

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

Summary

The ESA submission to the Royal Commission focused on land management, hazard reduction measures, biodiversity protection, and indigenous burning practices. We stressed the following points:

- I. Hazard reduction burning reduces the intensity and spread of bushfires and enhances fire suppression activities under limited circumstances.
- II. Hazard reduction burning is most effective when targeted strategically within 500 m of the asset to be protected.
- III. Inappropriate fire regimes and hectare-based fuel reduction targets can threaten the existence of plant and animal species and ecosystems.
- IV. Hazard reduction burning is just one method of reducing risk.
- V. Traditional land and fire management practices of Indigenous Australians are nuanced, sensitive, and targeted to particular objectives.
- VI. All prescribed burning should be accompanied by monitoring and research.

The ESA made the following recommendations to the Royal Commission:

1. There is a need to develop national environmental standards for monitoring and evaluating environmental change and biodiversity recovery actions, and adequate resourcing for monitoring;
2. There should be investment into forecasting research and applications that can provide near-term and seasonal predictions of how disaster risk is likely to impact society, economy and biodiversity;
3. There is an urgent need for research into alternative environmental management options (e.g. habitat restoration, species translocations for managing native species at risk from wildfires) that complement hazard reduction burning which has limited effectiveness at reducing bushfire risk and protecting biodiversity.
4. We support planned burning where it is demonstrated that it will have greatest benefit in reducing risk to life, property and ecological assets. We do not support hectare-driven targets for burning in Australia's ecosystems.
5. There is a need for regional-scale planning that identifies the most suitable mix of post-fire age-classes necessary to maintain ecological values and to ensure the resilience of ecosystems to fire.