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BRUMBY'S FIRE FAILURE EXPOSED

- New analysis reveals failure to implement key recommendations of interim Bushfires Royal Commission report
- Many previous warnings ignored

John Brumby has failed to implement a number of key recommendations from the Bushfires Royal Commission's Interim Report, new analysis by the Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition has revealed.

Releasing a research report on recommendations from the interim Royal Commission report which have still not been implemented by John Brumby, Coalition Leader Ted Baillieu said John Brumby had ignored many previous warnings on bushfires and had not done enough to protect Victorians from bushfire risk.

Mr Baillieu said it had been a year since the release of the Bushfires Royal Commission Interim Report and key recommendations had still not been implemented by John Brumby.

"In November last year John Brumby claimed that *'government departments and agencies are working quickly to implement recommendations of the Royal Commission's interim report'* but his claims are not supported by the evidence," Mr Baillieu said.

"Victorians already know that the Brumby Government ignored 25 key recommendations before the February 2009 bushfires which, if they had been adopted, would have ensured Victorians were better prepared and protected, and now the same alarming pattern is evident with these recommendations.

"There is no point in having lengthy and expensive inquiries, reports and Royal Commissions if John Brumby continues to ignore and fails to implement their recommendations.

"John Brumby cannot be trusted to keep Victorians safe from fire when he has not done the work to ensure these key recommendations are implemented," Mr Baillieu said.

Among the key recommendations which John Brumby has failed to implement are:

- Recommendation 4.8 – *investigation into the technical feasibility of the second phase of a national telephony-based warning system* (this investigation being undertaken by the Brumby Government is currently held up);
- Recommendation 6.4 – *review by councils of their Municipal Emergency Management Plans to ensure there is appropriate provision for relocation during bushfires* (councils are struggling to implement this recommendation because of inadequate financial assistance from the Brumby Government);

- Recommendation 8.4 – *replacement of the 2005 Fire Refuges in Victoria: Policy and Practice policy after its review by the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner* (the Brumby Government has only released a discussion paper in July 2010, and with the policy held up there have been no new refuges announced);
- Recommendation 8.6 – *the State to have commenced progressively identifying, establishing and advertising designated community refuges and Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs) giving priority to areas where bushfire risk is identified as high* (NSPs not fully implemented; Victoria has 101 NSPs, while in New South Wales more than 700 have been identified using similar guidelines; as at 28 July 2010, the CFA website showed that 23 of the 52 Hot Spot towns did not have an NSP, with none in the extreme bushfire risk area of the Colac-Otway Shire);
- Recommendation 8.6 – *establishment of community refuges* (there have been no new community refuges identified or established);
- Recommendation 8.7 – *councils record the location of designated community fire refuges and NSPs in Municipal Fire Prevention Plans and Municipal Emergency Management Plans, and inform residents and visitors about their use and location* (councils are struggling to implement this recommendation because of inadequate financial assistance from the Brumby Government); and
- Recommendation 10.6 – *the CFA and DSE amend operating protocols to ensure that when an Incident Controller requests Victoria Police establish a roadblock to an area threatened by a bushfire, the Incident Controller simultaneously issues a bushfire warning to residents of that area* (new requirements only require an Incident Controller to consider the need for a warning should a roadblock be initiated).

“Even where John Brumby claims to have acted, he has failed to ensure communities are better protected,” Mr Baillieu said.

“The guidelines for the use of sirens in communities that John Brumby has developed are so rigid and bureaucratic that no community has been able to successfully cut through the red tape he has placed in their way.

“This means communities who want to use sirens as an additional warning measure are banging their head against John Brumby’s bureaucratic brick wall, contrary to the clear intent of the Royal Commission’s recommendation on sirens.”

There are also a host of areas where John Brumby has failed to heed previous warnings and recommendations on bushfire safety, including:

- the need for a single, multi-agency portal for bushfire information;
- adequate funding of the Victorian Bushfire Information Line;
- bushfire warnings; and
- The Standard Emergency Warning Signal.

“John Brumby has failed in his responsibility to do everything that can be done to protect Victorians from the threat of bushfire,” Mr Baillieu said.

ATTACHED: Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Research report into recommendations of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Interim Report not implemented by the Brumby Government – also includes recommendations that have only been implemented after previous warnings and recommendations were ignored.

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