



Media release

IFA/AFG welcomes Australian Government Support Funding for Primary Producers

The professional body representing foresters, forest industry professionals and forest growers around Australia, the Institute of Foresters of Australia and Australian Forest Growers, has welcomed the announcement by the Federal Government of support packages of up to \$75,000 grants for Primary Producers affected by the bushfire crisis.

Vice-President of the Institute of Foresters of Australia and Australian Forest Growers (IFA/AFG), Dr Kevin Harding said the scale of the current bushfire emergency in terms of the number of bushfires, their overall magnitude of size and severity and their spread around every state jurisdiction of Australia presents enormous challenges to rural communities.

"Our members appreciate the response of firefighters, governments, volunteers and professional land managers to resource the immediate need to support fire control and suppression activities," Dr Harding said.

"However, the rebuilding efforts needed to bring these communities and regions back to a level of functional normalcy as quickly as possible is also important. It will be assisted by the grants of up to \$75,000 to support farming, forestry and other businesses in fire-impacted regions.

Dr Harding said forestry plantations and native forest management on farms is a long-term investment providing important economic resilience to farmers in times of drought, flooding and other weather induced loss of other crops or livestock.

"It takes around a decade to produce a harvest of pulpwood products to supply paper and cardboard packaging products and 25-30+ years to produce construction grade sawn boards that provide long-term carbon sequestration when used for building and construction projects.

"High quality native hardwood species often require 50-80 years to produce very valuable furniture and engineering grade products. Bushfires often impact forests so severely that the wood quality is greatly diminished and the trees need to be salvage harvested rapidly so that their wood does not deteriorate to the point where it is no longer useful for wood or fibre products."

Dr Kevin Harding, who is spokesman for small private forest grower members of the IFA/AFG professional body which merged in 2019, said our members impacted by these current fires will need to rapidly assess damage and organise salvage harvests to preserve the quality of their timber and to minimise their losses.

"Some will have lost vital plant and equipment and some small private foresters will need to build road access for these salvage harvests. The grants announced today are appreciated as they will assist these farm foresters and small-scale rural investors.

"They will address immediate cash flow needs to salvage and then replant and undertake the silvicultural management needed to restore their forest assets to health. Well managed and actively growing forests sequester carbon and are the ultimate renewable building resource to supply the timber and fibre needs of the nation and the building reconstruction needed after these fires are suppressed."



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Dr Harding said it is important support for the rural communities that our members belong to.

"They are on the front lines fighting these fires with the skilled support of many forestry professionals in land management agencies (Forestry, National Parks and Natural Resources bodies) and the deservedly lauded volunteers of the rural fire services and the forest industry contractors who are combining in a massive on ground response to this year's bushfire challenges," Dr Harding said.

"The IFA/AFG is ready to support this and other government initiatives to ensure that the arrangements under development meet the needs of forest growers.

"We will contribute to the mooted Royal Commission to champion the need for sound forest science principles to underpin the future professional management of all of Australia's forests.

"Forestry professionals were the earliest champions of the conservation and multiple use management of our forests going back to the early 1900's. We recognise the need to work with our indigenous peoples to incorporate their learnings on living with and using fire as a management tool to mitigate the impacts of severe weather conditions and our changing climate on bushfire spread and intensity."

Dr Harding said he would particularly like to acknowledge The Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister, Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie, Minister for Agriculture and the Hon. David Littleproud MP, Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management for the announcement.

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