



MEDIA RELEASE

INQUIRY INTO THE WAMBELONG FIRE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

13 February 2014

The Parliamentary Committee Inquiry examining the causes and management of the Wambelong fire has been postponed, pending advice regarding the timeline for the Coronial investigation into the fire.

The Chair of the General Purpose Standing Committee, the Hon Robert Brown MLC said, "The Committee has received a request from the Hon Michael Gallacher MLC, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and the Hon Robyn Parker MP, Minister for the Environment, that hearings for the Wambelong fire inquiry not commence until the current coronial process is completed."

The Committee has agreed to postpone its hearings until further advice can be received from the Coroner's Office.

According to Mr Brown, "While there are no legal or procedural reasons for the committee not to proceed with its inquiry, for abundant caution, we have agreed to this request, but only if we can be assured that the Coroner's inquiry will be completed within a reasonable timeframe."

The Committee also received a request from the Premier, the Hon Barry O'Farrell MP, that the Committee consider keeping the Government submission to the inquiry confidential because its publication may risk prejudice to the coronial proceeding.

"We have agreed to this request, and will also keep other submissions received to date confidential, but will revisit this issue once we hear back from the Coroner about the timeline for his investigation."

"Therefore the site visit and public hearing planned for Coonabarabran in early March will be postponed. The Committee Secretariat will contact those local residents who expressed a desire to give evidence, to assure them that the Committee will visit the area," Mr Brown said.

"Given one of the reasons for establishing our inquiry was concern within the community about the time being taken to complete the coronial investigation, I want to assure the local community that we have not taken this decision lightly, and I will issue another media release once we have received advice from the Coroner." Mr Brown said.

More information regarding the Inquiry, including its Terms of Reference, is available on the Committee's website – www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/gpsc5.

For further information please contact the Committee Chair, the Hon Robert Brown MLC, on (02) 9230 3059.