

M E D I A R E L E A S E

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Long term funding for fire research vital

Australia's fire and land management agencies have committed to securing a national centre for long-term research into fire.

The commitment follows today's announcement by Minister Kim Carr about the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centres Program. The Bushfire CRC was unsuccessful in gaining funds in this round of CRC funding from the Australian Government. A consortium of 42 Australian fire and land management agencies, research partners and industry partners had put forward a bid for \$50m to supplement the sector's \$100m own commitment to an eight year research program.

The Bushfire CRC had already secured \$15m Australian Government funds outside of the CRC Program. That funding is for three years from 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2013 to look into issues relevant to the Black Saturday fires in Victoria this year.

The Chair of the Bushfire CRC, Mr Len Foster AO, said the \$15m funding allows research to continue while further, ongoing funds for longer term research under a global wildfire research centre were secured.

"It is inconceivable that a fire-prone continent such as Australia is ever without a long term nationally focussed fire research program. The public and the fire industry recognise the importance of long-term research into fire and the need to protect communities from all over Australia, New Zealand and other fire-prone parts of the world from the threat of fires," Mr Foster said.

"Today's announcement means that we can fully consider the findings of the final report 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, due by 31 July 2010, while redefining a national research program."

The proposed \$150m research program takes fire research into the next decade with a focus on the interplay between fire and the main demographic, environmental and technological changes in Australia and New Zealand, with strong links to international fire research and management.

Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council, Ms Naomi Brown, said the industry was committed to long-term research.

"In light of today's announcement, all the fire chiefs of Australia have supported the call for ongoing research that will lead to improvements in the management of bushfires over the coming decades. Our proposal for a new CRC to focus on the impact of changing demographics, economics and climate has been unsuccessful but the need for research with a long-term vision remains vital.

"We look forward to having discussions with the Australian Government about how this can be achieved."

The Bushfire CRC was formed in 2003 and has lead a nationally coordinated, multi-disciplinary research program into areas such as fire behaviour, smoke management, aerial firefighting, prescribed burning, fire weather, community education and building in fire zones.

For more information:

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