

MEDIA RELEASE



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COMMUNITY GROUP CAUTIOUSLY WELCOMES BUSHFIRE RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission's Interim Report have been welcomed by Timber Communities Australia (TCA) and is now calling on the Commission to focus on the long term, land management aspects of the inquiry.

TCA represents the interests of forest industry workers and communities throughout Australia.

"The Report gives an absorbing account of what happened in each fire area on 7 February and paints a mental picture of the tragedy as it unfolded. The resulting recommendations are fundamentally sound and are an opportunity to improve performance in response to previously unimagined bushfire conditions." said TCA chief executive Jim Adams.

"Unfortunately, the Commission was only able to address the terms of reference given to it by the Victorian Government in its Interim Report. This excluded making investigations and recommendations into fuel load management which is seen by all bushfire behaviour experts as the critical issue. The fact that it was raised as the key topic in 485 submissions to the Royal Commission indicates the broader community supports the views of bushfire experts" he added.

The Royal Commission has made 51 recommendations dealing predominantly with fire warnings, further development and enhancement of the stay or go policy, reinstatement and identification of fire refuges in communities and bushfire incident management protocols.

"The recommendations are achievable and will undoubtedly assist when large scale fire emergencies occur. .".

"TCA and its members are pleased the stay or go and warning issues have been addressed however there is an unhealthy focus on fire suppression rather than fire prevention. This was obvious to our members who mostly live in fire prone areas when the Government handed down its terms of reference. The recommendations offer a fix for fire suppression situations but do nothing about removing the fire sources" TCA Victorian spokesperson Trevor Brown said.

TCA, like other forest industry bodies, is now demanding that serious examination be given to fuel load levels and public land and forest management" he added.

"The Government is flagging the coming fire season as potentially worse than the last. TCA believes heavy fuel loads in areas such as the Dandenong, Macedon and Otway Ranges and many coastal areas is a major warning in need of immediate action" said Brown.

On Tuesday morning Victorian Premier, John Brumby, released a list of 52 towns and districts deemed to be potential bushfire hotspots for the coming fire season. Enhanced township protection plans will be implemented in those towns.

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