

## Appendix A The Inquiry's terms of reference

On 20 February 2003 the Chief Minister issued the following terms of reference for the Inquiry into the Operational Response to the January Bushfires:

The disastrous ACT bushfires of January 2003 caused the deaths of four people and a heavy loss of private and public property. The Government proposes to undertake an Inquiry into the preparation for and operational response to those bushfires by the ACT's emergency services in order to identify improvements that might enhance the capacity to respond effectively to large scale events of that kind.

The Inquiry will examine and report on the adequacy of the response to the bushfires by the ACT Emergency Services Bureau and its components (ACT Bushfire Services, ACT Emergency Services, ACT Fire Brigade and ACT Ambulance Service) and other relevant agencies, including ACT Policing, Environment ACT and ACT Forests with particular reference to:

- i) the preparation, planning and response to the bushfires and of strategies for the evaluation and management of bushfire threat and risk;
- ii) ESB's management structure, command and control arrangements, and public information strategy;
- iii) the coordination and cooperative arrangements with other ACT and interstate, Commonwealth and non-government agencies, including utility providers, for managing such emergencies; and
- iv) the adequacy of ESB's equipment, communications' systems, training and resources.

In undertaking its work, the Inquiry Team will consult closely with the Coroner conducting inquests into the deaths caused by the bushfires to avoid any interference with the process of inquiry being directed by her.

The Inquiry is also to advise the Government on the ACT's overall structure for dealing with emergency situations, given the Territory's unique context (geographic, population, financial and administrative), including the operation of the Emergency Management Act. In providing this advice, the Inquiry should make reference to arrangements that exist in other jurisdictions for dealing with emergencies.

The Inquiry Team will report to the Chief Minister by 30 June 2003, in order that relevant recommendations that may result from the Inquiry may be fully implemented prior to the onset of the 2003–04 bushfire season.

The Inquiry's reporting date was subsequently extended to 31 July 2003.