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# **VICTORIAN LANDS ALLIANCE**

## **Media Release**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **BUSHFIRE INQUIRY MUST LET FARMERS AND FORESTERS APPEAR**

The refusal of the Bushfire Royal Commission to allow the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Victorian Association of Forest Industries leave to appear at the commission was today denounced as ludicrous.

“This is a bad start for public confidence in the commission” said Max Rheese, secretary of the Victorian Lands Alliance.

“The Alliance calls on the commission, in the interests of public confidence and transparency, to list on its website who has been given leave to appear before the commission”.

“We want to see who it is that the commission thinks can speak for our members and ordinary Victorians who were affected by the fires”.

“We are flabbergasted that groups such as the Master Builders Association and the Housing Industry Association are preferred witnesses over organisations with intimate knowledge of the area and management expertise in the key issues relating to the fires”.

“Over 1500 farmers live in the fire affected areas – some were killed in the fires, others burnt out and nearly all were badly affected and yet the group that has represented them for decades and which mounted a massive campaign to help victims has been denied a voice on their behalf”.

There are massive issues for the farming and timber industries resulting from the fires as both are an integral part of the fire affected rural communities and have significant skills and expertise in land and forest management.

The Victorian Lands Alliance, the Institute of Foresters Australia and Timber Communities Australia have also been refused leave to appear at the commission.

“Given the range of organisations and individuals that have been denied the opportunity to voice their concerns, share their in-depth knowledge and offer solutions on fire and land management, we have real concerns as to who the commissioners will be hearing from” concluded Mr Rheese.

– ENDS –

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The Victorian Lands Alliance is a coalition of member based recreational and commercial users of public land representing over 40,000 Victorians. The primary objective of the Alliance is to initiate public policy which is consistent with the ideals of its member organisations.

This policy will ensure active management and sustainable multiple-use of public land that balances the needs of the environment and the community.