

Friday, April 17, 2009

GREEN GROUP BACKFLIPS OVER BURNING ISSUE

A policy backflip by a leading 'green' group shows they are out of touch with responsible bushfire management practices and the safety needs of forest communities, according to the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI).

The VAFI CEO, Philip Dalidakis, said comments by one of the Wilderness Society's Senior Campaigner's during the Environmental program on Geelong radio station 94.7FM said that "broad scale burning in the landscape does nothing but damages (sic) and further endangers (sic) our unique threatened wildlife," were a direct contradiction to the organisation's recent public utterances of support for good forest management principles.

"Shortly after the recent bushfire tragedy, the Wilderness Society joined the majority of our community in publicly supporting prescribed burns and surprising many by denying they had previously opposed them," Mr Dalidakis said.

"Even for the Wilderness Society, this attempt to deceive Victorians is extremely disappointing. Making public comments for show only and then repudiating them through ill-informed statements is a very serious breach of the public's trust."

Mr Dalidakis said research by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and the CSIRO has consistently supported prescribed burning as a way to reduce the intensity of fires and protect forest communities and our native flora and fauna.

"Put simply, fire is made up of oxygen, heat and fuel. The only influence we can have on fire prevention is by fuel reduction through prescribed burns and appropriate forest management," he said.

"If we fail to learn the lessons of the past then we will continue to make the same mistakes, leading to the same devastating outcomes as were experienced in the bushfires of 2009, 2007, 2003, 1983 and 1939 before that.

The Wilderness Society 2009 'Bushfire Action Plan' states "fuel reduction burning has an important place in the fire management toolbox, and we support its place in scientifically underpinned fire management for the protection of life, property and the environment".

"And yet, if their recent comments are anything to go by, the Wilderness Society has again flip-flopped on this very serious issue and shown they are simply out of touch with what our forest communities really need," Mr Dalidakis said.

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