

Parliamentary Inquiry into the 2026 summer fires across Victoria

DEECA Panel, 1 May 2026



Energy,
Environment
and Climate Action

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it.

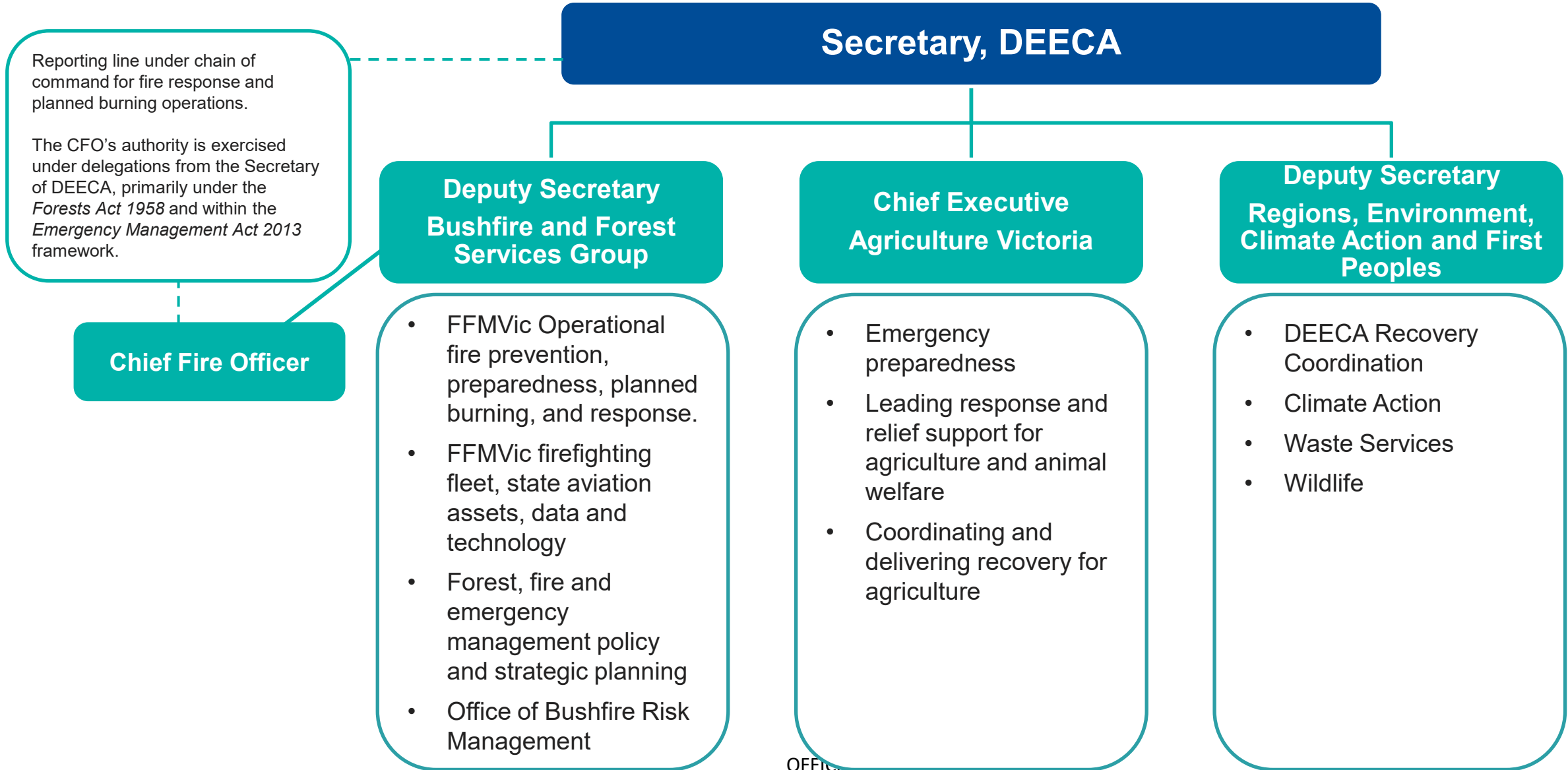
We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

DEECA is committed to genuinely partnering with Victorian Traditional Owners and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.

