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VICTORIAN LANDS ALLIANCE

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Push ahead with more prescribed burning

In a dramatic rebuff of the scale of prescribed burning currently undertaken in Victoria, the expert panel on Land and Fire Management at the Bushfires Royal Commission yesterday unanimously recommended lifting the range of prescribed burning to between 5 and 10 per cent of the treatable area of public land.

The seven member panel consisted of experts in fire ecology and environmental research.

Bushfire fuel reduction programs over the last three years have achieved just 2.5 per cent, or around 150,000 hectares, with even less achieved in the previous three years leading to “unnaturally high fuel levels” according to former chief fire officer, Athol Hodgson.

Professor Ross Bradstock, director of the Centre for Environmental Risk Management of Bushfires at the University of Wollongong said “We must push ahead with more prescribed burning...we can’t keep waiting. We will reduce the risks to environmental values through increased prescribed burning”

Professor Mark Adams in evidence at the royal commission said “To delay is an invitation to disaster....we must commence now.”

This evidence was contrary to that given last Friday by the Department of Sustainability and Environment secretary, Greg Wilson who described increased burning programs as “A longer term aspiration.” Mr Wilson agreed with Commissioner McLeod that there had been a reduction in effort by DSE on prescribed burning from previous decades.

The Victorian Lands Alliance has consistently supported the target of 385,000 hectares as recommended by the government’s own parliamentary inquiry in 2008, which fits in the middle of the 5 to 10 per cent range recommended by the royal commission’s expert panel.

Secretary of the VLA, Max Rheese said today “We have heard compelling evidence over the last few days that the current burning program is inadequate to protect communities and the environment.

We have also heard in evidence that the department is “running at capacity” in achieving the current low target. It is obvious that the department must be funded and resourced immediately at a level to be able to achieve the risk reduction program put forward by the expert panel.”

“We have been calling for an increased commitment on prescribed burning and other fuel reduction measures since the Black Saturday disaster. These calls are backed by long standing science and evidence and backed unanimously by the expert panel.

With the autumn burning program about to start, now would be an appropriate time for government to commit resources to the land manager to enable them to undertake an expanded burning program immediately as recommended” concluded Mr Rheese.

– ENDS –

Contact: Max Rheese 0428 621 320 www.landsalliance.org [Bushfire Survey](#)

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.