



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

MC12/16370

5 December 2012

Ms Belinda Clarkson
4 Felicia Rise
DIAMOND CREEK VIC 3089

Dear Ms Clarkson

Thank you for your letter of 26 October 2012 addressed to the Prime Minister regarding bushfire mitigation. This matter was referred to the Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Management, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP. The Minister has asked me to respond on her behalf.

Primary responsibility for managing natural disasters rests with State and Territory Governments (the States). This includes identifying, prioritising and undertaking disaster mitigation activities such as fuel-reduction burns. The Australian Government does, however, provide substantial support to the States in this area to drive nationally consistent approaches to managing natural disasters and the sharing of resources and expertise.

Together with the States, the Australian Government is working to manage and reduce natural disaster risks to our communities. The Australian Government has supported the States by providing nearly \$110 million over the last four years to deliver a range of mitigation projects that will help communities prepare and potentially save lives and properties. These include projects in Victoria to improve bushfire predictions and reduce fuel loads, funding for flood mapping in Gippsland, the training of more local volunteers and support for education and safety.

Indeed Victoria has suffered several natural disasters in recent years. The cooperative partnership between the Australian and Victorian Government will help to better protect communities from such events in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Trushell', written in a cursive style.

Paul Trushell
Director Emergency Management Capability Policy
Capability Governance and Assurance Branch
National Security Capability Development Division

PREM12D05189



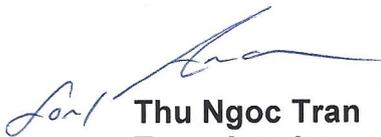
Hon Jay Weatherill MP
Premier of South Australia

Ms Belinda Clarkson
4 Felicia Rise
DIAMOND CREEK VIC 3089

Dear Ms Clarkson

The Hon Jay Weatherill MP, Premier of South Australia has asked me to thank you for sending him a copy of your letter dated 26 October 2012 to The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Prime Minister of Australia, about the Australian Government Disaster Grant.

Yours sincerely


Thu Ngoc Tran
Team Leader

30 October 2012

From: The Premier (DPaC) [mailto:Premier.The@dpac.tas.gov.au]

Sent: Tuesday, 30 October 2012 10:46 AM

To: devpress@optusnet.com.au

Subject: FW: Australian Government Disaster Grant

On behalf of the Premier, Lara Giddings MP, I acknowledge and thank you for your email.

Kind regards

Elisa Robinson

Executive Assistant
Office of Lara Giddings MP
Premier
Treasurer
Minister for the Arts



Connect with the Premier of Tasmania



Please consider the environment before printing

The Honorable Julia Gillard MP,
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600.

Fax: 02 6273 4100.



26 October 2012 (1-26pm to CC list)

Dear Prime Minister Gillard,

Re: Australian Government Disaster Grant.

With the greatest respect, I believe the Australian Government is at risk of being asked by the Victorian Government, for a Disaster Grant potentially in excess of \$50 billion, to help with damage caused by a future extreme bushfire impacting on a traffic gridlocked residential area (*"Extreme bushfires in Victoria's Plenty Gorge"* 9 October 2012, 9.37am, see below).

The Victorian government has acknowledged emergency access/egress problems north of Melbourne's Yarra river (*"Victorian government bushfire warning DVD"* ["Don't Wait and See"](#) 12 September 2012, 1.22pm, see below). An extreme bushfire like Black Saturday was predicted in 2003 by *"Report's"* from bushfire experts, who were endorsed and formally heard by the Victorian government (*"Horrendous Devastation"* 21 September 2012, 1.57pm, see below).

Why should other Australian States finance Victoria with Disaster Grants when *"...no action was taken on the report's recommendations..."* over many years (*"Victorian Bushfires"* The Senate 15 June 2011). In my opinion the Australian Government has a responsibility to request that extreme bushfire landscape level fuels be reduced, for at least 10 kilometres north and west of Victoria's Warrandyte and Eltham Yarra river bridges (*"Government may join bushfire class action"* The Sydney Morning Herald, 23 October 2012, see below).

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Belinda Clarkson'.