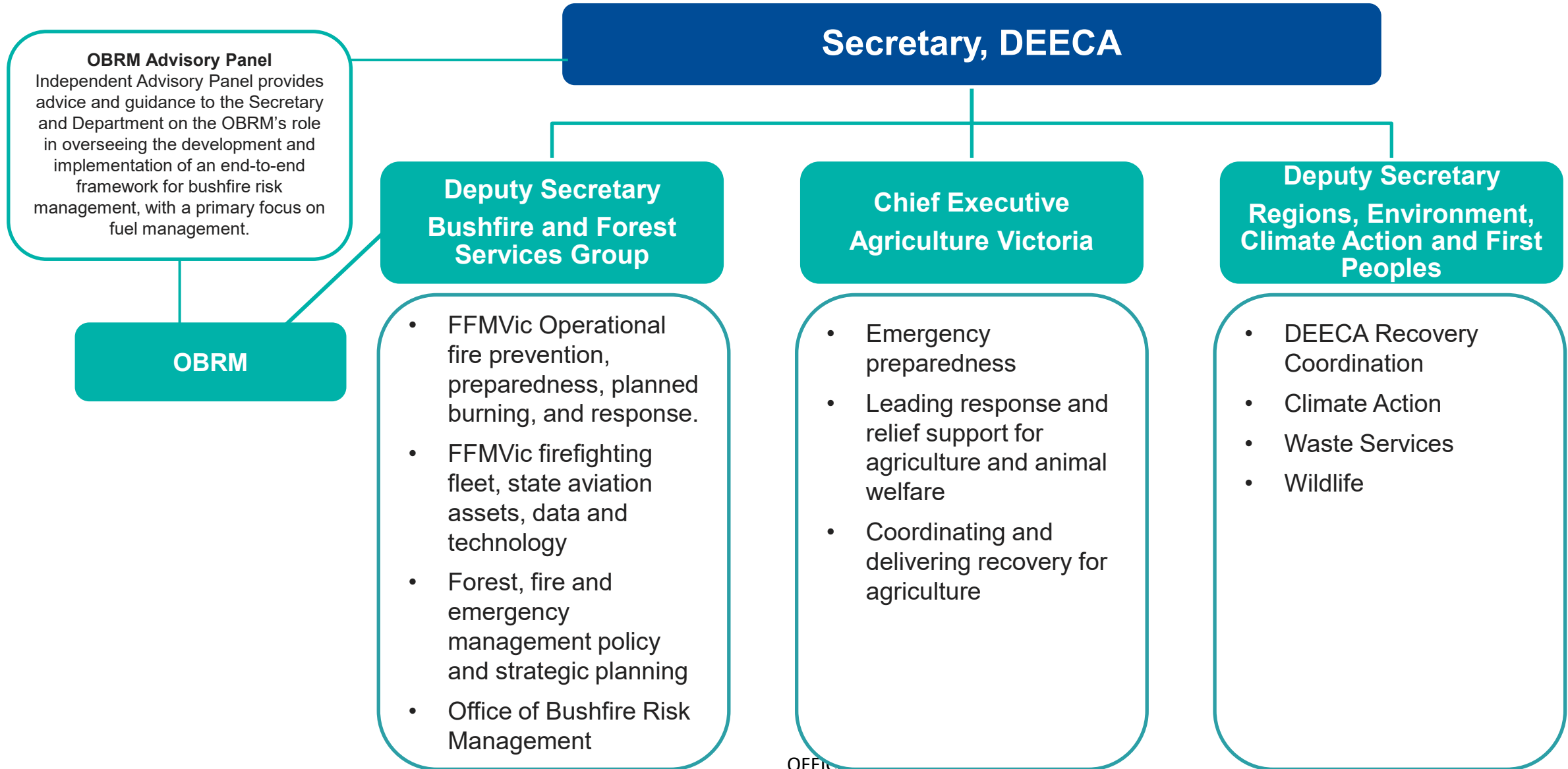
DEECA's Panel Members

- **Kelly Crosthwaite**, Deputy Secretary, Bushfire and Forest Services Group
- **Rachaele May**, Executive Director, Policy and Knowledge Division, Bushfire and Forest Services Group
- **Beth Jones**, Chief Executive, Agriculture Victoria
- **Carolyn Jackson**, Deputy Secretary, Regions, Environment, Climate Action and First Peoples Group

