

Media Release

Peter Walsh MLA



Member for Swan Hill State | Deputy Leader | Shadow Minister of Agriculture | Shadow Minister for Country Water Resources

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PARKS WON'T IMPROVE FOREST OUTCOMES

Better environmental outcomes cannot be achieved in Victoria's river red gum forests simply by turning them into national parks.

Deputy Leader of The Nationals and Shadow Minister for Agriculture Peter Walsh said the Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition would not support the *Crown Lands (River Red Gums) Amendment Bill* because it would heighten the risk of fire and do little to improve the health of the forests.

"Even the Victorian Environment and Assessment Council has stated that changes to public land use categories will do virtually nothing for the health of the forests," Mr Walsh said.

"The biggest single issue affecting the health of the forests is water and on that, the Brumby Government's track record is appalling.

"The government has repeatedly looted environmental water which would have made a real difference to the health of these forests.

"Most recently they have taken 14 billion litres from savings made from the Wimmera Mallee pipeline for the north-south pipeline."

Mr Walsh said the Coalition was also concerned that turning the forests into national parks would increase the risk of fire.

"There are no provisions in the legislation put forward by the Brumby Government to address the heightened risk of fire," Mr Walsh said.

"VEAC has previously suggested that just \$1 million of extra funding would be enough to manage these new parks.

"In its final report it recommended the government retain an average of at least 50 tonnes of coarse woody debris on the forest floor.

"The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition believes those two factors present an unacceptable risk of fire to the forest and to the communities which border it," Mr Walsh said.

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