



MEDIA STATEMENT

ACT one only

AFAC SUPPORTS ACT COLLEAGUES IN WAKE OF INQUIRY FINDINGS

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

Naomi Brown, AFAC's Chief Executive Officer, stressed that whilst AFAC has not yet had a chance to fully study the findings of the Coronial Inquiry into the 2003 Canberra Bushfires which were released today (Tuesday, December 19), the peak body accepts the findings of the Coroner, her staff and the traumatic and exhaustive process that they have undertaken to gather information and evidence over the past three years.

"We are however deeply concerned at the future impact some of these findings may have on the ACT Fire Brigade and Rural Fire Service; which form part of one of our member agencies - the ACT Emergency Services Agency - its paid and volunteer firefighters and the communities involved.

"Our concerns lie with the impact the findings may have on fighting the current and future bushfires in Australia in terms of individuals being named for decisions taken – often under immense pressure - during the 2003 Canberra fires. We believe that the findings may have several far reaching implications, including the fact that:

- Bushfires have and always will pose a difficult situation.
- The difficulties of fighting and managing wildfires – in that they are unpredictable.
- The potentially huge impact the findings may have on the confidence of career and volunteer firefighters to be involved in decision making positions in the future and that
- It may ultimately affect the safety of communities involved in current and future fires throughout Australia."

Brown added that AFAC values and respects the importance of analysing the tragic results of current and past fires in order to improve fire fighting methods and community safety in the future.

The Australasian Fire Authorities Council provides collaboration between fire, emergency services and land management agencies for the protection of our communities. Go to www.afac.com.au for further information.

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