

5 August 2009

CA warns time is running out for bushfire policy changes

The Country Alliance party today warned the State Government cannot afford to wait for the outcome of the current Royal Commission before it takes further steps to avoid a repetition of last summer's fires.

Party spokesman, Russell Bate said that a leaked DSE report forecasting a repetition of the conditions faced last summer demonstrated that the government has no option but to implement new policies and fuel reduction measures as soon as possible.

"We went to the last state election with policies that specifically addressed the need to reduce fuel loads but the major parties seemed more interested in chasing the urban Green vote by locking up more land in national parks and effectively minimizing fuel reduction," he said.

"After last summer's tragic fires these same parties are finally taking the bushfire issue seriously but they have to start committing themselves to action now before the warmer weather brings increased risk of bushfires and makes safe fuel reduction burning impossible".

"While we don't expect that any new policies can be fully implemented before next summer it must be obvious to everyone that both the government and the opposition need to commit themselves to a rethink on their land and bushfire management policies. The recent Government proposals to make it easier for residents to collect firewood from roadsides and to clear vegetation around their homes and the opposition suggestion that rethink of who should pay the CFA levy is required are all welcome moves, but these were policies Country Alliance were advocating three years ago".

Mr Bate said that while the current Royal Commission into the bushfires may come up with new measures it is a lengthy process and little that it recommends will be in place by next summer. He added that there is a long history of investigations and commissions into previous fires making numerous recommendations but most of these were either ignored or, in recent years, sacrificed on the alter of "habitat preservation".

For media comment contact Russell Bate on 0425 729 811 (mob) or (03) 5777 0750
Alternate media spokesperson: Andrew Jones 0427 557 093
Admin: admin@countryalliance.org / ph 0425 746 066