

# COUNTRY ALLIANCE

## *MEDIA RELEASE*

*(Embargoed until 6am Wednesday 7 September)*

## **‘Common sense’ call for firewood policy**

Country Alliance today called upon the Victorian Government to review the requirement for licences for the collection of fallen timber for firewood from public land and the prohibition of collection from state and national parks.

Under a Country Alliance proposal, licences would no longer be required for the collection of fallen timber from public land within 500 metres of adjoining private property. The 500 metre collection zone would also apply where private property adjoined national and state parks.

“While everyone understands the role that fallen timber plays in the provision of habitat it is also true that it constitutes a real danger in times of bush fire” spokesman Russell Bate said.

“When you consider that National and State parks currently cover more than 3.75 million hectares, or approximately 16% of the State, it is reasonable to assume that the loss of a 500 metre strip where these reserves adjoin private property would have little impact on the total available habitat provided by fallen timber” he added.

“Current regulations require that anyone wishing to collect firewood for personal use from public land requires a Forest Produce Licence from the Department of Sustainability and Environment. Licence prices currently range from \$8.20 to \$24.50 per cubic metre and licences are only available from DSE offices during business hours.

The current licencing process is unwieldy and places an unnecessary financial burden on many rural residents”, Mr. Bate said.

“By abolishing the requirement for licences when collecting fallen timber for personal use within this 500 metre area the Government would not only eliminate this burden on local residents but would help to greatly reduce the risk of bush fire damage to fences and other private property by creating a valuable buffer zone” he added.

Mr. Bate also pointed out that while firewood may also be collected from some Shire and VicRoads roadsides when approval is granted, a DSE licence is still required.

“Once again the collection of fallen timber from these roadsides, when safe to do so, could assist with fire prevention. The removal of the requirement for licences for collection of fallen timber from these areas should also be considered”.