

Monday 17 May 2010

VIC COALITION HAS CLEAR LOCUST PLAN

A Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Government would provide insecticide to Victorian farmers and local government to control locust hatchings in spring.

Immediate decisions are needed to start the campaign to control locust hatchings in the spring to stop the entire state being damaged to a greater degree than already experienced in north-west Victoria this autumn.

In government, the Coalition would immediately open a competitive tendering process for the supply of knockdown and residual insecticide and fund the purchase of that insecticide, with the 90 to 120-day lead time that is needed to ensure sufficient chemicals could be manufactured.

This process should ensure there is sufficient insecticide to spray up to two million hectares of public, private and local government-controlled land that will be affected by spring locust hatchings.

The Coalition would also ensure the availability of enough aircraft to spray hatchings on both public and private land before locusts started to fly.

We would also ensure the relevant insecticides had current registration for locust control.

It is deeply concerning that the Brumby Government has failed to outline any course of action.

Labor's refusal to act on locusts is leaving all Victorian food producers and communities dangerously exposed to an unprecedented spring locust plague.

Without immediate action from the government to guarantee the supply of chemicals, it is highly likely food producers and government departments will face insecticide shortages.

New South Wales and South Australia are already preparing for next season but Victoria's incompetent Minister for Agriculture Joe Helper has refused to admit the true extent of the threat from locusts to Victoria's food security.

Farmers cannot afford for the Brumby Government to wait until November before it decides locusts are a problem, because by then it will be too late.