DEECA Functions for this Parliamentary Hearing



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About DEECA and its role in emergency management

DEECA at a glance – one integrated Department



Statewide footprint ~6,000 staff | 86 locations



Lead agency for:

- Bushfires on public land (Class 1)
- 15 Class 2 emergencies (wildlife, energy, water, agriculture)



Agriculture Victoria – role in emergency management

Agriculture Victoria leads DEECA's agriculture and animal welfare responsibilities under the State Emergency Management Plan across preparedness, response and recovery.



Undertaking year-round preparedness

- maintaining and exercising emergency management plans
- training and briefing staff
- engaging with industry, local government and community stakeholders to support readiness for emergencies.



Leading response and relief support for agriculture and animal welfare

- assessing and addressing urgent animal welfare needs
- supporting affected landholders
- coordinating agriculture-specific response activities with control agencies and partners.



Coordinating and delivering recovery for agriculture

- facilitating access to financial assistance
- referring landholders and animal owners to appropriate services
- sharing information with councils and agencies
- supporting the delivery of recovery programs and advice to primary producers.

Regions, Environment, Climate Action and First Peoples Group (RECAFP) – role in emergency management

RECAFP leads DEECA's coordinated recovery, climate action, waste services and wildlife emergency response functions.



Leads recovery preparedness and coordination

- development of operational recovery policy, coordinated recovery advice, deployment of Rapid Risk Assessment Teams following emergencies
- managing recovery funding and program oversight (in partnership with Emergency Management Victoria to ensure aligned, whole-of-government recovery outcomes).



Leads wildlife emergency response

- responsible for DEECA'S Wildlife Emergency (Class 2) functions
- leading response to wildlife impacts arising from emergencies
- coordinating wildlife recovery



Driving climate action and resilience

- responsive policy advice to support Victoria's transition to a net zero economy by 2045
- facilitating investment in climate resilience
- coordinating economy-wide and sector-specific adaptation action
- supporting government decision-making with the best available climate science



Supporting waste services across emergencies

- supporting control agencies during response
- maintaining continuity during relief
- delivering approved waste-related recovery assistance to support affected communities

DEECA's preparedness ahead of the 2025-26 high-risk weather season

An additional \$80 million investment was provided for fire season preparedness. This provided:

- An additional 130 seasonal firefighters (Forest and Fire Operations Officers)
- Earlier start to the service period for 15 regional aircraft including Ballarat, Stawell and Ovens Valley

In addition, the Department delivered an accelerated repair and return-to-service program for our fleet of G-Wagens and Unimogs.

Detailed information on DEECA's preparedness activities is available in the Government submission to the Inquiry.



DEECA's response to the 2026 summer fires

FFMVic responded to **542 bushfires** as the Control Agency

As at 30 April 2026

71 Wildlife Field Assessment Team members deployed across **8 fires** totalling 439 days of wildlife response activities

From 1 January to 20 February 2026

DEECA activated **state water emergency management arrangements** to protect critical water assets and support timely service restoration

FFMVic responded to **199 unattended campfires**

As at 30 April 2026

More than **380 Agriculture Victoria staff** deployed supporting agricultural communities across 14 bushfires

DEECA worked with **electricity distribution businesses**, telecommunications, health and water portfolios to identify and prioritise critical infrastructure without power

DEECA's role in relief and recovery

Public land and asset restoration

Restoration including roads, bridges, river crossings and visitor infrastructure

Fencing repair support

Repair and restore fences damaged by suppression activities or bushfire along the public-private land boundary

Wildlife and environment

Mitigation of immediate risks to wildlife and biodiversity

Support for primary producers

Including emergency fodder support, grants, concessional loans, recovery water tank rebates

Essential service restoration

Restoring essential services including energy, water and sewerage including power outage payments

Waste

Waiver of the waste levy and a rebate of any 'gate fees' for impacted communities

Closing remark

- Thank you for the opportunity to provide this opening statement to the Inquiry.
- We are happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.