



Department of Environment,
Land, Water & Planning

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Mr Joel Hallinan
Acting Secretary
Parliament of Victoria
Environment and Planning Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Ref: SEC012188



Dear Mr Hallinan

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING - INQUIRY INTO FIRE SEASON PREPAREDNESS

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee's Inquiry into Fire Season Preparedness. As advised by Ms Burt in her email dated 16 August 2016, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) took on notice three questions from the Committee, and I provide preliminary responses below.

Chair - Copies of the materials and documents provided to DELWP by Parks Vic, Melbourne Water, VicForests, the CFA and Emergency Management Victoria in the production of the joint submission to this inquiry.

DELWP led the development of the Victorian Government's whole of sector submission. The submission was developed collaboratively between partner agencies based on discussions between executive and officers. DELWP did not seek "submissions" from other agencies. The draft submission or sections of the draft submission were circulated to partner agencies for comment and input. The submission was endorsed by partner agencies and was subject to relevant approvals as outlined in the *Guidelines for Victorian Government submissions and responses to inquiries* (DPC, 2016).

Ms Dunn - A copy of the bushfire agreement that DELWP has with VicForests

The Bushfire Management Agreement between the DELWP and VicForests was signed in 2012. In 2012 the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) was the responsible department for bushfire prevention and management under the *Forests Act 1958* and hence the agreement is in the name of DSE. DELWP is the successor to DSE in this regard.

Copies of the above two categories of documents are currently being collated and a response will be provided as soon as possible.

Ms Bath - Provide some details around how much it would cost to put one person into a fire tower or across the board

Fire tower observers have historically been employed on a casual basis. The cost of a casually employed fire tower observer depends on the hours of operation (which can vary through the season) and other factors. For budget purposes, DELWP allows \$300/day for fire tower observer including on costs and allowances. The number of days per year varies from year to year depending on seasonal conditions. Casual fire tower observers generally earn between \$20,000 and \$50,000 per annum dependent on the season length and severity.

DELWP is proposing to progressively incorporate fire tower observation activities into the functions of existing field service staff where such staff are available, suitably experienced and skilled, interested and are no longer able to undertake active fire ground roles. Casual fire tower observers will still be required to provide sufficient observers, particularly where it is not practical to use ongoing field service staff (e.g. remote towers) and to ensure back-up resources are available. The use of casual and ongoing staff as fire tower observers will be determined on a case by case basis. There will be no reduction in the level of service to the communities in Victoria.

Mr Lee Miezis, Mr Darrin McKenzie and I have reviewed the transcript of our evidence and separately provided corrections. If you have any further enquiries please contact Mr Lee Miezis, Deputy Secretary Forest, Fire and Regions Group on 9637 9937.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely



Adam Fennessy
Secretary