

Att Hon. John Pandazopoulos
 Environment and Natural Resources Committee
 Level 8, 35 Spring St
 Melbourne VIC 3000

Mrs Colleen Wood 23 MAY 2007
 Southern Ash Wildlife Shelter
 PO Box 13
 Rawson VIC 3825

DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND NATURAL
 RESOURCES COMMITTEE

SUBMISSION

21 May 2007

Dear Sir

NO. 077

Inquiry into the Impact of Public Land Management Practices on Bushfires in Victoria

Flora and Fauna have most certainly been affected due to the 2006-2007 wildfires/back burns to contain such, as well as fuel reduction burns.

In the past year our Wildlife Shelter alone has admitted just under 200 Native Wildlife Species due solely to effects of fire. Wildlife carers need to be accredited in burns training/management and have vets with knowledgeable expertise when dealing with burnt Native Wildlife. It is a specialised field.

Department of Sustainability and Environment, Gippsland staff, have assisted with rescue of Native Wildlife in these cases and their support has proved invaluable. This is something that can be expanded upon.

Both common and threatened species have been affected.

Recovery of wildlife in our care from fire is approx 75%.

There is significant lack of foliage as a feed source as well as camouflage from predation and no insulation for native wildlife dependence. What does survive then competes with both hunters and motor vehicles from dispersing to green belts, isolated areas and or corridors.

Bracken predominantly takes over after fire and sucks the ground of water content and therefore Native tree and shrub species do not contain water requirements to thrive, and nourish animals dependant on such. This may result in dehydrated animals eg: koalas coming into care and long term affects being kidney damage.

Continual burning results in a drier habitat.

Epicormic growth acts as a temporary feed source but is similar to new growth and therefore cannot be readily lived on alone due to toxins in leaf (overbrowsing may result in death of tree) – mature leaf is also needed to maintain an animal such as koalas and Greater Gliders. Areas that have been continuously burnt need attention with replanting of foliage found in the area affected, particularly for under-established eucalypt that are not mature enough to re seed. Regions affected by wildfire should be rested – pro posed fuel reduction burns, within vicinity, postponed for several years so that both flora and fauna have time to recover.

Fuel reduction burns are often 'lit' from all four sides, therefore wildlife has no way of escape and results in wildlife burnt or dead in centre of fuel reduced region.

Is burning really the answer to protecting the community, assets - the flora and fauna, given we are in a drought?

Yours sincerely



Colleen Wood