seen as primarily addressing your Inquiries' Terms of Reference 'd' and 'l' viz:

- d. the identification of measures that can be undertaken by government, industry and the community and the effectiveness of these measures in protecting agricultural industries, service industries, small business, tourism and water catchments;*
- l. insurance against bushfires.*

The aims of the current *Bushfire CRC* are encapsulated in its mission, viz:

*..... to reduce the risks of bushfires to the community in an economically and ecologically sustainable way.....*

Further, and while this submission provides more detail, I would like to suggest at the outset, that with the advent of global warming it is increasingly futile for Australia's fire dependent or fire adapted environments to be developing or refining policies in areas ranging from water and biodiversity conservation, to urban planning, carbon sequestration, and the maintenance of key aspects of indigenous culture, without first critically analysing fire management.

In concluding these brief introductory remarks can I assure you that the Board and staff of the *Bushfire CRC* remain ready to assist your Inquiry, as appropriate, in its task.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Gary Morgan, A.F.S.M., the CEO of the *Bushfire CRC*, should you require more information regarding the material below or indeed in relation to other matters. Gary can be contacted at the above address or on (03) 9412 9600.

More general information about the *Bushfire CRC* and its current research programs can be found at <http://www.bushfirecrc.com/> and at the 'Knowledge Web' of the *Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council* <http://knowledgeweb.afac.com.au/>.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Len Foster".

Len Foster, AO  
Chairman  
Bushfire CRC