



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 9

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT, AND CITY SERVICES
JO CLAY MLA (CHAIR), SUZANNE ORR MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), MARK PARTON MLA

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

Asked by Jo Clay:

EPSDD AR P. 111

In relation to: Fires/Fuel loads

A number of targets in the accountability indicators under Output 2.2 (fuel management activities including physical removal and burning) were not met – why?

MINISTER STEEL: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

The 2019-20 year was one of the most dynamic and challenging for land management agencies.

Collectively, 2017, 2018 and 2019 was Canberra's lowest three-year rainfall period on record, lower than any three-year period throughout the Millennium drought.

With 2019 being the driest year on record for Australia, fuel moisture content across prescribed burn areas was too dry to burn within prescriptions to protect life, property and the environment. Autumn rains, while providing welcome increase in water storages, also prevented burns from occurring. Prescribed burns only occur if it safe to do and the weather allows for them to occur.

The clear expert consensus following the Royal Commission and our own reviews is that while hazard reduction burns are a part of the toolkit, they have a limited impact on reducing fire risk. Their effectiveness is reducing even further as climate change makes seasonal conditions more extreme.

Other physical removal tasks were not undertaken due to shortages of suitable contractors to undertake tree felling tasks. These contractors were engaged elsewhere in the region as land managers in NSW undertook fire recovery tasks.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport, and City Services

Signature:

Date:

11 / 3 / 21

By the Acting Minister for Planning and Land Management, Chris Steel