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VICTORIAN LANDS ALLIANCE

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CALL TO PROTECT WATER CATCHMENTS FROM FIRE

Community anger was on show over inadequate fuel reduction burning at a No Fuel No Fire community meeting held last night by the Victorian Lands Alliance at Pakenham on Melbourne's outer eastern fringe.

The meeting was one of a series held in rural and urban fringe areas to give local communities a say on fire management practises on public land. The meeting ended with motions directed to the Premier John Brumby calling for a tripling of fuel reduction burning this coming year.

"Residents were passionate about what they saw as inadequate fire prevention in many areas of the Melbourne eastern fringe and water catchments" said Max Rheese, secretary of the Alliance.

Professor Peter Attiwill from Melbourne University, who was one of the speakers at the meeting, highlighted the risks to Melbourne water catchments from poor fuel reduction practices when he said "Melbourne could lose up to 30 per cent of its water yield from catchment forests for more than 50 years through inadequate fuel reduction burning".

People were angry when it was pointed out to them that this year's DSE burn targets, as indicated in the Budget papers, are the same as the last four years – 130,000 hectares".

The lessons have not yet been learned, more people will die from uncontrolled fire" said Mr Rheese.

It is now over five months since the Black Saturday fires and few measures have been announced by the government that would prevent the same sort of tragedy this coming summer.

The Alliance has written to the Premier three times encouraging him to adopt the recommendation of his own parliamentary Bushfire Inquiry to increase fuel reduction burning to 385,000 hectares per year.

"It was clear from the meeting last night that the community expects and would support decisive action on fire management reform" said Mr Rheese.