

# THE HOWITT SOCIETY

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## MEDIA RELEASE



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### Fire Experts Slam IGEM Recommendations on Burn Targets

The Howitt Society has labelled as disappointing that there are no recommendations to increase the area fuel reduced in the IGEM report which was produced following an inquiry into the 2019/20 fires conducted by the Inspector General for Emergency Management.

The group, whose membership includes eminent fire scientists, ex public land managers, experienced bushmen and tourism leaders unanimously agree that reducing fuel is the only practical, cost effective way to reduce bushfire risk.

The IGEM report noted that Climate Change is contributing to an increase in extreme fire weather while also increasing the impact on fire frequency and intensity. The report also noted that bushfire intensity is influenced by the amount of fuel available to burn.

“It is astonishing that, despite these observations, the IGEM report makes no recommendation for more burning to reduce fuel loads,” said Garry Squires, Secretary of the Howitt Society.

“Clearly there is nothing that can be done in the short or medium term to influence Climate Change nor any aspect of weather and so the only avenue available to land managers to reduce fire risk is to reduce fuels,” Mr Squires added.

“The message is clear, if there is no fuel, fire cannot burn. If fuel quantity is decreased then fire intensity will also decrease and there is more possibility of controlling any fire which does occur.”

The Howitt Society is concerned about the continuing risk to communities and the devastating impacts of fire on the flora and fauna because of the high fuel loads in the bush over vast areas and the lack of any commitment to increase broad area fuel reduction burning in the bush.

The IGEM report is very much a “make no change report” as far as how fuels are managed in our environment. If there is to be no change in how we manage fuels then it would be expected that there would be no change in fire frequency and intensity. Hence we can expect more and regular megafires which devastate the environment, kill millions of birds and animals and needlessly risk human lives,” said Mr Squires

The Howitt Society calls on the government to implement the minimum of 5% of forest area to be burnt annually as per the 2009 Royal Commission recommendation.

“By not implementing a realistic fuel reduction program the government is abrogating its responsibility to protect the environment and the community,” Mr Squires concluded.

**Further information: Howitt Society Secretary Garry Squires 0417 588 210**