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## All Governments Must Act NOW To Prevent, Limit and Protect Us Against Extreme Bushfires

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The Australian Risk Policy Institute ('ARPI'), a not-for-profit independent think-tank and educator calls on all Australian Governments – Federal, State and Territory – to immediately change policy directions and introduce 'preventive' and 'reduction' measures to protect Australians from the ongoing 'vulnerability' of bushfires.

**'Risk today is based in vulnerability and concerned with consequences' is an ARPI Principle.**

Nineteen formal inquiries including Royal Commissions have focused entirely on responses to bushfires and excluded policy on prevention and reduction of threats to trigger bushfires.

Australia is approaching a summer forecast to be at the hotter and drier end of the scale. The risk of loss of life and property is extreme. **Governments must act now.** In fact, action is overdue. Reportedly, every State and Territory stands at somewhere between only 20% and 50% of the minimum recommended level of clearing required to protect property and life. Also, reportedly, only 3% of all funds spent on bushfires is spent on prevention or reduction.

While Australians live with an ongoing 'annual vulnerability' or potentiality of bushfires occurring, two further 'controllable' factors exist and have converted that vulnerability into an "extreme risk."

Firstly, as outlined above, the dangerous lack of clearing of excessive vegetation resulting from heavy rainfall and flooding, and secondly the equally dangerous matter of reportedly fewer than needed firefighters available particularly on the eastern seaboard. Fewer firefighters are available reportedly due to Government policies as well as inadequate or reduced resources needed to fight fires, on top of a lack of some form of remuneration to offset volunteer fire-fighters' lost wages.

In risk terms, the vulnerability of extreme bushfires this summer has already converted through a "Threat" – namely, an hot and dry summer forecast – and a "Threat Actor" in the dual form of Government policy to not clear sufficient excessive vegetation, combined with fewer fire fighters and insufficient fire-fighting equipment.

**ARPI therefore calls on all Australian, State and Territory Governments, co-ordinated by the Federal Government, to immediately:**

- 1. Introduce a national, standing co-ordination of policy and action which includes prevention or at least minimisation of threats such as those described above – that is, sufficient clearing of excessive vegetation and proper resourcing of firefighters and fire-fighting equipment;**
- 2. Publish the current level of clearing carried out during 2023 by all States and Territories against minimum recommended levels stated by relevant authorities; and**
- 3. Co-ordinate a national emergency project immediately to raise the level of clearing so far as is possible before the bushfire season and also to address and resolve the adequacy of fire-fighting resources – numbers and remuneration arrangements for fire-fighters.**

[ARPI Perspectives reflect Strategic Risk Policy® - Risk 4.0 – an innovation which sits above and before risk management processes]

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