



## POLICY NO. 2/03

### Ecologically Sustainable Development

#### **1.0 Rationale**

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to outline the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee's commitment to ensuring the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) underpin our decision-making processes, and how ESD is incorporated into the activities of the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee.
- 1.2 The Bush Fire Coordinating Committee, under the *Rural Fires Act 1997* Sec 3 (d), is required to have regard to ESD as outlined in the *Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991*, which sets out the following principles:
- a) The precautionary principle namely, that if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. In the application of the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by:
    - i. careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment, and
    - ii. an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options.
  - b) Inter-generational equity namely, that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations
  - c) Conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration in all decisions.
  - d) Recognising the economic values that the natural environment provides. The natural environment has values that are often hard to quantify but provide a benefit to the entire community. By recognising that the natural environment does have significant economic and social values we can improve decision making for the present and future generations.

## **2.0 Policy**

- 2.1 The Bush Fire Coordinating Committee will ensure that its programs, actions and policies are consistent with the Australian Government's goal for ESD, which is:

*"Development that improves the quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends"* (National Strategy for ESD, 1992).

- 2.2 The Bush Fire Coordinating Committee will apply the four principles of ESD: the precautionary principle, intergenerational equity, conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity, improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms, as described in the *Protection of the Environment Administration Act*.
- 2.3 Objectives for ESD will be implemented by integrating ecological, social and economic considerations into decision-making processes of the Committee.

## **3.0 Implementation of ESD**

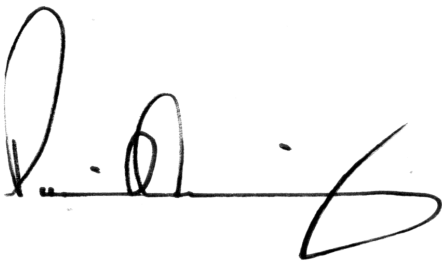
- 3.1 The Bush Fire Coordinating Committee will implement ESD principles by:
- a) Providing timely and accurate information to the community on fire and fire management operations to assist the community adopt practices which support ecologically sustainable methods and resource use.
  - b) Promoting the use of bush fire risk mitigation activities only where it is in accordance with a plan that takes account of the community and environmental values that need to be protected or enhanced.
  - c) Actively seeking the involvement of the community in planning for the protection of their community and environmental assets.
  - d) Continuing to support ongoing research into the behaviour and effects of fire, and establish monitoring of fire effects and fire operations to ensure that ESD commitments continue to be met.
  - e) Ongoing review of the impact of fire management operations across the landscape including response to wildfire frequency and intensity on human life, community assets, the environment and property.
  - f) Supporting learning and encouraging values that promote the implementation of ESD principles.
  - g) Developing, implementing and reviewing contracting and procurement methods so that ESD commitments are adopted and adhered to by contractors and agencies, and are reflected in the use of materials equipment and resources.

## **4.0 ESD Reporting**

4.1 The Bush Fire Coordinating Committee will encourage all member agencies to report on their achievements in implementing and supporting ESD. Plans prepared by the Coordinating Committee, including model bush fire management and operations plans, will include reporting mechanisms that take account of ESD indicators.

## **5.0 Review of This Policy**

5.1 This Policy will be reviewed as appropriate to reflect the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee's understanding of ESD.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Koperberg', written over a horizontal line.

**Phil Koperberg, AO, AFSM, BEM**  
**Chairman**  
**20 February 2003**