



2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

MEDIA RELEASE

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COMMISSION DELIVERS INTERIM REPORT

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission today presented its Interim Report to the Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, the Honourable Marilyn Warren, AC.

The Lieutenant Governor then handed the 376-page report to the Premier, Mr John Brumby. A short time later the report was tabled in Parliament and released publicly.

The Interim Report makes 51 recommendations and is the culmination of six months' work, including four weeks of community consultations; examination of more than 1,260 submissions and eight weeks of public hearings involving a total of 87 witnesses.

The Royal Commission was established on 16 February to investigate the causes and responses to the bushfires which swept through parts of Victoria in late January and February 2009, killing 173 people. The Commission is chaired by the Hon. Bernard Teague AO, supported by Commissioners Ron McLeod AM and Susan Pascoe AM.

"The Interim Report has focussed on those things we consider can and should change in the short term to make Victoria a safer place during the upcoming fire season," said Commissioner Teague.

"Going forward we will concentrate on longer-term changes that we believe are necessary to avoid a repeat of the tragic loss of life that occurred earlier this year."

Commissioner Teague said the underlying principle throughout the inquiry had been the preservation of life and this would continue to be the Commission's focus.

The Commission resumes its public hearings on 24 August. The initial focus will be an examination of building standards in bushfire-prone areas and will include matters such as construction materials, fire-resistant house features and bushfire bunkers.

The Commission will then hear evidence about the structure and regulation of the electricity industry in Victoria followed by a detailed investigation of all the major fires that swept through parts of the State earlier this year.

The Commission will also examine the circumstances surrounding the deaths of the 173 people who died in the fires. This information will assist the Commission to continue its evaluation of the "stay or go" policy. It is important to note that this work of the Commission will not replace the role of the Coroner.

The Coroner has already indicated she will wait until the Commission hands down its final report in 2010 and the completion of any related criminal proceedings before finalising any coronial investigations.

A range of other matters will be investigated in later sessions. The Final Report of the Royal Commission is due on 31 July 2010.

For further information, please contact Quentin Fogarty, Public Affairs Manager 0421 084 089.