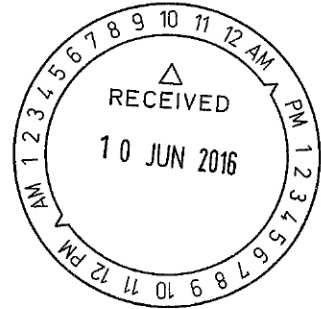




**Hon Albert Jacob MLA**  
**Minister for Environment; Heritage**

Your Ref: Petition No 108  
Our Ref: 50-13211



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

*Simon*  
Dear ~~Mr O'Brien~~

Thank you for your letter dated 10 May 2016 regarding Petition No 108 – Operation of DFES.

In recognition of the importance of managing fuel loads for the mitigation of bushfire risk, the State Government has provided the Department of Parks and Wildlife with an additional \$20M over four years from 2015/16, through the Royalties for Regions program, to provide for an enhanced prescribed burning program (EPBP) in the south-west of Western Australia. Funding for the first year is \$3.8M, with \$5.2M, \$5.5M and \$5.5M allocated for each of the remaining three financial years. A summary of the 2015/16 expenditure to end April 2016 is provided in Attachment 1. The EPBP funds are on top of the Department's annual prescribed burning budget of approximately \$10M.

The additional funding enables the Department to more flexibly deploy its fire crews across the south-west and engage contractor support to maximise the opportunities to safely carry out prescribed burning when suitable weather conditions exist. In the first year of the EPBP, the Department had its most successful spring prescribed burning season for at least six years, completing more than 131,000 hectares of prescribed burning in the south-west forests, significantly more than for the same period in recent years. As at the end of May 2016, the Department has completed approximately 162,000 hectares, providing enhanced bushfire protection to a number of south-west towns and communities.

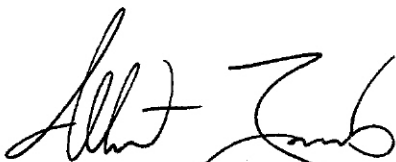
Wetter than expected autumn conditions have prevented the Department from achieving more prescribed burning in the south-west, though additional planned burns will proceed once conditions are again suitable.

The Department engages with local governments and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services in planning its prescribed burning program and actively

encourages the involvement of volunteer bushfire brigades in implementing its prescribed burns. A range of mechanisms also exist to foster collaboration and coordination for preparedness and response to bushfires, and the effectiveness of these is subject to ongoing review and improvement.

As noted in the submission of 15 March 2016 from Hon Rick Mazza MLC, Member for Agricultural Region, the issue of the management of bushfire emergencies has been the focus of a number of past reviews and I note that the report of the recently concluded Special Inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona Fire is due for release soon. The inquiry's terms of reference (Attachment 2) are particularly relevant to the proposed Parliamentary Inquiry and accordingly the report of the inquiry is likely to be highly relevant to the deliberations of the Standing Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Albert Jacob', with a large circular flourish underneath.

Albert Jacob MLA  
**MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT; HERITAGE**

Att

- 7 JUN 2016

As at 30 April 2016, the Department had expended \$3,136,746 of the \$3,800,000 funding allocated for 2015/16.

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 & 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
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$3,136,746</b>

## Schedule A

### PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO JANUARY 2016 WAROONA FIRE TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### Preamble

The January 2016 Waroona Fire has caused significant damage, particularly to the town of Yarloop, and the tragic loss of life. The Government of Western Australia is committed to managing bushfire-related risk and continuously improving the State's capabilities to prevent, mitigate and respond to major bushfires to protect the Western Australian community and the assets it values.

For this purpose, the Government has committed to the establishment of an open and independent review of the management of the fire, with broad terms of reference that will allow for consideration of what has been learned from previous major bushfires, what can be learned from the Waroona Fire, and strategies for future reforms and capability enhancements to efficiently and effectively manage bushfire-related risk.

#### Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the Inquiry are to examine and report on:

##### 1. The response to the January 2016 Waroona Fire

- (a) The effectiveness of pre-incident bushfire prevention and mitigation activities;
- (b) The effectiveness of emergency management plans and procedures;
- (c) The effectiveness of the suppression strategies and tactics used during the fire;
- (d) The effectiveness of incident management, including coordination of agencies, volunteer fire and emergency services and interstate assistance;
- (e) Protection of essential services infrastructure and access to essential services (power, transport, water, communications) by emergency services organisations and the community;
- (f) The effectiveness of public messaging including the adequacy and timeliness of emergency warnings issued to residents and visitors;
- (g) Effectiveness of assistance to and management of those affected by the fire:
  - (i) Evacuation procedures
  - (ii) Communications with the community over the course of the fire
  - (iii) Provision of welfare support
  - (iv) Management of people seeking to return to their properties, and
- (h) Livestock and companion animal management and welfare issues.

##### 2. Lessons learned from previous bushfire emergencies

- (a) The extent to which the findings and recommendations of the following Western Australian bushfire reviews undertaken since 2011 have been implemented:

- (i) A Shared Responsibility – Report of the Perth Hills Bushfire February 2011 Review (Keelty, 2011);
  - (ii) Appreciating the Risk – Report of the Special Inquiry into the November 2011 Margaret River Bushfire (Keelty, 2012);
  - (iii) Post-Incident Analysis of the 2011 Margaret River and Nannup bushfires (Noetic Solutions, 2012);
  - (iv) Parkerville Stoneville Mt Helena Bushfire Review (State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC, 2014);
  - (v) O’Sullivan and Lower Hotham Bushfires Review (SEMC, 2016); and
  - (vi) The Western Australian State Emergency Management Committee. Preparedness reports.
- (b) The effectiveness of reforms implemented by the State since 2011 on the State’s ability to prevent, mitigate and respond to major bushfires and the community’s understanding of and preparedness for bushfire risk.

### **3. The need for further reform**

Any legislative, policy or functional reforms relating to bushfire risk management, emergency management and processes for review of major incidents to strengthen the State’s capability to efficiently and effectively manage bushfire-related risk.