



PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA
Environment and Planning Committee

MEDIA RELEASE

Report tabled on Fire Season Preparedness

The Victorian Parliament's Environment and Planning Committee has today tabled its long-awaited report into Fire Season Preparedness in Victoria. The inquiry, which has taken 12 months, included hearing from more than 100 witnesses in Melbourne and regional Victoria and received 86 submissions.

The report has 22 findings and has made 12 recommendations.

The Committee has recommended tougher penalties for total fire ban offences as well as support for arson prevention programs similar to one established in the Gippsland region.

"The Gippsland Arson Prevention Program represents a significant and positive initiative and is an example of a community and agencies combining to address the serious problem of deliberately or negligently lit fires," said Committee Chair, the Hon David Davis MLC.

The Committee addressed a number of issues during the inquiry, including fuel management regimes, particularly planned burning practices. The Committee heard evidence supporting more planned burning and contrary views suggesting that planned burning is ineffective and damages the environment. The Committee made recommendations encouraging the retention of hectare based targets as well as the government's new risk-based approach.

The Committee also heard evidence about the value of the indigenous approach to planned burning, which seeks to undertake cooler, smaller and more frequent burns and it recommended that the government provide support to a program designed to encourage this approach.

The report also addressed issues of the environmental impact of planned burns, the impact on native animals and plant species, the need for more work to be done assessing the health impacts of fuel management practices and considered planning and resourcing for fire season preparedness.

The report was not unanimous and includes minority reports, reflecting the differing views of Committee members on a range of issues.

In particular, the views on the issue of the impact of the controversy surrounding the Country Fire Authority/United Firefighters Union of Australia Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement 2015 and its potential impact on country Victoria and community safety diverged.

The report is available from the Committee's [website](#).

For media enquiries, contact the office of Hon David Davis on 9888 6244.

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