



VAFI

VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION OF FOREST INDUSTRIES

Sunday, 19 April 2009

BUSHFIRE ENQUIRY UNDERMINED BY FOREST INDUSTRY EXCLUSION

Victoria's peak forestry body, the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI) said today it was dumbfounded that it will not be allowed to appear before the Bushfire Royal Commission, and has called upon the Commissioner to explain and reverse his decision.

"Victoria's forest industries are one of the State's best pools of knowledge about good forest and bushfire risk management," said VAFI CEO, Philip Dalidakis.

"Some of our members lost staff and loved ones; others suffered economic distress through the loss of their business, while our industry has been placed into a state of flux due to the fire impact on the forest estate.

"Even putting aside the devastating impact these fires have had on our industry and the passionate and proud communities it is comprised of, the Royal Commissioner's decision not to grant our industry leave to appear simply makes no practical sense.

"A sustainable and well managed forest industry is one of the State's best weapons in the defence against bushfire through maintenance of fire tracks, reduction of fuel loads, provision of fire fighting vehicles and skilled local volunteers."

"Victorians expect and deserve an exhaustive review in the wake of this great tragedy. Denying our industry an opportunity to contribute our expertise in appearing before them raises questions about whether the Royal Commission will give appropriate consideration to important policy issues such as land management and potentially erode the public and industry's confidence in any of its findings."

Philip Dalidakis is available for comment or interview

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