Belinda Clarkson

My views, not the Victorian Government (Nillumbik)

Cc: Federal Opposition Leader – Hon Tony Abbott, Premier of Victoria – Hon. Ted Baillieu, Premier of New South Wales – Hon. Barry O'Farrell , Premier of Western Australia – Hon. Colin Barnett , Premier of South Australia – Hon. Jay Weatherill, Premier of Tasmania – Lara Giddings, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory – Hon. Terry Mills, Premier of Queensland – Hon. Campbell Newman , Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory – Hon. Katy Gallagher, Deputy Premier Peter Ryan, Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews, Louise Asher, Ryan Smith, Jeanette Powell, Robert Clark, Richard Dalla-Riva, David Davis, Hugh Delahunty, Martin Dixon, Matthew Guy, Peter Hall, David Hodgett, Nicholas Kostsiras, Wendy Lovell, Andrew McIntosh, Terry Mulder, Dr Denis Naphine, Michael O'Brien, Gordon Rich-Phillips, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Mary Wooldridge, Weekly Times, The Australian, HeraldSun, The Age, Diamond Valley Leader, A Current Affair, Andrew Bolt (H/S, Channel 10), 7.30 Report, Neil Mitchell (3AW), Jon Faine (774), Alan Jones (2GB), Miranda Devine (Sun/HS), Peter Mickelborough (H/S), Jason Dowling (The Age), David Packham OAM, Rod Incoll, Deryn Hinch, Jan Kronberg, Craig Ondarchie, Nillumbik Ratepayers Association.

Belinda Clarkson 4 Felicia Rise Diamond Creek, Victoria 3089
Email: devpress@optusnet.com.au Phone: 0439 755 411

Mr Ted Baillieu, Premier of Victoria
Treasury Place, Melbourne.
ted.baillieu@parliament.vic.gov.au



9 October 2012

Dear Mr Baillieu,

Re: Extreme bushfire in Victoria's Plenty Gorge

The Plenty Gorge in my Victorian Government constituency of Blue Lake Ward Nillumbik, is an unacceptable extreme bushfire risk extending into Melbourne's suburbs. The Plenty Gorges location on the cities northern rural urban interface provides the most dangerous route for the conduction of extreme bushfire.

The Yarra River about 6 km to the south, blocks the natural emergency egress from an extreme bushfire, burning through the Plenty Gorge and into the suburbs. The potential for a catastrophic tragedy, due to people being trapped in cars by the bridges at Eltham and Warrandyte, is now established. Indeed the unacceptable extreme bushfire risk; in regard to the Warrandyte Bridge, has been articulated by the Victorian Government DVD "*Don't Wait and See*".

The horrendous devastation referred to in my previous correspondence to you, and the Victorian Government's "*Don't Wait and See*" DVD, points to an extreme bushfire disaster at least 40 times greater than Ash Wednesday, and 12 times greater than Black Saturday. After Ash Wednesday's extreme bushfires in which there were 47 deaths and associated damage, Premier John Cain said the State Government could meet the cost alone "*only with great difficulty*". The Australian Government then gave Victoria a large disaster grant. Black Saturdays 173 deaths and associated damage were estimated by the Royal Commission to cost Victoria \$4.37 billion. Pro rata, 2000 deaths and associated damage would cost \$50 billion.

The loss of thousands of lives and associated damage, potentially costing \$50 billion, would be an unsustainable cost for the Victorian Government, and a major cost for the Australian Government. In my view, if the Victorian Government cannot prescribe burn the forested part of the Plenty Gorge, it is obliged to publically inform the Australian Government of the likely cost of future disaster grants.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Belinda Clarkson".

Belinda Clarkson
(My views, not Council's)

Belinda Clarkson 4 Felicia Rise Diamond Creek, Victoria 3089
Email: devpress@optusnet.com.au Phone: 0439 755 411



Councillor Belinda Clarkson

Blue Lake Ward

Mobile 0429 430 977 Telephone/Facsimile 03 9438 5645

Email Belinda.Clarkson@nillumbik.vic.gov.au



Mr Ted Baillieu, Premier
Treasury Place, Melbourne.
ted.baillieu@parliament.vic.gov.au

21 September 2012

Dear Premier Baillieu,

Re: Horrendous Devastation.

Six years prior to Black Saturday, the Victorian government conducted a Hearing into Planning Policy. The Victorian government Hearing questioned two independent experts about bushfire, and received their CFA endorsed bushfire Assessments. During that meticulous Planning Policy Hearing, the Victorian government was told in detail to expect horrendous devastation from an extreme bushfire, unless fuel was reduced. The Victorian government did not further respond or action the expert bushfire Assessments. In response to that Victorian government Hearing, the first of many books published about Black Saturday stated *"...the threat of catastrophic fire was dismissed with what now seems a culpable disregard for life and safety"* (*Inferno - The Day Victoria Burned*, by Roger Franklin).

Now, in what seems a case of history repeating itself, it appears to me that your government has an apparent *"...culpable disregard for life and safety"* by not fully actioning Royal Commission recommendations 30, 31 & 56. In my opinion the Victorian government has increased landscape level extreme bushfire fuels and allowed emergency egress hazard trees to remain in the trapped Eltham and North Warrandyte areas. To quote former Premier Brumby *"...hundreds if not thousands of lives..."* are at risk on this ISSUE (Please see 2 Motions re Royal Commission recommendations 30, 31 & 56).

