



IN BRIEF



Trend is up

Debate in Copenhagen heated the political climate but in eastern Australia there's been a trend towards more fire weather for the last 30 years. And since the late 1990s, total fire weather (Daily Forest Fire Danger Index) has jumped significantly with increases of around 20-60% plus.

*From a report by the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre, the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research - commissioned by the Climate Institute.



matt hayes/firecall.com.au

More demands

Professional firefighters routinely perform duties from rescue to emergency medical response, and are now trained to be part of the frontline response to terrorist attack. "These are duties we are proud to perform," says Peter Marshall, "but they are putting us under increasing strain as we respond."



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Pressure On

"There is now more pressure on volunteer organisations," says Peter Marshall. "As cities expand along 'growth corridors' into rural areas, many volunteer brigades find their new members have city-based fulltime jobs, plus all the pressures of urban life. This means less time to devote to firefighting, so these areas need more professional resources."

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The UFUA is calling for a national inquiry into fire risk and readiness across Australia



Act now

As the Senate debated climate legislation, firefighters took their message to Parliament House in Canberra

"Pass legislation that's required – pass it with the maximum standard not the minimum." This was the call from UFUA National Secretary, Peter Marshall, as federal opposition politicians met, debated, changed leaders, then torpedoed the Government's climate change legislation.

Emissions reduction targets legislated for Australia must be boosted to between 25 and 40%, Peter Marshall believes. "Firefighters are not

scientists but we are the people on the front line. We are asking the politicians to stop playing political football with this issue."

So what now? The UFU is pressing for a national inquiry which folds in the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. "This would widen the terms of reference and allow Australia to get to the bottom of what happened last summer," says Peter Marshall. "We urge State and Federal governments to make sure the Victorian tragedy isn't repeated and to develop Australia's first ever national approach to fire and rescue."

Season's greetings

On behalf of all UFUA elected officers, I extend season's greetings to all Members; here's to a safe and secure 2010. And special thanks to the Union's OHS delegates for their dedication to making firefighting a safer occupation in 2009.

Peter Marshall
UFUA National Secretary

WIDER INQUIRY NEEDED

Ice melts, droughts, fires, ocean level rise, species in trouble; even the gloomiest climate change models generated back in the 1990s didn't forecast results this bad, or so fast.

"I've written to the Prime Minister calling for a national inquiry into Australia's fire risk and readiness," says Peter Marshall.

"Traditionally, fire cover has been a state responsibility. But now we need a national

approach to prepare for the impact of climate change on the community and firefighters."

"The scientists say that climate change will mean more days of extreme fire danger and more catastrophic weather events," says Peter. "Every firefighter knows that fire prevention is better than fire suppression. We have to avoid a high global warming scenario." The Union awaits the PM's response.