

# David Koch

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### **Lake Bolac foreshore still serious fire risk**

Debris left along the foreshore of Lake Bolac after a mini-tornado devastated the district in January 2006 is a serious fire risk and should be cleared immediately says David Koch, Member for Western Victoria.

Speaking in Parliament this week David Koch called on the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Gavin Jennings MP, to instruct the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) to remove the remaining debris on the lake's foreshore now to reduce the fire risk this summer.

He said tree stumps, fallen branches, leaf litter and dry grass along the foreshore of the eastern side of the lake are a serious and dangerous fire risk.

"The devastation resulted from a severe thunderstorm that generated wind gusts of up to 250 kilometres per hour and struck the Lake Bolac community on 19 January 2006.

"A tornado travelled from the west in a two kilometre path causing more than \$2 million damage to property and uprooted trees in and around the township and along the lake's foreshore. Massive sugar gum and cypress trees that surrounded the lake were destroyed in the storm with around 10 kilometres of the foreshore impacted and hundreds of trees flattened.

"This same storm also ignited the devastating Grampian's bushfires of January 2006.

"Ararat Rural City, emergency volunteers and the local community set about the immediate clean up, focussing on restoring damage in the township.

"But the lake's foreshore is the responsibility of the Lake Bolac Foreshore Committee and Parks Victoria under the control of DSE.

"During winter 2006, DSE started clearing the fallen trees but as the equipment being used was needed elsewhere, DSE ran out of time to complete the clean up before last summer.

"DSE then made a commitment to complete clean up operations during winter 2007 but despite constant calls to finish the clean-up, these calls have been ignored.

"Local residents are now concerned that the remaining debris left along the eastern side of the lake poses a dangerous fire risk.

"Concern has been expressed to me that if this very dry and flammable debris is not removed before the onset of what looks like a long, hot summer, the district will be faced with yet another disaster.

"The community is fed up with DSE's tardiness and the Minister must now act to ease the fears of the community", said David Koch.

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