



Member for South West Region



Hon Peter Foster MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
Harvest Terrace
Perth WA 6000

12 October 2021

Dear Mr ~~Foster~~ *Peter*

Thank you for your letter dated 15 September 2021 regarding Petition No. 029 – Independent review of DBCA prescribed burning practices.

With a view to assisting the Committee's investigations, I think it is worth noting that an inquiry into the issues raised in the petition would be welcomed by communities throughout the south west – and indeed statewide – who live with an ever-increasing consciousness of the effects of climate change and the environmental, social and economic aspects of managing the risk of bushfires.

It has become increasingly clear to me that there is a wide variety of views in our community about what constitutes best practice in regard to prescribed burning. In particular, the threat to flora and fauna posed by certain types of burns is the subject of considerable and, in my opinion, often justified concern. Even if the need to reduce fuel loads is accepted, the question about the size and frequency of burns gives rise to further controversy, as was clearly demonstrated by the incident in Perup earlier this year when the local numbat population was severely impacted by a prescribed burn.

As you will note, the petition references several different areas of concern relating to prescribed burning. The principle petitioner, Mr Donald Clarke, has been kind enough to share with me his submission to the Committee. I commend Mr Clarke on the thoroughness with which he has summarised the areas of concern and support his request for further inquiry into the issues he raises.

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions Parks and Wildlife Service publishes a Fire Management Strategy which places a great deal of emphasis on "Lessons management, improving knowledge and innovating." Section 6 of the Strategy states:

The department is committed to enhancing and innovating fire management practices using a systematic science-based approach to better understand and increase our knowledge of the

behaviour and ecological effects of fire across a range of Western Australian ecosystems. The department is committed to the process of continuous learning to improve the safety, effectiveness and efficiency of our fire management business.

It seems to me that an inquiry framed around the issues raised in the petition which I tabled and Mr Clarke's submission would be entirely consistent with the commitment to a science-based approach and best practice outlined in the DBCA Fire Management Strategy.

If I can be of further assistance in relation to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sally Talbot', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

SALLY TALBOT