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April 3, 2023

By email

The Hon Ingrid Stitt MLC  
Minister for Environment

Dear Minister

### **Planned Burns**

While we look forward to your response to the two letters on treefern destruction (16/1 and 5/3) from my colleague, Ms Dick, I bring to your attention another pressing matter which demands action by the Victorian Government.

As far as we know, while there have been many inquiries into bushfires, there has never been a proper comprehensive ecological review, with public input, of a core element of Victoria's bushfire protection regime: planned burning.

Our immediate concern has been prompted by the manifestly excessive size of the planned burns in the Upper Goulburn and Big River State Forests over the next two years, but for some time we have been aware that Victoria's fuel reduction burning regime is based on out-of-date scientific thinking. Our position has been powerfully expressed in an [article in the latest issue of VNPA's magazine](#), Park Watch, by fire management expert Phil Ingamells. The VNPA, through Mr Ingamells, have been [pressing the Government](#) on this for some time, but to no avail.

Lately we have become aware of what we hope might be a turning point, with the apparent decision by your Department to review the manifestly excessive planned burn in the Strathbogie State Forest that threatened more than 400 Greater Gliders. However, the fact that it could even have contemplated such a huge burn shows that its thinking is still stuck in the past.

Yet the scale of the burns proposed in the Upper Goulburn and Big River State Forests seems even more reckless. The Big River State Forest, which escaped both the 2006-07 and 2009 fires and is remote from human settlement, is likely to be carried out without regard for the particular circumstances for threatened fauna in the area. It dwarfs the proposed burn in the Strathbogies and if that proposed burn is to be reviewed, the Big River and Upper Goulburn burns should be likewise reexamined, including with input from RFPG ecologists.

We also call upon the Government to establish comprehensive ecological review, with public input, of the planned burning component of Victoria's bushfire protection regime in line with Victoria's commitment in all RFAs (e.g Central Highlands RFA CI 62C(c)) to limit the ecological impact of planned burning.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ken Deacon".

Ken Deacon,  
Convenor, Rubicon Forest Protection Group