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ARSON PREVENTION TASKFORCE A PRIORITY

The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition will as a priority in government seek to establish an Arson Prevention Taskforce to help stop bushfires before they start.

The Coalition is also calling on the Government to immediately implement an Arson Prevention Taskforce to increase monitoring of known arsonists who pose a risk of causing bushfires, and increase patrols and identification of areas vulnerable to arson attack during the bushfire season.

A number of the deadly fires in Victoria last summer were reported to have been deliberately lit, including the fires near Bendigo, Churchill, and Marysville.

With Victoria regarded as one of the most dangerous places in the world for bushfires, it is a gross failure that this State has no dedicated statewide program to avert arson attacks.

Victoria needs a co-ordinated, statewide preventative bushfire arson taskforce consistent with neighbouring states that have had bushfire arson prevention programs operating for years.

Similar to programs operating in South Australia and New South Wales, under the Coalition's plan, the Arson Prevention Taskforce would:

- identify known arsonists;
- increase contact with and monitoring of them during the fire season; and
- increase patrols of areas identified vulnerable to arson attack.

The highly regarded anti-arson *Operation Nomad* has been running in South Australia for the past 17 years, and *Strike Force Toronto*, which reduced the number of deliberately lit bushfires in New South Wales between 2007 and 2009, has also been successful.

Labor ignored 25 key bushfire-related warnings and recommendations between 2002 and 2008, and the Brumby Government's lack of action on fire

Policy

prevention over the past ten years has left Victoria dangerously unprepared for bushfires.

Under a Coalition Government Victoria Police, the Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment would be tasked with the establishment of an inter-agency taskforce to prevent deliberately lit bushfires before they occur.

Under the successful *Operation Nomad* in South Australia regular and ongoing contact is made with known arsonists at key bushfire risk periods, and key risk locations for arson are patrolled.

The Coalition will explore legislative and other arrangements between states to allow details of each state's "persons of interest" list to be shared, allowing greater co-operation across jurisdictions.

According to the South Australian Government arsonists have been caught in the act because of increased monitoring and patrolling, which makes this policy a priority for the Coalition.

Victoria has enough issues to face with naturally-caused bushfires, and we will not stand by idly and allow deliberately lit fires to occur as well.