



STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

JEREMY HANSON CSC MLA (CHAIR), MARISA PATERSON MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), JO CLAY MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports and Budget Estimates 2020-21
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Ms Jo Clay MLA: To ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

In relation to: **Cultural Burns**

ACTAR p383 and
JCSAR P178

In relation to: Cultural Burns

Last year we conducted 3 cultural burns (ACTAR p383). We've just hired six new Ngunnawal rangers are using cool cultural burns.

- a) Will we now be able to do more cool cultural burns, are we measuring their effectiveness at reducing fire risk, are they a better land management tool in terms of their impact on habitat and wildlife and what sort of data are we tracking and reporting on these?
- b) Are we using cool cultural burns on rural landholder land as well as public land? (JCSAR p178)

Mick Gentleman MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

- a) All burns conducted by the ACT Parks and Conservation Services (PCS) include consideration of environmental, cultural and risk reduction factors. The burns conducted primarily for cultural reasons may be able to be expanded with additional rangers who are appropriately trained and skilled in the implementation of such burns and have the support of the Ngunnawal community.

Cultural burns do not necessarily aim to reduce risk or improve environmental quality, although it may be a co-benefit from their maintenance of a cultural landscape. All burns undertaken are monitored for their effectiveness in meeting the objectives of protecting cultural sites and significance of landscapes and in reducing risk to life and property and conserving the environment.

- b) The ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS) has responsibility for burns undertaken on rural land. ACTRFS is working with rural landholders and ACT Government land managers to promote indigenous burning.

I am advised that planning is underway to conduct low key indigenous burning at Birrigai at Tidbinbilla, and the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm at Paddys River. The aim of these projects is to support the Ngunnawal community to undertake burns during suitable traditional burning weather opportunities.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

JACS No. 92

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ACTRFS support includes handling all planning processes to enable required risk assessments, and burn plans to be pre-approved, training for staff and community members in Bushfire Awareness, and support with stand by firefighting units during burns. Discussion has identified that these burns will be a two-way learning opportunity where indigenous burning triggers and techniques will be compared to hazard reduction and land management objectives. This provides an opportunity for the ACTRFS volunteers to learn much from their millennia of management of the environment in Australia including bushfire management.

These burns will be conducted in a similar way to normal rural landholder burns, e.g. burning at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm is likely to begin with grassland burns to promote native Kangaroo grass, (Themeda Triandra), a valuable traditional food source.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

Signature:

Date: 23/3/2024

By the Minister for Police and Emergency, Mick Gentleman MLA