



MEDIA RELEASE

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Are Big Fires inevitable? - A National Bushfire Forum

As another severe bushfire season unfolds across south eastern Australia the nation's business and community leaders, policy makers and scientists are being invited to contribute to a National Forum on Bushfires.

The Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre will host the Forum on **Tuesday, 27 February 2007** in Canberra.

The forum will focus on the key issues needed to meet the challenge of recurring destructive bushfires.

Kevin O'Loughlin, the chief executive officer of the Bushfire CRC, says recent events show that Australia must better understand the complex challenges presented by bushfires.

"Bushfires have long been a contributor to the nature of our landscape. But recent experience suggests we're having an increase in the frequency, intensity and size of bushfires across Australia.

"The challenge is large and immediate – how do we best manage an increasing bushfire risk in one of the most severe fire environments in the world? What are the implications for our water supplies, forestry resources and our cities?"

The one-day forum will bring together experts from around Australia and internationally to discuss the impact that bushfires have on the environment, industry and communities.

Major issues to be discussed include:

- **Drought and other climate factors** – what is the impact of long running droughts, possible climate change influencers and longer fire seasons?
- **Water** – how do bushfires affect the quantity, quality and security of our water supplies?
- **Communities** – how do we increase self-reliance, where will we find future volunteers, and how do we manage the expanding bush-urban interface?
- **Fire and Land management** – how far should we go to actively manage our bushland? What is the right balance between fire suppression and fire preparedness?

A detailed program will be released closer to the Forum.

The Bushfire CRC was established in 2003 under the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centre program to improve understanding of the complex social, economic and environmental aspects of bushfires. Its partners include fire and land management agencies across Australia and New Zealand, universities, and government agencies including the CSIRO, Emergency Management Australia and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology.

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