

Peter Ryan MP

Leader of The Nationals • Shadow Minister for Bushfire Response
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GOVT FAILURE ON FUEL REDUCTION BURNS INCREASED BUSHFIRE RISK

A decade of Labor Government inaction has forced John Brumby to desperately play catch up with fuel reduction burns after the 2009 Victorian bushfires, Shadow Minister for Bushfire Response and Leader of The Nationals Peter Ryan said today.

Mr Ryan this week criticised the Brumby Government's appalling record on prescribed burning in Parliament ahead of the Bushfires Royal Commission's final report due this Saturday.

"The State Government repeatedly ignored expert advice recommending additional preventative burns, leaving at least one-fifth of the targeted area untouched during much of the past decade," Mr Ryan said.

"John Brumby also disregarded an all-party parliamentary Environment and Natural Resources Committee recommendation in 2008 for the government to triple its annual prescribed burning target from 130,000 hectares to 385,000 hectares."

Mr Ryan said in eight of the ten years to 2009 Labor failed to meet its own modest preventative burn targets and that failure undoubtedly contributed to the terrible events on Black Saturday.

"It wasn't until after Black Saturday that John Brumby finally began to take notice of the preventative burning backlog," Mr Ryan said.

Mr Ryan said the Bushfires Royal Commission had heard evidence from a senior Department of Sustainability and Environment employee who admitted the government's current target was inadequate and needed to be doubled.

"Lawyers for the Commission have also supported an increase in fuel reduction burns but the Brumby Government did not support adopting a target of 385,000 hectares as put forward by Counsel Assisting," Mr Ryan said.

"Fuel reduction burns need to be undertaken across much of the state and the onus is on John Brumby to significantly increase the level of prescribed burning in Victoria."

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