



Inquiry into the Operational Response to the January 2003 Bushfires

The ACT Government is undertaking an Inquiry into the preparation for and operational response to the January 2003 bushfires by the ACT's emergency services in order to identify improvements that might enhance the capacity to respond effectively to large scale events of that kind.

The Inquiry will be conducted by Mr Ron McLeod AM. The Inquiry will commence on 3 March 2003 and will report to the Government by 30 June 2003.

Terms of Reference

The Inquiry will examine and report on the adequacy of the response to the bushfires by the ACT Emergency Services Bureau and its components (ACT Bushfire Services, ACT Emergency Services, ACT Fire Brigade and ACT Ambulance Service) and other relevant agencies, including ACT Policing, Environment ACT and ACT Forests with particular reference to:

- i) the preparation, planning and response to the bushfires and of strategies for the evaluation and management of bushfire threat and risk;
- ii) ESB's management structure, command and control arrangements, and public information strategy;
- iii) the coordination and cooperative arrangements with other ACT and interstate, Commonwealth and non-government agencies, including utility providers, for managing such emergencies; and
- iv) the adequacy of ESB's equipment, communications' systems, training and resources.

In undertaking its work, the Inquiry will consult closely with the Coroner conducting inquests into the deaths caused by the bushfires to avoid any interference with the process of inquiry being directed by her.

The Inquiry is also to advise the ACT Government on the ACT's overall structure for dealing with emergency situations, given the Territory's unique context (geographic, population, financial and administrative), including the operation of the *Emergency Management Act 1999*. In providing this advice, the Inquiry should make reference to arrangements that exist in other jurisdictions for dealing with emergencies.

Submissions

The Inquiry will be seeking submissions from all relevant government agencies. The Inquiry is also keen to encourage submissions or comments from the community at large. Members of the public are encouraged to send in their written submissions by **30 March 2003** to:

**The Inquiry into the Operational Response
to the January Bushfires
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601**

Or alternatively to: McLeod.Inquiry@act.gov.au

Submissions to the Inquiry containing private or confidential information should be clearly identified as 'private' or 'confidential'. General questions about the Inquiry can be made by contacting the Executive Officer on (02) 6207 0342.