



**The Hon Terry Redman MLA
Minister for Regional Development; Lands;
Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development**

Our ref: 39-34607
Your ref: Petition No 108

Hon Simon O'Brien MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear ~~Chairman~~

**PETITION NO 108 - OPERATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES**

Thank you for your letter received by my office on 10 May 2016 regarding the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs - Petition No 108 - Operations of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

I refer you to the Minister for Environment, Hon Albert Jacob MLA, through the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) and to the Minister for Emergency Services, Hon Joe Francis MLA, through the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) for comment on the terms of the petition and the submission from the principal petitioner/tabling Member. The responsibility for managing the process for the prescribed burning program and firefighting rests with these respective Ministers.

On 11 May 2016 Cabinet, in recognition of the role of prescribed burning as a valid and necessary technique for land management generally and the treatment of bushfire related risk, endorsed \$20 million over four years (2015-16 to 2018-19) from the Royalties for Regions Program for the delivery of an Enhanced Prescribed Burning Program (EPB Program) in the South West of Western Australia. In January 2016, the EPB Program was formally extended to include enhanced prescribed burning in the Great Southern and Goldfields-Esperance regions of Western Australia.

All burning undertaken as part of the EPB Program is undertaken on *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* land in accordance with DPaW's Corporate Policy Statement's *19 Fire Management Act* and *88 Prescribed Burning*. Planning for prescribed burns proposed as part of the enhanced prescribed burning program are also in accordance with the approvals from the Office of Bushfire Risk Management.

In addition to the \$20 million allocated to the EPB Program, Royalties for Regions has also allocated \$12.34 million to DFES for the installation of comprehensive crew fire protection systems in firefighting vehicles throughout regional Western Australia. As a result of this funding, 667 firefighting vehicles will be fitted with this lifesaving equipment, ensuring that our state's firefighters have access to the most survivable environment whilst fighting bushfires.

Information provided by DPaW has been utilised to respond to the questions requested in your correspondence, as follows:

- How has the \$20 million Royalties for Regions funding, provided by the Department of Regional Development, and allocated for reducing fuel loads and fuel load management programs been spent?

As at 30 April 2016, DPaW had expended \$3.136 million of the \$3.8 million in Royalties for Regions funding allocated for 2015-16 as detailed in the table below:

Enhanced Prescribed Burning Program Expenditure (RfR allocation)	
2015-2016 (as at 30 April 2016)	
Wages/seasonal employment	\$906,884
Personnel mobility – accommodation/food etc	\$492,464
Non-core overtime (prescribed burning)	\$895,218
Burn boundary prep overtime (Departmental)	\$32,827
Heavy fleet/plant (Departmental)	\$115,002
Contract services – non-Departmental traffic management, water supply, burn boundary prep machinery (wet and dry hire) etc	\$266,020
Aerial ignition (Departmental)	\$60,197
Community awareness (media)	\$91,706
Minor capital purchases	\$140,222
Other approved costs	\$136,206
TOTAL	\$3,136,746

From 1 July 2015 to 12 May 2016, 157 820 hectares of South West forest areas have been prescribed burnt. Approval was given to burn 20 655 hectares on 13 May 2016 and a further 22 000 hectares of prescribed burning is expected to occur during May 2016, weather permitting.

DPaW's nominal annual target for prescribed burning in the South West forest areas is 200 000 hectares. If all of these burns are implemented as planned, DPaW will exceed the nominal target of 200 000 hectares for the first time since 2009-10.

It should be noted that the capacity of DPaW to undertake prescribed burning is impacted by various factors, particularly weather and the mobilisation of staff. Fire crew commitments to the Waroona and Mt Solus bushfires in January 2016 meant that opportunities for prescribed burning in the Karri and Tingle forests could not be realised whilst the opportunities for prescribed burning during the autumn burning period have been impacted by the unseasonally wet weather in late April 2016 and early May 2016 across much of the South West forest areas.

- Which communities have benefited from the programs?

Within the designated regions for the Royalties for Regions funded EPB Program, the greatest prescribed burning achievements have been undertaken in the South West of Western Australia.

EPB Program in the South West Forest Region

The EPB Program in the South West Forest Region has benefitted nine communities including: Harvey; Collie; Donnybrook; Bunbury; Busselton; Margaret River; Kirup; Nannup; Augusta; with burning also undertaken in communities directly adjacent to Collie, Donnybrook, Balingup and Bridgetown. Regional communities have also benefited through the engagement of services in the South West to assist with the preparation and implementation of the EPB Program.

DPaW has undertaken prescribed burning in 43 297 hectares of the South West Forest Region (1 July 2015 to date), representing an additional 21 908 hectares when compared to the same period in 2014-15. Eleven prescribed burns have been completed to meet prescribed outcomes with a further 28 prescribed burns commenced.

EPB Program in the Warren Forest Region

The EPB Program in the Warren Forest Region has benefitted seven communities including Bridgetown; Manjimup; Pemberton; Northcliffe; Walpole; Rocky Gully and Denmark; with burning also undertaken directly adjacent to the communities of Pemberton, Manjimup and Walpole and in close proximity to Gully and Denmark.

DPaW has achieved 69 673 hectares of burning (1 July 2015 to date) in the Warren Forest Region, an additional 16 536 hectares compared to the same period in 2014-15. Eighteen prescribed burns have been completed to meet prescribed outcomes and a further 30 prescribed burns have commenced.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on Petition No 108 – Operation of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

Yours sincerely



**HON TERRY REDMAN MLA
MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

3 JUN 2016