



## Department of Environment and Primary Industries

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Ref FM/24/3406

25 September 2014

Chris Johnston  
10 McMillan Road  
Green Gully, Victoria 3462

Dear Ms Johnston

### Re: Loddon Mallee Region Fire Operations Plan

Thank you for providing feedback on the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) Loddon Mallee Region Fire Operations Plan (FOP) for 2014/15-2016/17. Your submission raises matters specific to Muckleford Forest and DEPI's broader approach to fuel management.

The Victorian Government is committed to implementing an increased planned burning program consistent with the recommendations made by the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. We are increasing the program progressively to ensure the right mix of fuel reduction activities are carried out where they are most likely to reduce the impact of major bushfires. The 2015-16 Fire Operations Plans outline 390,000 hectares for the state, however this will be reviewed closer to the time. The Murray Goldfields is capped at approx. 4% or 14 000 hectares, this is in recognition of the unique vegetation that occurs in the Murray Goldfields District.

The West Central Bushfire Risk Landscape team is one of seven Strategic Bushfire Planning teams established across Victoria in 2013. Each team will develop a strategic bushfire management plan for their landscape, using a risk based approach. Strategies within the Plan aim to reduce the risk of bushfires impacting on communities, infrastructure and the environment. The first West Central Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, incorporating a strategy for prioritising fuel management across the landscape, has been prepared. This Plan is expected to be publicly released later this year.

In order to protect biodiversity values DEPI conducts an environmental assessment for every planned burn. Where possible and if required, measures such as exclusion areas or reducing the fire intensity are put in place to reduce the impact on biodiversity values. In these burns, DEPI works to select target area to ensure that within the burns areas of structural diversity are retained for fauna habitat, particularly the important mid story critical to many of the woodland birds.

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A review of the amount of burning in the Muckleford Forest has been conducted, it has been determined that MGFCAS024, Gower Cemetery Rd, a 784 hectare planned burn will be removed from the current FOP.

In order to maintain fuels at lower levels within Asset Protection Burns and Bushfire Moderation Zones, burning maybe more frequent than other zones. It is acknowledged that achieving the aims in the two respective zones may have negative impacts. Through a range of methods DEPI seeks to moderate such negative impacts.

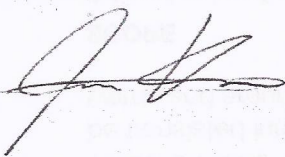
DEPI is committed to monitoring the effects of planned burning. Monitoring improves burn planning through increasing our understanding of how biodiversity responds to fire. Since 2006, DEPI has undertaken fire monitoring programs to understand the long term effect of fire on the landscape.

I acknowledge your passion for the Box Ironbark Forest and am encouraged by your continued interest in our planned burning program. We appreciate your input and will continue to refine our program based on feedback from your and other community members.

I noted a request to be involved in the design and implementation of the planned burns you raised in your submission. This has been noted and a DEPI staff member will contact you to arrange a suitable time and location.

Thank you again for providing input into the FOP process.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Koren  
Program Manager Planned Burning and Rooding  
Loddon Mallee Region