



# Media release

## **The Hon Peter Ryan MP**

Deputy Premier  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services  
Minister for Bushfire Response  
Minister for Regional and Rural Development

Monday 24 October 2011

## **Coalition Government delivers key Bushfires Royal Commission recommendation**

Deputy Premier and Minister for Bushfire Response Peter Ryan today announced details of the Victorian Coalition Government's voluntary buy-back community consultation process as it moves to implement recommendation 46 of the Bushfires Royal Commission.

Recommendation 46 stated: *The State develop and implement a retreat and resettlement strategy for existing developments in areas of unacceptably high bushfire risk, including a scheme for non-compulsory acquisition by the State of land in these areas.*

"From 10 November, all landowners whose principal place of residence was destroyed in the 2009 bushfires will be given an opportunity to attend meetings to comment on the details of the scheme before it is finalised," Mr Ryan said.

Mr Ryan said Bushfire Buy-back Scheme Landowner Information and Consultation sessions would be held in Bendigo, Chum Creek, Churchill, Flowerdale, Kinglake, Marysville, Melbourne, St Andrews, Strathewen, Wandong, Whittlesea, and Yarra Glen.

"Participation in the bushfire buy-back scheme is completely voluntary as eligible landowners can decide for themselves whether they wish to sell," Mr Ryan said.

Eligible properties will, in the first instance, be determined by the following criteria:

- owner occupiers whose principal place of residence was destroyed by the Victorian bushfires in early 2009, and
- who have not commenced rebuilding, and
- a site is not available on the property that will enable a replacement dwelling to be located at a distance greater than 100m from forest vegetation, and that vegetation adjoins a large area of forest such as a National Park, State Park, State Forest or private plantation.

Mr Ryan today also announced Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund Chairman Pat McNamara would chair the Bushfire Land Acquisition Panel which would oversee the operation of the scheme and the management of acquired properties.

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“I am delighted Pat McNamara has agreed to chair the Panel as he has worked very closely with bushfire affected communities in his position as Chairman of the Victorian Bushfires Appeal Fund (VBAF) since the 2009 fires and is the ideal person for this role.”

Mr Ryan said \$50 million funding had been made available in the first instance as part of the Coalition Government’s voluntary bushfire buy-back scheme, with future allocations to be provided as may be required.

“The former Labor Government rejected this key Bushfires Royal Commission recommendation,” Mr Ryan said.

“The Coalition Government is acting on its commitment to implement all 67 Bushfires Royal Commission recommendations.

“If a property is eligible under the Coalition Government’s voluntary buy-back scheme, and the landowner and government agree on the terms of sale, we will provide the funding to make that happen.”

The Bushfire Land Acquisition Panel will initially use existing data to determine landowners whose properties meet the above criteria and are assessed to be at the greatest bushfire risk. The process of contacting those landowners will begin as soon as the precise terms of the buy-back scheme have been resolved. Other eligible property owners will be able to apply to have their land acquired through an application process starting in March 2012.

Mr Ryan said land would be valued through Valuer-General Victoria processes at both pre-bushfire and current market value with the higher of the two values being the basis of the sale price.

“The Coalition Government is committed to improving bushfire safety and the buyback scheme will be delivered in conjunction with community consultation and other government bushfire safety initiatives,” Mr Ryan said.

Further information on the voluntary bushfire buy-back scheme is available on the Department of Justice website [www.justice.vic.gov.au/buyback](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/buyback)

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