

May 3rd 2009



VICTORIAN LANDS ALLIANCE

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

GOVERNMENT MUST COMMIT TO BUSHFIRE POLICY CHANGE

The Victorian Lands Alliance today cautiously welcomed the announcement by the Victorian Government of a \$204 M allocation in the upcoming budget to help prevent bushfire holocausts such as Black Saturday.

“At this early stage it does not appear this announcement allocates any extra funding to prevention of bushfires than what was announced by the government on December 4th 2008 in response to the parliamentary Bushfire Inquiry recommendations” said Max Rheese, secretary of the Alliance.

“Increases in funding for fire trucks, warning systems and the like are most welcome, but these things do not address the primary concern of rural residents – fuel reduction on public land.

\$10 M per year for fuel reduction programs announced three months before the Black Saturday fires equates to the \$52 M over five years announced today.

This week, as we reach the three month anniversary of the fires, we encourage the Premier to unequivocally accept the major recommendation of his own parliamentary inquiry, the advice of the auditor general and the calls of a bushfire ravaged community to accept as an absolute minimum; a tripling of fuel reduction burning to 385,000 hectares per year.

The government has not committed to a target for fuel reduction burning ahead of the next bushfire season, which is only seven months away. The auditor general has already highlighted that DSE ‘have consistently failed to meet their own burn targets’ so the government must be upfront and tell the community what they will commit to with this funding.

Fuel reduction burning is not a panacea for bushfire management, but there simply will not be fire management without adequate levels of fuel reduction burning

Funding allocations without a commitment to specific action as recommended by the inquiry provide no comfort to the community” said Mr Rheese.

A continuing series of public meetings around the state in recent weeks, attended by hundreds of Victorians, have called on the Premier to take action consistent with the inquiry recommendations. Another meeting on May 19th will be held in Bairnsdale. Over three thousand signed postcards from rural communities are on their way to the Premier’s office calling for action on fire prevention.

– ENDS –

[Govt response to Bushfire Inquiry media release](#) on December 4th 2008
[Parliamentary Bushfire Inquiry](#) tabled in Parliament June 24th 2008

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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.