



MEDIA RELEASE

HON ROBERT BROKENSHERE MLC

FAMILY FIRST
The Independent Party



NATIVE VEGETATION COUNCIL MAY BE EXPOSING VEGETATION AND LIVES TO BUSHFIRE RISKS

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FAMILY FIRST MLC Robert Brokenshere has today called upon the Minister for the Environment to review the Native Vegetation Act and require that a member of the Country Fire Services is on the Native Vegetation Council, given that the Native Vegetation Act has no requirement that the Council be aware of bushfire prevention.

When trying to prevent bushfires, the CFS and landowners have to abide by a management plan for native vegetation, or else they face prosecution if they clear native vegetation without Native Vegetation Council consent. However, since the Act imposes no requirement on the Native Vegetation Council to consult with the CFS or hold any bushfire prevention expertise, the Council can impose whatever restrictions (such as fire break widths) or bans that they like upon the clearing activity.

“This is a crazy situation given that nothing poses more of a threat to native vegetation than a bushfire”, Mr Brokenshere said, “How can it be that there’s no need for bushfire prevention expertise on the Council, yet a bushfire can wipe out an entire species of vegetation – not to mention animal life and ecosystems”

Mr Brokenshere indicated, after years of experience as the former Emergency Services Minister, ill-informed restrictions on native vegetation clearance were meaning we are more at threat from bushfire due to insufficiently wide, and not enough, fire breaks.

“The Native Vegetation Council cannot exist in a vacuum – ill-informed decisions to protect native vegetation can put lives at risk, and in any case may be counter-productive (ie lead to bushfire losses) if they haven’t consulted with the experts”

Mr Brokenshere said that we will amend to require NVC to consider bushfire prevention matters and put a CFS board member on the NVC.

NB during a bushfire, section 97 of the Fire and Emergency Services Act, together with Regulation 5(1)(o) of the Native Vegetation Regulations, give power to CFS crews to remove vegetation and plough firebreaks to contain a fire – a change Hon Mr Brokenshere made when Emergency Services Minister. During a bushfire is too late to be clearing new fire breaks, however.