The Victorian government's extreme bushfire DVD *"Don't Wait and See"*, refers to the horrendous devastation facing the gridlocked and trapped residents of North Warrandyte. Western Australia's leadership on this issue has proved that this horrendous devastation is avoidable. I believe you are not providing the appropriate Victorian government leadership to reduce fuel, hazard trees and future loss of life.

With the greatest respect, would you please provide appropriate leadership in regard to actioning the expert advice the Victorian government has sought and received, about *"strategic"* extreme bushfire fuel reduction. The horrendous devastation referred to in the Victorian government's DVD will in my opinion occur as a direct result of the Victorian government's fuel and hazard tree related policies. As the only person in the Victorian government with the power to lead a reduction of extreme bushfire fuel, I believe you must take full responsibility for the predicted horrendous devastation.

Regards,

Cr Belinda Clarkson
devpress@optusnet.com.au

Cc: Deputy Premier Peter Ryan, Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews, Louise Asher, Ryan Smith, Jeanette Powell, Robert Clark, Richard Dalla-Riva, David Davis, Hugh Delahunty, Martin Dixon, Matthew Guy, Peter Hall, David Hodgett, Nicholas Kostsiras, Wendy Lovell, Andrew McIntosh, Terry Mulder, Dr Denis Napthine, Michael O'Brien, Gordon Rich-Phillips, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Mary Wooldridge, Weekly Times, The Australian, HeraldSun, The Age, Diamond Valley Leader, A Current Affair, Andrew Bolt (HIS, Channel 10), 7.30 Report, Neil Mitchell (3AW), Jon Faine (774), Miranda Devine (Sun/HS), Peter Mickelburgh (HIS), Jason Dowling (The Age), David Packham OAM, Rod Incoll, Derryn Hinch, Jan Kronberg, Craig Ondarchie, Nillumbik Ratepayers Association.



Councillor Belinda Clarkson

Blue Lake Ward

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Mr Ted Baillieu, Premier
Treasury Place, Melbourne.
ted.baillieu@parliament.vic.gov.au

12 September 2012

Dear Premier Baillieu,

re: Victorian government extreme bushfire warning DVD "Don't Wait and See".

In response to the Victorian government spokesperson's letter, on the issue of "leave early" in the event of an extreme bushfire impacting on the Melbourne suburb of North Warrandyte (manningham.vic.gov.au, "Extreme bushfire warning DVD "Don't Wait and See" 3 September 2012, see below).

While answering my seven questions about the detail of "leaving early", the response letter clearly indicates the Victorian government places primary responsibility for the communities safety on "families and individuals". However, it is not "families and individuals" who are responsible for the extreme bushfire fuel, that exponentially increases this problem (see figure 1 below). Mitigating extreme bushfire fuel is the responsibility of the Minister for Planning, the Honourable Matthew Guy MP, and you as Mr Guy's leader. The potential for extreme bushfire causing hundreds of deaths of people trapped by the Yarra River at North Warrandyte, is now confirmed by the Victorian government's own DVD, "Don't Wait and See". However, I believe the message of horrendous devastation to the trapped people of North Warrandyte, is a fraction of the much larger problem at the Eltham Yarra River bridge, where thousands of lives could be lost.

With the greatest respect, it is now clearly imperative that you instruct Planning Minister Guy, to reduce landscape level fuel loads, for at least 10kms north and west of both the Warrandyte and Eltham Yarra River bridges, consistent with the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Recommendation 56.

Regards,

Cr Belinda Clarkson

devpress@optusnet.com.au

Fuel is the only factor we can control.

Figure 1: Incoll Rod Fire Hazard Vegetation Controls Nillumbik.

FIRE DANGER CLASS	FUEL t/ha											
	LOW	MOD			HIGH		VERY HIGH		EXTREME			
FDI	5	10	15	20	25	30	40	50	60	80	100	
5 t/ha	75	150	225	300	350	425	575	700	850	1125	1400	
10 t/ha	300	600	900	1150	1450	1700	2250	2800	3350	4450	5550	
15 t/ha	675	1350	1950	2625	3225	3825	5100	6375	7850	10125	12600	
20 t/ha	1200	2400	3600	4800	6000	7200	9600	12000	14400	18300	23100	
25 t/ha	1750	3750	5625	7500	9375	11250	15000	18750	23500	30000	37500	

FIRES CONTROLLABLE

FIRES NOT CONTROLLABLE

Cc: Deputy Premier Peter Ryan, Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews, Louise Asher, Ryan Smith, Jeanette Powell, Robert Clark, Richard Dalla-Riva, David Davis, Hugh Delahunty, Martin Dixon, Matthew Guy, Peter Hall, David Hodgett, Nicholas Kostsiras, Wendy Lovell, Andrew McIntosh, Terry Mulder, Dr Denis Napthine, Michael O'Brien, Gordon Rich-Phillips, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Mary Wooldridge, Weekly Times, The Australian, HeraldSun, The Age, Diamond Valley Leader, A Current Affair, Andrew Bolt (H/S, Channel 10), 7.30 Report, Neil Mitchell (3AW), Jon Faine (774), Miranda Devine (SunHS), Peter Mickelborough (HS), Jason Dowling (The Age), David Packham OAM, Rod Incoll, Derryn Hinch, Jan Kronberg, Craig Ondarchie.

