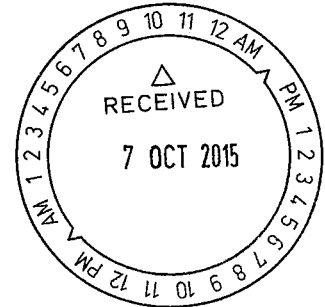


Petition No.97 – Prescribed Burning in South West Region.

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs,
Parliament House,
Perth, WA, 6000.
To the Chairman.
Hon Simon O'Brien MLC



This submission is to compliment Petition No 97.

The petition to ask the State Government to increase their Prescribed Burning of State Forests, Nature Reserves and National Parks of the South West region of Western Australia to at least 8% and to fund and allow day and night burning was spurned out of the devastating fires that occurred in January and February 2015. As you would be well aware of the two massive fires of Boddington and Northcliffe, there were also numerous lesser fires that caused just as much damage and grief to private landholders, communities and bushland as the two major fires did.

And let's pray we do not witness or suffer from anything like we did in early 2015 this coming summer.

In view of these devastating fires that affected the South West during the summer of 2015 with the horrific damage it caused to the forests and farmland and the fear of possible decimation of small towns and communities, this petition came to fruition after lightning strikes on 28/1/2015 caused 4 known fires within near distance of each other close to my residents at Mordalup, of which 2 of them caused damage to Nature Reserves and Farmland (Unicup & Noobijup Fires).

A local ground swell became evident that something had to be done, and this petition evolved.

We settled on a comprehensive prescribed burning programme of 8% per annum in lieu of the fact, at that rate per annum over a 15 year period the entire south west forest area less areas of non-fire significant (i.e. flora and fauna sensitive wetlands) have a fair chance of having a control burn put through them. I would also like to point out priority should be given to the forest and bushland abutting private landholders and nearby villages and townships having good hazard reduction burn plans and are carried out. This is due to the fact that the value of assets invested in private holdings is very high. Especially farmland when significant expenses are invested in and on the land such as homes, buildings, fences, livestock, pastures, crops, horticulture and machinery.

The 8% target is very achievable providing adequate funding is made available to allow day and night burning to occur.

The two main reasons behind the night burning programme is-

- a) Where high forest fuel loads and certain fire sensitive areas exists a cooler and less damaging burn can be achieved without causing loss of sensitive flora and fauna,

b) While also helping achieved the 8% target by getting more bush burnt.

You would be well aware of the devastating damage caused when extreme and catastrophic high temperature bushfires have occurred, a lot of the majestic mature trees and rare flora is destroyed and any land based fauna are totally wiped out. We just cannot allow this to continually happen.

While on petitioning for more control burning I would like to raise the issue of - DPaW's "NO BURN" policy on crown land abutting private property

I find this "NO BURN" policy abutting Private Property truly a bad policy. It suggests to me Government agencies have scant regard for the value and safety of Private Landholders property. Simply a dangerous fire hazard is created adjoining private land for no good reason at all.

My family and I was victim of lightning starting a fire in a "No Burn" section of a Nature Reserve (Unicup fire-28/1/2015). We had 60ha of blue gum plantation, over 100ha of pasture, approx. 60ha of fenced conservation land and nearly 14km of fencing burnt. Luckily we never lost any livestock. I know we can all say insurance can cover a lot of the fencing and such, but it cannot cover the post burn fatigue, stress, trying to find agistment for livestock, repairing fences so livestock do not escape and try and have some normality in life. This is all before you begin the task of re-fencing (pulling down and rebuilding fences), reseeding burnt paddocks, buying extra hay to feed livestock and the extra hours that is required to do these jobs is very taxing. It's just not the extra physical work that is required but your mental ability is really tested to the extreme as you try and come to terms with what has happened and what has to be done. Your mental ability to keep going is really rocked to the core; it resonates right through your whole body. Luckily I and my family are resolute people. The Unicup Nature Reserve, in which this fire originated from, abuts our eastern boundary fence. This portion of the reserve has never been burnt in living memory in any of our older local's recollection.

I penned the above paragraph just to give you some insight of what it is like to be a victim of a bushfire and the stress and strain that goes with it.

Note: I have not taken my complaint (Petition 97) to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations.

I would like to reserve my right to appear before the committee if need be to explain my concerns further.

Yours Sincerely,

Mark Muir.

Petitioner.