

INDEPENDENT BUSHFIRE GROUP

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Strong action needed to keep fires small: Independent Bushfire Group

The Senate committee's commitment to investigate fast attack strategies in its final report has been congratulated by the Independent Bushfire Group.

The IBG was commenting today following the release of the Senate committee's interim report, *Lessons to be learned in relation to the Australian bushfire season 2019-20*.

IBG member and former incident controller Geoff Luscombe said some remote lightning fires that later became disasters could have been put out shortly after ignition with a strong force of specialised helicopters, bombers and remote area fire crews, dedicated only to extinguishing these remote area ignitions.

“Supported by the best lightning strike detection technologies, these teams could act quickly while there were only one or two trees alight,” Mr Luscombe said.

“Changes in decision-making and investment in specialised firefighting can ensure more lightning fires are put out early, thus reducing costs and impacts on communities and bushland.

“It is clear that we are in unchartered territory for future fire seasons, and we need radical changes in the way we understand and fight fires in the era of climate change.

The Independent Bushfire Group, which includes 13 fire management veterans and researchers with more than 450 years of fire experience between them, has analysed 11 fires from the last catastrophic season.

Mr Luscombe said future severe fires seasons will be closer together and more extreme. Practices that were developed in the past now need radical rethinking.

“We strongly support the approach being taken by the committee to a whole of community fire mitigation effort and the shift in emphasis of prescribed burning closer to communities,” he said.

The Independent Bushfire Group's report is available [here](#).