



2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

MEDIA RELEASE

Sunday, 23 May 2010

COMMISSIONER CRITICISES LEAKING OF SUBMISSIONS

The Chairman of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, the Hon. Bernard Teague AO, has criticised the leaking of Counsel Assisting's submissions on key issues including the "stay or go" policy, organisational structure and leadership on Black Saturday.

The Sunday Age published a number of articles today which went to the substance of the submissions that Counsel Assisting will present to the Commission next week. Last Saturday, The Age also published a story with some details of the submissions.

"I am disappointed that someone with access to these documents appears to have decided to go to the media," said Commissioner Teague.

"The submissions of Counsel Assisting are distributed, in advance, to all parties with leave to appear to enable them to prepare their own responses.

"This is done on the basis of trust and with the expectation that the various parties will respect the confidence placed in them by the Commission."

Commissioner Teague said it was not helpful and entirely inappropriate for these matters to be published in the media before they could be discussed in the Commission and without the benefit of submissions from other parties.

"This is just one side of the debate," he said. "The proper place for a robust discussion of the submissions of Counsel Assisting, and those of the other parties, is before us. Then, and only then, will we make our final decisions."

Commissioner Teague and his fellow Commissioners, Susan Pascoe AM and Ron McLeod AM, have urged all parties to remain focussed on the important issues to be discussed in the Commission in the coming week and not to be distracted by incomplete and, at times, misleading coverage in the media.

The Commission will complete its hearings next week and deliver its final report for the Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser AC, on Saturday, 31 July.

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