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VICTORIAN LANDS ALLIANCE

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

ROYAL COMMISSION ASKED TO HEED PUBLIC'S CALL

The Victorian Lands Alliance submission to the Royal Commission analyses the fuel reduction burning history since the rapid expansion of national parks in the 1970's and finds a correlation between increasing area of parks and declining fuel reduction burning.

"Parks Victoria annual reports over the five years from 2003 – 2008, show prescribed burning in parks was even lower than other public land at just 1.2 per cent of the land mass, ensuring a second rotation burn would not occur on average for another 83 years" said Max Rheese, secretary of the Lands Alliance.

"This level of fire preparation on public land is setting us up for a disaster, which is what has happened four times in the last six years.

Whichever way you slice it, Victoria is poorly prepared to deal with a growing fire threat that is a result of a flawed public land management model over the last thirty years" said Mr Rheese.

The major recommendations for change in the Lands Alliance submission to the Royal Commission are:

- Increased fuel reduction burning to 385,000 hectares per year, consistent with the government's own parliamentary Bushfire Inquiry report.
- Government increase funding to the Department of Sustainability and Environment [DSE] for fuel reduction burning to \$31M per year instead of the current \$10M.
- The establishment of a permanent fire forum, independent of government agencies, to bridge the gap between the community and public land managers on fire management.

The DSE burn target for 2009/10 is 130,000 hectares, the same as the last four years.

The funding for fuel reduction burning announced on May 3rd is \$52m over five years [\$10.5M per year]. The funding announced last year, prior to the Black Saturday fires was \$10M.

Nothing has changed. As fire ecologist, Dr Kevin Tolhurst told the Royal Commission this week 'We are still exposed to that risk. This will happen again'

– ENDS –

The Alliance submission to the Royal Commission can be viewed at:

<http://www.landsalliance.org/home.html>

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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 resulting in active management and sustainable multiple-use of public land, balancing the needs of the environment and the community.