



Media Release

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Bushfire mitigation must be part of climate change solution

The National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) urges the Australian Government and Coalition to ensure bushfire mitigation and prevention is part of our national greenhouse gas reduction strategy. A national summit is needed to address bushfires as an issue of public safety while at the same time incorporating bushfire management into climate change policy.

While bushfires are a natural part of the Australian environment, the disturbing trend of increasing 'mega-fires' in southern Australia is a major source of greenhouse emissions that cannot be ignored. For example, a Federal Government report estimated that the major wildfires experienced in 2003 in Australia released around 190 million tonnes of carbon; or around a quarter of Australia's total annual carbon dioxide emissions.

"While we need to seek to reduce industrial emissions through such measures as an emissions trading scheme (ETS), there is also an important need to recognise the effects of large scale bushfires on our net emissions strategies," said NAFI CEO Allan Hansard.

"What we are looking for is lateral thinking from the Government and Coalition to develop effective bushfire management measures. As bushfires represent an uncertain and natural disturbance event on a large proportion of our forested lands, market based measures such as an ETS may not be the most suitable way to reduce emissions from bushfires.

"Direct bushfire management policies would not only help to reduce Australia's net emissions, they would help protect the millions of Australians that live in and around our forested landscape.

"NAFI is calling for a national bushfire summit to build a national framework to address long term bushfire prevention and management in order to minimize the adverse effects of bushfires on our bush communities, industries, the economy and the climate," said Mr Hansard.

The Victorian Royal Commission into the Black Saturday bushfires will reconvene early this year with a particular emphasis on long term preventative measures such as fuel reduction strategies. NAFI will be seeking to appear to expand on its original submission supporting the development of coordinated land management strategies to reduce the risks of large scale 'mega-fires' throughout Australia.

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