

**5 November 2003**

## **Aerial Fire-Bombers Welcome Federal Bushfire Report**

The Aerial Agricultural Association of Australia, representing many of Australia's aerial fire-bombing operators and pilots, has welcomed the Report from the Federal Inquiry into Bushfires.

Executive Officer, Phil Hurst, said that the report contains many useful recommendations and has set down a challenging agenda of improvement for fire authorities and governments.

“The report injects a healthy dose of common-sense into the bushfire debate, but the real challenge is what governments and fire authorities will do over the next few months to take up the recommendations.

“The Inquiry has correctly identified the significant impact well-managed aerial fire-bombing can have on a fire, and especially the importance of aggressive initial attack.

“Aircraft should work hand-in-hand with volunteers on the ground to ensure small fires don't become big fires.

“This has worked wonderfully in many states, with WA alone identifying savings of over \$40 million each year as a direct result of a \$1.5 million dollar investment in fixed-wing firebombing.

“Experts giving evidence to the Committee, including the CSIRO, have all indicated that fixed-wing firebombing aircraft should be an integral part of the fire fighter's arsenal and can be better managed.

“The Report provides a very solid base for moving forward this summer to having better protection against bushfires. While some of the recommendations are longer term, a number can be put to work almost immediately”, Mr Hurst said.

Recommendation 29 of the report (page 229) makes a series of points to improve aerial fire fighting - some initiatives are already in place in some States, while other States have no aerial firefighting capacity at all for the coming season.

**Further Information:**

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