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BUSHFIRE CRC CEO NEWSLETTER – 7 April 2006

BUSHFIRE CRC PRIORITIES 2006 AND IMPACT ON CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

The calendar year 2006 is turning out to be the busiest and most demanding of the Bushfire CRC's three-year life so far. In turn, this is affecting the CRC's decisions about support for conference and workshop attendance.

Key challenges for the remainder of 2006 include:

- For the research outputs achieved to date, capturing them in ways that foster use within user agencies;
- Achieving critical targets due in the remainder of this year, for example the report of interim results on the aerial suppression project to allow agencies to mount arguments for future federal funding, and for the federal government to assess the value of their investment in aerial suppression;
- Achieving targets for quality, peer reviewed publications;
- Remedial action on those projects running behind schedule;
- Accelerating efforts of the Education and Training program to encourage knowledge transfer and research uptake in user agencies;
- Implementing the Fire Knowledge Network;
- Conduct of the CRC Third Year Review – a major review required by DEST involving an independent panel;
- Conduct of the Fire Managers' Research Workshop in Wollongong, 3-7 July 2006 involving all research projects and representatives of all operational fire and land management agencies;
- Conduct of our Annual Conference with the industry in Melbourne, 10-12 August 2006, building towards research conference at the 2007 Conference in Hobart and a major international scientific conference in Canberra in 2008;
- Strengthening our international participation, including targeted participation in the international conference in Portugal in November.

In the context of these challenges and the need for a CRC to focus very specifically on its industry partners, as well as on excellent performance on research quality, and taking account of limited budgetary resources, the CRC needs to take some hard decisions on support for conference participation this year.

There will, of course, be support for researchers and students to attend the annual CRC conference and the major whole of CRC workshop – the Fire Managers' Research Workshop. There will also be limited support for other conferences where these align with the imperatives outlined above.

The Bushfire CRC office has received some inquiries from researchers about participation in the Bushfire 2006 Conference in Brisbane in June. I am aware some researchers have

submitted abstracts. It had been the Bushfire CRC's intention to support this conference; however circumstances and CRC priorities make this difficult. From 3-7 July, we have the CRC's major annual workshop that brings the CRC research and student group together with a substantial group of operational fire managers. The timing for this is chosen to fit the academic year.

In early August we have our annual conference in conjunction with the industry conference. Running our conference in conjunction with the industry is essential to the CRC's core objectives. This year's conference will attract some 1000 delegates and each research project is expected to be represented at the conference if possible, as we head towards this becoming a major international research conference in 2008.

It is impossible for the CRC to provide significant support to three large events in three months. In the circumstances, the CRC will not be providing significant support for attendance at Bushfire 2006. Individual researchers who wish to attend will need to undertake this as part of their non-CRC duties, or, if it is consistent with aspects of their project, the expense must be accommodated within the current project budget.

This information is being passed to our user agencies so that they are aware the CRC is focussing specifically on the July Fire Managers' Research Workshop in Wollongong and the Annual CRC/AFAC Conference in Melbourne in August.

While the number of successful research outputs is growing, some projects are still behind schedule and there are a number of major contracted milestones to be achieved this calendar year. For example, the future federal government funding of national aerial suppression efforts will be influenced by the published interim research results on the aerial suppression research expected by August 2006.

The increase in research outputs has increased the importance of rolling out the necessary technology and knowledge transfer program to enable the benefits of the research to be adopted in the operational agencies.

Another major activity this calendar year is the conduct of a CRC Program Third year Review. This exercise will involve a review by an independent panel of the research and education programs, the effectiveness of technology transfer and research utilisation, and the effectiveness of engagement with the end user community in the CRC. As an initial lead in to this each of the Program Leaders will co-ordinate a review of every CRC project, examine the degree that the project is meeting the commitments made, meeting user needs and meeting the scientific quality expectations.

In connection with these priorities, it is essential that the researchers give attention to capturing as much as possible the progress of the research in terms of written and published reports.

Kevin O'Loughlin
Chief Executive Officer