

4 August 2003



## **A.C.T. NEEDS ITS OWN AERIAL FIRE PROTECTION**

The McLeod Inquiry has sent a strong message that the ACT should have an aggressive initial attack capacity for bushfires that can only be delivered by aerial firebombing.

Executive Officer of the Aerial Agricultural Association of Australia, which represents Australia's aerial firebombers, Mr Phil Hurst, said that the McLeod Report findings were a useful assessment of what the ACT needed to confront future bushfires.

'Aerial firebombing using fixed wing firebombing aircraft is a key tool in the modern fire manager's arsenal and its effectiveness has already been proven in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and internationally.

'Fixed-wing firebombing is the most cost effective way of delivering tens of thousand of litres to a fire, either in the form of suppressant or retardant,' Mr Hurst said.

'Aggressive initial attack makes a real difference to fires every season, with a number of States having sufficient contracted aircraft on stand-by to ensure a fire is attacked within 15 minutes of reporting.

'Lightening strikes in difficult or inaccessible terrain can be attacked almost immediately and established fires can be knocked down or at least retarded by laying of chemical firebreaks dropped from aircraft.

'Purpose built fire fighting aircraft save lives, homes and assets every year across Australia and it is time the ACT enjoyed the same protection as other Australians.

'For example, in WA, the fire authorities have estimated savings of \$3.8 million from only seven of seventy-seven fires attacked using fixed-wing bombers.

'AAAA and its members welcome the opportunity to work with the ACT Government to improve the level of protection from bushfires that Canberra deserves,' Mr Hurst said.

### **Further Information:**

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