



Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

PO Box 500, East Melbourne,
Victoria 8002 Australia

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Penny Hawe, President
www.friendsoflorne.org.au
PO Box 68, Lorne VIC 3232
Email: committee@friendsoflorne.org.au

Dear Penny Hawe,

Thank you for your recent correspondence to the Victorian Government regarding observations of wildlife in and around Lorne. As this matter is in my area of responsibility, your email has been referred to me from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's (DEECA) Customer Call Centre. I apologise for the delay in responding.

Victoria is one of the highest bushfire risk areas in the world. Significant fires including most recently the 2003 Alpine fires, 2006 Great Divide fires, 2009 Black Saturday fires and the 2019–2020 Black Summer bushfires have shown us that high intensity, large landscape fires have devastating impacts on communities and the environment. Climate change is increasing the frequency, intensity and area impacted by bushfires and represents a significant threat to Victoria's communities, wildlife and forest biodiversity.

The Secretary to DEECA has a duty under s62(2)(b) of the *Forests Act 1958* (Vic) to undertake works for the planned prevention of bushfires. Whilst fire is a natural part of the forest lifecycle in many parts of Victoria, and in some cases is an essential process for maintaining biodiversity, large-scale uncontrolled wildfires are destructive and risk life, property, community infrastructure and environmental damage and hence Victoria has a bushfire management program.

The primary policies that guide this work are the Victorian [Bushfire Management Strategy 2024](#) and the [Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land](#) (the Code). These require that DEECA uses a risk-based approach to mitigate the potentially destructive effects of bushfires, and undertakes prevention, response and recovery activities as a part of the bushfire management program.

Prevention

The risk-based approach guides fuel management activities on public and private land. Fuel management includes planned burning and non-burn mechanical fuel treatments. These include mulching, slashing and the maintenance and upgrade of strategic fuel breaks.

Extensive planning is undertaken to ensure that fuel management activities avoid, or where necessary mitigate, the impacts on biodiversity and cultural values. The [Joint Fuel Management Program](#) (JFMP) sets out the on-ground activities that implement long-term bushfire management strategies. This is a publicly available plan developed in partnership with Traditional Owners and the Country Fire Authority to ensure a tenure-blind partnership approach between agencies. We welcome your comments all year round and encourage you to have input into the operational and strategic planning processes locally.

DEECA's prevention, response and recovery programs attract a broad range of views in the community, particularly in relation to planned burning. Some information is provided below on some of the most frequently raised topics.

FFMVic's programs are based on evidence and science

DEECA makes significant and consistent investments in research and uses the best available science to inform bushfire risk management activities.

DEECA recognises recent research that has reiterated the well-known phenomenon that ecological outcomes of bushfires are shaped by multiple components of the fire regime — including severity, frequency, interval, and spatial configuration (such as the presence of unburnt patches). These elements influence the extent to which species and ecosystems are positively or negatively affected by fire. DEECA continues to lead and collaborate with researchers, such as recent work published in the journal [Fire Ecology](#), which aims to better understand and effectively measure ecological resilience outcomes from fire regimes.

This research takes a more nuanced approach to understanding the impacts of fire on ecosystems, focusing not only on how different fire regime elements influence outcomes, but also considering their impacts in different vegetation communities and how different species respond within those contexts. This work is helping to support more targeted and ecologically informed fire management.

DEECA recognises that the effectiveness of planned burns can diminish over time and under elevated fire danger conditions, and that their ecological effects are complex, shaped by multiple elements of the fire regime. DEECA takes this into account when considering the placement of burns. The long-term strategy for fuel management in each of DEECA's 6 regions is set out in strategic plans available at [Strategic Bushfire Management Planning](#).

Bushfire Science is continually evolving. DEECA remains open to new ideas and ways of working and continues to undertake and invest in research to improve the outcomes of the program. The balance of Australian and international research strongly aligns with the deep expertise within the department and supports the basis for our fuel reduction program – which is that well targeted and well-timed fuel management is an important and effective tool to reduce bushfire risk to people, communities and to the environment in a changing climate. It is for these reasons mentioned above, that DEECA will proceed with planned burn operations in and around Lorne.

Impacts on biodiversity and cultural values are carefully considered

One of the tools DEECA uses to review and assess biodiversity values for each planned burn is the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA). All new species records submitted to the VBA undergo an expert review process to ensure that quality, evidence-based data is accepted into the database. Please submit any species detections to the [Victorian Biodiversity Atlas](#) page so observations can be verified and included in the data sets used for values assessment, prior to planned burn operations.

In relation to the planned burns around Lorne and the species you are interested in, Otway Smooth Frogs, Yellow Bellied Gliders and Otway Snails, the Department considers these species and other listed threatened species by assessing the landscape and treatments. Mitigations are developed and implemented with advice from biodiversity experts.

Planning of burns and the timing considers a broad range of factors including bushfire risk, ecological values, seasonal conditions and community factors as you would understand from your recent meetings with the local Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) team.

More information is available

If you would like more information regarding planned burning and bushfire risk reduction, please visit the following links:

- [Reducing the impacts of bushfires on plants and animals](#)
- [Victoria's Bushfire Management Strategy](#)
- [Regional Bushfire Management Strategies](#)
- [Traditional Owner burning](#)
- [Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy](#)

Should you have further queries, please address future correspondence to Scott Turner, at Scott.Turner@deeca.vic.gov.au to assist us in expediting replies to your concerns.

Thank you for raising these important matters with the Victorian Government.

Yours sincerely



Chris Hardman AFSM
Chief Fire Officer

03 / 09 / 2025