



## MEDIA RELEASE – 4 February 2023

### **Bushfire experts say mismanagement of recovery funds was shameful.**

The Independent Bushfire Group (IBG) has expressed its dismay at the NSW Audit Office's report that found the distribution of bushfire recovery funds lacked integrity and deviated from guidelines for their fair dispersal.

Speaking from the Blue Mountains today, IBG President Geoff Luscombe said that damaged communities have been let down.

"This money was to help impacted communities get back on their feet after the disastrous fires of Black Summer. Now we find out that what should have been a fair process seems misdirected."

"All the communities that got money needed help, but some like Tenterfield and the Blue Mountains got nothing for many months afterwards. All because the system fails to always direct public money to the places it needs to go."

"Recovery grants programs like this are too important to fail. They provide vital practical support but also give traumatised people a big morale and psychological boost in the aftermath of very hard times."

"The NSW Audit Office plays an essential role in keeping the government honest, but they can't check everything."

"We all know that devastating fires and floods will come again. We call on the government and the opposition to announce an Independent Inspector General for Emergency Management as exists in Victoria and Queensland. This office would be independent of government and agencies. It would be expert, take a holistic approach and report directly to parliament."

"The 2020 Royal Commission into National Disaster Arrangements observed that independent accountability was important to encourage the best use of resources and best possible outcomes for our communities. Three years later, NSW communities still don't have this in place", Mr Luscombe said.

The Independent Bushfire Group advocates for better fire management and recovery processes.

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The **Independent Bushfire Group** is a group of non-aligned bushfire practitioners, fire managers, land managers, fire researchers and ecologists with over 400 years of collective experience across a range of landscapes. The IBG advocates for better fire management with a focus on practical firefighting, science and evidence-based practices so we can adapt to our worsening fire climate.

<https://independentbushfiregroup.org/>