



## 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## COMMISSION RELEASES INTERIM BUILDING RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission today released its second Interim Report focussing on priorities for building in bushfire-prone areas.

The Commission delivered the report to the Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser, this morning and it was later tabled in the State Parliament.

In August and September, the Commission heard evidence from a range of expert and lay witnesses about building in areas of high bushfire risk and decided that several matters required urgent attention.

This Interim Report contains seven recommendations which address the need for a national standard for bushfire bunkers and urgent changes to the construction requirements for building in bushfire-prone areas.

“The Commission has an important role as a catalyst for change,” said Commission Chair, the Hon Bernard Teague, “and we welcome the prompt action by the Victorian Government and the Australian Building Codes Board on these important matters.”

The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) has begun work on a national standard for the design and construction of bushfire bunkers and the Victorian Government has introduced interim regulations while the national standard is being developed.

### Interim Recommendations:

- The Australian Building Codes Board continue to progress the development of a standard for bushfire bunkers, that addresses matters including, but not limited to, fire resistance, structural strength, resistance to high winds, maintenance of tenable conditions, minimum functional size, maximum period of occupancy, visual communication with outside, siting, access and egress and signage, and make it publicly available no later than 30 April 2010.
- The Australian Building Codes Board amend the Building Code of Australia (BCA) to include bunkers in the classes of building regulated by the BCA. This amendment should take effect with the publication of the 2010 edition of the BCA.
- The Australian Building Codes Board reference the national standard for bushfire bunkers in the Building Code of Australia (BCA) as soon as possible, ideally in the 2010 edition of the BCA.

- The Commonwealth, through the Building Ministers' Forum, encourage all jurisdictions to adopt the standard for bushfire bunkers as soon as practicable once it is developed and/or referenced in the Building Code of Australia.
- The Victorian Government prescribe the national standard for bushfire bunkers as a minimum standard for Victoria by amending the Building Regulations, no later than 31 May 2010.
- Standards Australia, no later than 31 March 2010:
  - publish amendments to AS3959-2009 that address inclusion of unmanaged grassland in the vegetation types and classifications, and use of sarking as a secondary ember protection measure; and
  - report to the Commission on progress of amendments to AS3959-2009 to increase ember protection measures at lower Bushfire Attack Levels, in particular in relation to subfloor requirements and materials prescribed for doors, windows and wall barriers.
- Standards Australia publish a fully revised Handbook to replace HB-36 – *Building in Bushfire Prone Areas*, for use as a companion to AS 3959-2009, no later than 31 December 2009.

A printable and a hyperlinked version of the second Interim Report is available at the Commission's website [www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au](http://www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au)