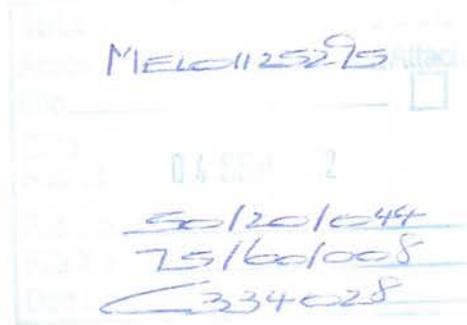
Manningham City Council

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File ID: TRIM
Enquires to: Lew Wilson
Telephone: 9846 0585
CFS Reference:



3 September 2012

Councillor Belinda Clarkson
Blue Lake Ward
C/- Nillumbik Shire Council
PO Box 476
Greensborough 3088

Dear Ms Clarkson,

Re: Extreme Bushfire Warning DVD "Don't Wait and See"

In response to your letter of 29 August I wish to make two points of clarification, following which, I have provided answers to the questions raised within your letter.

My letter of response to the editor was made on behalf of the Manningham City Council, a local government authority and not State Government, as indicated in your letter.

Secondly, the production and distribution of the bushfire DVD "Don't Wait and See" was a collaborative project between Nillumbik and Manningham Councils, the CFA and the Victoria Police, to alert and encourage residents of the greater Warrandyte area (both north and south of the Yarra River) to ensure they had a personal/family bushfire emergency plan to deal with the risk of bushfire.

Whilst supporting the key government messages to communities around bushfire, the DVD is not a State Government production.

In answer to your questions:

1. What predicted Fire Danger Index (FDI), triggers leaving?

This is not widely published anymore as a FDI, but presented to the community as Fire Danger Ratings (Low, moderate, High, Very High, Severe, Extreme and Code Red). Families and individuals need to take responsibility for preparing their own personal bushfire plan relevant to their personal needs and situation, and hence need to ask themselves this question and plan accordingly. For example, a Code Red day plan may be: Don't be There!!

2. What time frame does "...leave early", cover?

As above, families and individuals need to ask themselves this question, make their own assessment and plan accordingly. If unsure, they should contact the CFA for more advice.

3. What areas of Melbourne are safe havens, on a FDI day of 100 plus?

The DVD was for Warrandyte residents only. As an indication, it mentions The Pines Shopping Centre as a safe haven, however, people need to have developed their own plans, which could include relative's or friend's homes in safe suburban areas, remote from high bushfire risk areas.

4. From whom, and what media, should the "...leave early" warning be accepted, for both leaving and returning?

Again as above, families and individuals need to ask themselves this question when developing their family/personal plans, however, trusted local sources are (for example) Plenty Valley FM and 774 ABC AM, but if in doubt, contact the CFA for more advice.

5. What provisions have been made for those unable to leave, ie. elderly, sick, disabled, unaccompanied children, uninformed, and those without transport?

The emerging and developing Vulnerable People in Emergencies (VPE) program attempts to address this issue, but makes no qualms about the lack of resourcing that would enable any guarantee of safety for vulnerable people. Again, vulnerable families and individuals need to ask themselves this question, talk to neighbours, relatives and friends, and contact the DHS and CFA for more advice.

6. On consecutive "...leave early" days, what provision has been made for prolonged massed people management, in safe havens (ie. 60 plus hours)?

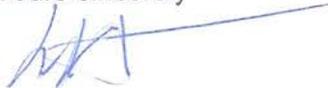
No formal provisions have been made, however, I would reiterate, as above, families and individuals need to ask themselves this question and include this in their plan.

7. Since the "...leave early" advice, will predictably involve many false alarms, how many times does the Victorian Government believe "... (if not all)..." residents leaving, will continue to take that advice before ignoring it?

Local government cannot be held responsible for providing an answer on behalf of the State Government, however, it is worth noting that the criteria for declaring, for example, a "Code Red day" have been significantly tightened and it is expected that the number of days designated as extreme or Code Red will be very limited.

I trust that my response satisfactorily answers your queries, and that Nillumbik and Manningham Councils can continue to collaborate on the important process of prevention and preparedness of our respective communities, to ensure their future safety and well being.

Yours sincerely



Leigh Harrison
Acting Chief Executive

cc: Stuart Burdack, CEO Nillumbik