

## FOREWORD

In 1993 the Senate Standing Committee on Industry, Science, Technology, Transport, Communications and Infrastructure investigated 'The capacity of public sector authorities to plan for, forecast and respond to major disasters, fully respecting and utilising the skills and capabilities of volunteer organisations'. The work of the Committee was substantially completed by the end of that year. However, as a result of the devastating bushfires in New South Wales and Queensland in January 1994, the Committee reconvened.

'Disaster Management', the Senate Committee report, was issued in June 1994. It contains a chapter devoted to Bushfire Management with the following major recommendation:

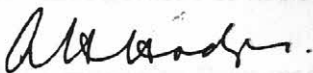
'The Committee ... recommends that EMA conduct a review of all state and federal reports on major conflagrations over the last 50 years to identify the key elements of prevention and suppression and develop a national bushfire strategy with emphasis on improving national coordination and cooperation.'

The Australian Fire Authorities Council readily accepted this task with the major work being undertaken by the Country Fire Authority Victoria. I believe that the resulting National Bushfire Preparedness Strategy is a very valuable contribution to our understanding of past fire disasters; but perhaps more importantly it identifies actions which can be taken to minimise dangers to life and property by proposing a strategy embracing three main areas:

Fire Control Capability  
Management of the Natural and Built Environment  
Community Preparedness

The challenge facing State and Territory Emergency Management Committees and fire agencies is to examine current approaches and determine whether the balance of effort between these three areas is appropriate, and whether there is a need for improvement in any area. I see the Australian Fire Authority Council having an important role in identifying best practice and disseminating information to agencies.

I greatly appreciate the willingness of the Australian Fire Authorities Council and the Country Fire Authority, Victoria to develop the strategy. In particular, I pay tribute to Stephen Petris and Paul Potter who undertook the detailed research and subsequent development of the paper under the guidance of John Nicholson, Director Risk Management, Country Fire Authority.



A. H. Hodges, AM  
Director General  
Emergency Management Australia