

PRESCRIBED BURNING — REVIEW

1513. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the Burn Severity Maps discussed in the Minister for Environment's response to petition 029, and I ask:

- (a) will the Minister please provide the burn severity criteria that will be used to define each category of burn severity in each type of forest;
- (b) how many burn severity maps were produced for each of the five previous years;
- (c) will the Minister please table the maps in (b);
- (d) if no to (b), why not;
- (e) how many burn severity maps will be produced for the 2023 fire season;
- (f) will the Minister please table all burn severity maps in (d) that have been completed;
- (g) if no to (f), why not;
- (h) will the Minister commit to making all burn severity maps publicly available as soon as they are completed; and
- (i) if no to (h), why not?

**Hon Darren West replied:**

- (a) The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) is refining the process using remote sensing technology to increase the accuracy and objectivity of burn severity maps produced for areas where prescribed burning is undertaken. At present this trial mapping is available for forest areas in DBCA's three forest regions, with five severity classes applied as follows:

- (i) Unburnt
- (ii) Low
- (iii) Medium
- (iv) High
- (v) Very High

Recently a burnt heath category has also been added to the severity classes due to the current inability to differentiate severity in this vegetation type.

The characteristics of these severity classes can be found in the tabled paper. [See tabled paper no 2497.]

- (b) The burn severity mapping process has been developed over several years and has only been applied as a broadscale operational trial since January 2023. An indicative burn severity map is generated on request from the relevant DBCA region or district undertaking the prescribed burn. The actual area of treatment may be smaller than the total planned burn area identified. The indicative burn severity mapping product is currently being trialled operationally and requires further ground-truthing and refinement to ensure that the remote sensing output is reflecting what is represented in the field. DBCA scientists are continuing to conduct fieldwork and incorporate technological advances to inform the burn severity mapping process and improve the maps' accuracy and detail over time.

Forty-two indicative burn severity maps were produced for the period 1 January to 30 June 2023.

| Year    | Number of maps produced |
|---------|-------------------------|
| 2018–19 | Nil                     |
| 2019–20 | Nil                     |
| 2020–21 | Nil                     |
| 2021–22 | Nil                     |
| 2022–23 | 42                      |

- (c) [See tabled paper no 2497.]
- (d) Not applicable.
- (e) Indicative burn severity maps are produced according to the number of prescribed burns implemented, a process that depends on weather, fuel and climate conditions being met. It is not possible to confirm the total number of indicative maps that may be produced for 2023 as these will be produced on an as needs basis.

- (f) Not applicable.
- (g) Not applicable.
- (h)–(i) DBCA’s indicative burn severity mapping process is still being refined and additional data and technology advances should improve its accuracy. It is DBCA’s intention to have a publicly available burn severity product available for all prescribed burns completed in DBCA’s three south-west forest regions.