

TIMBER QUEENSLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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Active fuel management can help reduce bushfire risk

The Queensland timber industry has praised the efforts of the state's fire and emergency services in the recent central Queensland bushfires, while recommending that more action be undertaken on fuel reduction and preventative management to mitigate future impacts.

Timber Queensland Chief Executive Officer, Mr Mick Stephens said the professionalism of the fire and emergency services agencies in responding to these fires has been exceptional.

"We recognise the brave work they do in ensuring public safety and fighting dangerous fires," said Mr Stephens.

"For an industry such as ours, fire management has always been a high priority as fire can not only devastate lives, property and wildlife, it can destroy valuable timber resources," he said.

"Going forward, it is timely to look at some of the longer-term risk factors that are contributing to the impacts and severity of the state's bushfires.

One of the biggest risk factors is simply the amount of fuel in the landscape in the form of combustible biomass and vegetation."

Reducing excessive fuel loads is a preventative measure that can help reduce the intensity and spread of bushfires, and is commonly practiced in state forests and on private forestry land.

However, there has been a decline in the amount of fuel-reduction generally undertaken in many public native forests and woodlands in Australia over the past few decades. This has simply increased the extent and severity of bushfires when weather conditions turn for the worst.

"Some of the reasons relate to the narrow window of safe burning days and concerns over smoke in built up areas, and a passive approach to fuel management particularly in protected land areas such as reserves," said Mr Stephens.

"What is needed is a more concerted effort to managing fuel loads in the landscape to reduce future bushfire risk. Measures that are typically used by land managers can include burning, grazing and mechanical treatments such as vegetation thinning and removal.

"We are calling on the state government to ensure adequate resources and policies are directed at promoting longer-term fuel management on public and private land, which can assist in reducing the risks of more intense and large-scale bushfires.

This can be a win-win for the community and environmental protection as well as for rural based industries such as forestry and agriculture, and should be an important part of an overall risk mitigation strategy," said Mr Stephens.

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