



Cape York Peninsula Development Association Inc.

Media Release

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2007 Fire Risk Reduced but Planning Still Needed

The risk of a highly volatile 2007 fire season on Cape York Peninsula has been substantially reduced due to large areas burning in November and December 2006, according to Peter Thomson, manager of the Cape York Peninsula Fire Program, which is funded by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust, in partnership with the Queensland Government.

In October 2006, Peter Thompson warned of a severely increased fire risk for the 2007 fire season due to the build up of debris left in the wake of cyclones Monica and Ingrid; combined with the affect of only 20 per cent of usual burns occurring.

Since then, this risk has been reduced with approximately 4.5 million hectares or 80 per cent of the usual burn occurring in 2006; an area of more than twice the size of the Kakadu National Park.

Peter Thompson said, "It is with some relief that we can now alter the prediction we made in October 2006 for the 2007 fire season to a lower grade risk. This however, does not mean that landholders can become complacent, especially in those areas that didn't burn this year. Good fire planning can protect property and manage feed for cattle, as well as maintaining biodiversity which may be affected by large scale wild fire".

Peter Thompson said that there are excellent examples of landowners working together with the Rural Fire Service (RFS), Natural Resources and Water and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services to minimise the risk of wild fire and jointly protect their properties.

"The Annan-Endeavour Catchment Management Group in Cook Shire facilitated workshops on biodiversity, erosion and strategic fire management in 2006, after severe fires damaged many properties in 2005. As an outcome of the workshop, a group of landholders involved with Rural Fire Brigades conducted successful controlled burns in the Endeavour Valley region. This successfully reduced the fuel load and prevented a repeat disastrous event in the area. The exercise is a credit to the members of the Cooktown Fire Management Committee and the agencies that worked with them." Peter said.

Apart from the Cooktown group, Weipa has also established a fire management committee and several other areas in Cape York have been working collaboratively to manage fire risks for many years.

The Rural Fire Service can advise landowners of the best way to manage precautionary burning and fuel loads. RFS also advise that all burn-offs require a free permit which can be obtained from the fire warden responsible for your property.

More information can be found on the RFS web site - www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au.

Media enquiries: *MaryBeth Gundrum, Communications Officer, CYPDA on 0429 385 567.*
Interviews: *Peter Thompson is available for interview.*
Vision: *7 year fire scar maps, spokesperson Peter Thompson – on request*
Location: *207 Bunda Street Cairns*