

David Koch
Member for Western Victoria
Opposition Whip (Council)

46 Brown Street, Hamilton 3300
Tel: 5572 3377 · Fax: 5572 4945

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 16 October 2008

Bushfire threat in Western Victoria

Western Victorians face a growing risk of severe bushfires this coming summer, says David Koch, Member for Western Victoria.

Raising community concerns at the regional sitting of the Legislative Council held in Lakes Entrance this week, David Koch said that Victorians living in high fire danger areas, particularly in Western Victoria, are facing a potentially devastating bushfire threat.

“Bushfire experts from the Bureau of Meteorology are warning that coastal regions, the Otway National Park, the Brisbane Ranges and the Enfield State Forest are at an increased bushfire risk due to low spring rainfalls.

“The CFA expects the fire danger to be highest in these areas too, but there is also concern for all forest regions in Western Victoria.

“Good rainfall earlier in the year has fuelled forest growth that is now starting to dry out, and while grasslands in southern areas are still green, a few hot days will see them dry out quickly.

“Extended drought conditions over the last decade with continually below average rainfalls have meant subsoils have not been replenished and is causing earlier drying out of grasslands and forest floors.

“Areas along the coast from Torquay, where there is a lot of vegetation not burnt for many years, are facing the potential of a major fire storm if Victoria experiences a continued dry spring and hot summer.

“Due to the dry conditions, the CFA expects to introduce fire restrictions across Western Victoria before mid November this year and is warning that drying fuel loads mean Victorians must now ready themselves by doing all they can to reduce the fire risk.

“All the elements that led to the disastrous Ash Wednesday fires 25 years ago were in place last summer and unless there is significant spring and summer rain, that threat will again increase rapidly as summer progresses.

“The Bureau is predicting warmer and drier than average conditions with above average maximum temperatures for most of Victoria.

“I have called on the Minister for Emergency Services, Bob Cameron, to ensure adequate fire prevention works have been completed on crown reserves as a buffer to adjoining neighbours and protection for community and private assets near crown land boundaries.

“In the event of rampant bushfires again threatening those who have diligently made fire preparations, the Government must actively show it has removed its “neighbour from hell” status,” David Koch said.

Media inquiries: David Koch 0418 723 031