

August 27th 2009



VICTORIAN LANDS ALLIANCE

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

BUSHFIRE PREVENTION NOT YET A

PRIORITY

A No Fuel No Fire community meeting in Colac last night heard that despite the Black Saturday tragedy, state-wide fuel reduction burn targets had remained unchanged for the 2009/ 2010 fire season at 130,000 hectares, the same level as the last five years.

“Department of Sustainability and Environment research shows 80 per cent of Victorians surveyed wanted to see a big increase in fuel reduction burning now” said Max Rheese, secretary of the Victorian Lands Alliance.

“Apart from a recent welcome announcement for limited fuel reduction burning on Melbourne’s outer fringe, there appears to be no change from recent years low burn targets.”

Last week the Premier said that Victorians were heading for a catastrophic fire season this year if an El Nino event materialised, which appears likely on current trends.

“It is now 13 months since the government’s own parliamentary bushfire inquiry recommended trebling fuel reduction burning to 385,000 hectares per year. This recommendation was based on DSE evidence before the inquiry, but the government has not yet fully supported this recommendation” said Mr Rheese

The VLA calls upon the Premier to answer some simple questions:

- Why is the 2009/2010 DSE burn target of 130,000 hectares the same as the last five years?
- Why does the 2009 Budget show an 11 per cent decrease on preventative fire funding from 2 years ago?
- Why will the government not adopt the key recommendation of its own parliamentary bushfire inquiry of 2008 to set a fuel reduction burn target of 385,000 hectares?

“The government is moving in the right direction with work on *Township Safety Plans* and *Neighbourhood Safer Places*, as well as improvements to native vegetation laws and relaxing restrictions on roadside fuel management, but it must get fuel levels down if it is serious about bushfire control” 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 to improve the management of public land.

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