

8 APRIL 2008

Bushfire – new research leading to safer communities

Australia is at the forefront of research on community bushfire safety and resilience according to a new book. *Community Bushfire Safety* brings together in one comprehensive volume the results of the most important community safety research being undertaken within the Australian Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre.

Using perspectives derived from social science, economics and law, *Community Bushfire Safety* supports the increasing emphasis on community self-reliance and the vital role it plays in bushfire management.

Co-editor Professor John Handmer, Bushfire CRC Program Leader, said this was an effective approach in dealing with bushfires. Professor Handmer is an Innovation Professor at RMIT University and holds Adjunct Professor positions at Macquarie University's Risk Frontiers, the Flood Hazard Research Centre at Middlesex University and at the Australian National University.

"Communities in other parts of the world, in particular the United States and in southern Europe, have a very different relationship with bushfires. In Australia, we know that a community safety and resilience approach saves lives and property, and ultimately saves the community money, because the evidence and the research have shown this to be true," said Professor Handmer.

"There is a growing understanding in Australia that to effectively deal with the bushfire threat people living in bushfire zones must share the risk with the fire agencies. They must be self-reliant, prepared and informed. The book is all about the research that underpins that approach."

"We know this approach works because most of our research published in this book has been conducted around the extreme bushfire events of recent years, including the alpine and Canberra fires of 2003 and the Eyre Peninsula fires in South Australia in 2005."

The chairman of the Bushfire CRC, Mr Len Foster, said the book provided the research evidence for all aspects of community bushfire safety that support the public campaigns of fire agencies around Australia each bushfire season. "This book will be of interest to anyone involved in preparing communities before a bushfire, dealing with communities during a bushfire and assisting communities to rebuild once the bushfire has gone," said Mr Foster.

Chapters cover issues such as preparing the home, preventing arson, understanding the value of local knowledge, and communicating with the media and directly to the public. It also tackles the broader issues like how an increasingly warming world will create the conditions for more severe bushfires and the implications this has for communities that are expanding into bushfire zones.

***Community Bushfire Safety* will be launched at 6pm on Tuesday 15 April at the Metropole Hotel, 44 Brunswick St, Fitzroy, Melbourne.**

Community Bushfire Safety is published by CSIRO Publishing.

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.

For further information contact John Handmer on 03 9925 2307 or
David Bruce, Communications Manager, Bushfire CRC, 03 9412 9606 or 0414 223 281.