



**Our Ref:** DS/CT File FIRE.1 / OCR22879635  
**Enquiries:** David Schober

15 August 2022

The Hon. Mark McGowan  
Premier Western Australia  
2 Havelock St  
WEST PERTH WA 6005  
Email: [wa-government@dpc.wa.gov.au](mailto:wa-government@dpc.wa.gov.au)

Dear Premier

### **Shire of Denmark Request**

The Shire of Denmark is recognised as one of Western Australia's highest risk areas with respect to bush fires. In recent years the Shire has successfully partnered with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services to implement an extensive Bush Fire Risk Mitigation program. On behalf of our community, I would like to thank the State for this ongoing support and commitment in protecting lives and property from the increasing risk of bush fire within our district.

While mitigation work is critically important it is only one tool to assist in preventing and managing wild fires. In February this year the Shire experienced a level 3 bush fire which required support from surrounding regions and the State to bring it under control. The impact on our community was profound and necessitated extensive community engagement, support and recovery. This recovery work is still continuing, along with a review into both response and recovery.

As a result of the fire activity experienced over the past 5 years, and the impact of climate change, Council, at its Ordinary Council Meeting on 19 July 2022, resolved to respectfully request:

*a) a public review of the State's prescribed burn policy and practices to ensure both are effective in protecting lives, property and the environment, and are aligned with current science and community sentiment, and that any such review provide for a 90 day consultation period to receive submissions, and*

*b) that the State Government recognise that climate change is creating challenges in managing the increased risk of bushfires regionally and consider providing local governments with additional resources for early detection and rapid suppression.*

With respect to part a), Council understands that the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs is considering representation from a number of interest groups and respectfully requests that this representation be open to all Western Australians who may wish to participate.

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With respect to part b), Council would like to work with the State to increase capacity for emergency service crews to respond and manage wild fires. Council would welcome an opportunity to further discuss these regional response measures with surrounding local governments.

On behalf of the Council, I thank you for your consideration on these matters and should you require further information please contact me on telephone (08) 9848 0300 or email [david.schober@denmark.wa.gov.au](mailto:david.schober@denmark.wa.gov.au).

Yours respectfully



David Schober  
**Chief Executive Officer**

cc.

- Ms Jane Kelsbie MLA, Member for Warren – Blackwood.
- Hon. Reece Whitby MLA, Minister for Environment; Climate Action.
- Hon. Roger Cook MLA, Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade; Tourism; Commerce; Science.
- Hon. Stephen Dawson MLC, Minister for Emergency Services; Innovation and ICT; Medical Research; Volunteering.
- Hon. Alannah MacTiernan MLC, Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food; Hydrogen Industry.
- Hon. David Kelly MLA, Minister for Water, Forestry; Youth.
- Hon. Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA, Minister for Health; Mental Health.
- Hon. Peter Foster MLC, Chair, Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs.
- Tim Foley, A/Regional Manager South West, Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions.
- Diarmuid Kinsella, A/Regional Manager, Great Southern, Department of Fire and Emergency Services.



**Minister for Emergency Services; Innovation and ICT; Medical Research; Volunteering;  
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council**

Our Ref: 62-31584  
Your Ref: DS/CT File FIRE.1 / OCR22879635

Mr David Schober  
Chief Executive Officer  
Shire of Denmark

[David.schiber@denmark.wa.gov.au](mailto:David.schiber@denmark.wa.gov.au)

Dear Mr Schober

I refer to your recent letter to the Premier advising of your Council's resolution to request: a public review of the State's planned burning policy and practices; and consideration of providing additional resources to local government to enable the early detection and rapid suppression of bushfires. The Premier has requested that I respond on his behalf.

As you are aware, Western Australia is a highly fire-prone environment, with over 95 per cent of the State being designated as bush fire prone. The State's approach to managing the threat of bushfire comprises a range of activities and capability across the spectrum of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Responsibility for addressing bushfire risk is shared throughout the community with governments, organisations and individuals all contributing. Effective bushfire prevention requires fuel to be reduced at both localised and landscape scales. Small scale fuel management may be achieved by several means, including planned burning, mowing, mulching, slashing or herbicides.

When fuels are to be managed at a landscape scale, however, planned burning is the only financially and environmentally sustainable method available. When appropriately targeted and scaled, investment in fuel reduction has been shown to be effective in reduced environmental impact, bushfire response and recovery costs. Planned burning has also been demonstrated to reduce greenhouse gas emissions compared to a bushfire driven fire regime, contribute to positive ecological outcomes and provide the ideal training ground for bushfire emergency responders.

The McGowan Government remains committed to the use of planned burning as the primary means of reducing combustible fuel at the landscape scale, and therefore reduce the risk of bushfire to our communities and the environment. We support the

continual improvement of planned burning policies and practices, and note the *Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs* is holding hearings into Petition No.029 – Independent Review of DBCA Prescribed Burning Practices in August 2022. I consider it would be pre-emptive to launch an additional public review of the State's planned burning policy and practices while this Standing Committee process is ongoing.

I take this opportunity to commend the Shire of Denmark for their participation in the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) Bushfire Risk Management (BRM) Planning Program. Local-level mitigation activities undertaken through this Program complement bushfire prevention activities at the landscape scale – both of which are critical for effective bushfire prevention. I am advised that the Shire has undertaken 161 mitigation activities through the Program, supported by \$1,332,900 in Mitigation Activity Fund Grants Program funding, the provision of a DFES-funded Bushfire Risk Planning Coordinator, and recently, a co-funded Bushfire Risk Management Coordinator. I congratulate you on these efforts, and encourage your continued participation in the Program to ensure that community-level bushfire risks are systematically addressed, prioritised and mitigated – reducing bushfire fuels, and improving fire response by providing safer access, egress and areas for firefighters to work.

I acknowledge your Council's passion for rapid bushfire detection and response, and agree that these are important elements of an effective bushfire management strategy, when combined with a sustained and enhanced focus on bushfire prevention, preparedness and recovery. The McGowan Government is committed to the continual improvement of our emergency management arrangements in Western Australia.

Thank you for taking the time to advise the Government of the resolutions made by the Shire of Denmark.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'S Dawson', written over a large, light blue circular scribble.

Hon Stephen Dawson MLC  
**MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**05 SEP 2022**