

# media release



**MASTERS OF OUR INDUSTRY**

Master Builders Association of Victoria  
ABN: 38 004 255 654

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## **Bushfire safety: More than just home design**

The Master Builders Association of Victoria will today tell the Bushfire Royal Commission that homes should never be viewed as a safe refuge from the threat of bushfires.

The Association will also caution consumers against reliance on bunkers to save lives or guarantee safety, and that home owners' management of vegetation around a property should not be subject to regulation.

Master Builders Executive Director, Brian Welch, said the primary role of a home is to shield its inhabitants from normal weather conditions, not natural disasters.

"Master Builders is concerned that the community is developing a false sense of security about homes being built to the upgraded bushfire standards. Many Victorians believe the new standard will fireproof houses - they won't," he said.

"Evidence already provided by the Building Commissioner shows that over 85 per cent of homes destroyed by the Black Saturday bushfires were built prior to Ash Wednesday's bushfire standards.

"While this indicates that higher standards may indeed reduce risk, a great many homes survived because of factors other than building standards, such as simply removing threatening vegetation.

"Since the Black Saturday bushfires, the debate over managing native vegetation has shifted from preserving the environment to preserving life and property. This is a good development.

"Master Builders recommends the elimination of the requirement to obtain permits from local government for the removal of native vegetation in near proximity to dwellings. Current laws are too restrictive and put lives at risk.

"On larger parcels of land, private landowners should have the legal right to clear land up to a scientifically recommended limit.

"We consider this area of reform to be of equal, if not greater importance than the new building regulations.

"Master Builders will also be providing feedback on the new bushfire building standard and its implementation in the regions."

ENDS

NOTE: Mr Welch will be available for a doorstep comment after providing evidence today, outside the Royal Commission at 222 Exhibition St.

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