Bushfire preparedness assessment for 2025 and 2026 across SE Australia in early November 2025 - John O'Donnell 5 November 2025

1 Introduction

There are annual Australian bushfire preparedness summits, conferences, workshops and webinars and many other fire activities, but nowhere does the author see broad annual assessment of bushfire preparedness across Australia, states, regions, local government areas nor for towns and cities, especially across all the applicable factors and available to the public.

In the public interest, community interest, national interest and in the interests of fire fighter and community safety, the author has prepared this bushfire preparedness assessment across SE Australia, examining a series of bushfire preparedness assessment factors. Such assessments are not provided to the public, communities or fire fighters and the author sees this as a major risk and concern area, hence the effort made to prepare this assessment.

This process of bushfire preparedness assessment is critical considering the massive impacts of many bushfires on safety, economic and social impacts and environmental impacts, including Australia, Palisades, Maui, Greece and elsewhere and many other recent bushfires. It is also an important step in capturing lessons from Australia and overseas.

2 Earlier SE Australia bushfire preparedness articles

Noting the importance of this issue, previous bushfire preparedness articles prepared by the author in relation to bushfire preparedness across SE Australia are outlined below:

Major concerns in relation to bushfire preparedness across SE Australia: John O'Donnell 9 January 2025 Australian Rural and Regional News https://arr.news/2025/01/09/major-concerns-in-relation-to-bushfire-preparedness-across-se-australia-john-odonnell/

Status of bushfire preparation and preparedness for major bushfires across South East Australia during 2024/ 25. Opinion piece John O'Donnell 14 August 2024 VFFA web. https://volunteerfirefighters.org.au/status-of-bushfire-preparation-and-preparedness-for-major-bushfires-across-south-east-australia-during-2024-25

3 Bushfire preparedness assessment across SE Australia

The author has undertaken this preparedness assessment in as briefly as possible assessment, but taking a broad look at bushfire preparedness across SE Australia. Detail is provided below under 11 preparedness assessment factors below.

3.1 Extent of preparedness mitigation across forest and woodland landscapes, including prescribed burning, mechanical treatment, grazing and other treatment in each state and region

Annual rates of prescribing burning of forest areas are less than 1 to 2 % of forest areas per year across SE Australian states, these rates of prescribed burning are not going to be effective in reducing bushfire extent, intensity, severity and long duration bushfires. Prescribed burning in NSW across forest areas has been around 0.6 % annually.

In Victoria from a post titled "Disaster waiting to happen" in November 2025, despite warnings of one of the worst fire seasons in over a decade, the fuel reduction program in Victoria has been reduced from around 200,000 hectares to barely 100,000 hectares, around 1.5 %, leaving thousands of tonnes of dangerous fuel loads and debris untargeted in forests across regional Victoria. The 2009 Black Saturday Royal Commission recommended fuel reduction of 5% of treatable public land annually.

Areas of prescribed burning and % of landscapes prescribed burnt annually in SW WA are at much high higher levels than SE Australian states, although have declined somewhat, putting some communities at risk. As outlined in "The Truth About Fuel Reduction Burning" on the Bushfire Front website, real data gathered from almost 60 years of historical data from the forests of south west WA,

the data unequivocally shows that when the area of prescribed burning trends down, the area of uncontrolled bushfires trends up. There is a simple explanation: bushfires are more difficult to put out in long unburnt, heavy fuels. The area annually burnt by bushfire escalates exponentially when the area of prescribed burning in a region falls below 8 percent per annum. Burning about 8% per annum results in about 40 % of bushland carrying fuels 0 to 5 years old, a level suitable to reduce bushfire extent.

A review by O'Donnell (2022) highlighted inadequate rates of annual prescribed burning in most SE Australian states and the impacts on increased annual bushfire area in the link.

https://arr.news/2022/05/18/review-of-prescribed-burning-and-wildfire-burning-across-australia-john-odonnell/

Small area goat grazing will not broad fuel areas across broad forested landscapes and likely would not be allowed in conservation areas.

Fuel loads and strata across landscapes, including understorey vegetation and changes in shrubbiness, are at very high levels. This is due to inadequate mitigation treatments, dense regrowth following major intense bushfires such as from 2019/ 20 and also in relation to eucalypt decline due to inadequate low intensity fire across landscapes.

In Australia, it is past time to dramatically increase pre bushfire mitigation (prescribed burning/ mechanical fuel reduction), reducing the costs of post bushfire spending.

There are large government expenditure savings to be made through increasing mitigation expenditure to reducing natural disaster response costs, including bushfires, it is estimated that they could be reduced by over 50 % by 2050. https://www.preventionweb.net/media/82890/download:. This highlights the huge importance of increasing pre disaster fire mitigation in Australia, opportunities to progress this, taking a long-term view and providing budget savings. The low funding spent on mitigation, including prescribed burning and removal of fuels/ thinning, is an issue of national importance and needs urgent attention from all governments, federal, state and local.

Assessment. Inadequate bushfire preparedness for communities, firefighters, infrastructure and ecosystems in relation to inadequate forest mitigation.

3.2 Extent of bushfire preparedness of nominated wilderness areas

Large areas of wilderness areas don't receive any or limited prescribed burning or very limited areas of low intensity bushfires. Intense bushfires in wilderness areas are a major risk issue with heavy fuel build ups, and in some cases repeat intense bushfires. This risk worsens with miniscule fuel mitigation in the areas surrounding wilderness areas.

Jurskis (2021) outlined:

…irrespective of tenure, the rules and regulations governing forest management are based on the wilderness mentality pervading our academic institutions and bureaucracies. Our prehistory and history demonstrate beyond doubt that megafires are a consequence of our fatally flawed conservation paradigm.

In the landmark paper Jurskis et al. (2003) noted:

Current policies and regulations in NSW exclude low intensity burning from much of the landscape including wilderness, old growth, rare ecosystems, habitats of rare plants or animals, and drainage lines. (e.g. Anon.1999). They focus on individuals, target species and fire frequency. They don't encourage assessments of the consequences of not burning. This policy environment reinforces the shift towards more widespread high intensity fire regimes.

Further information is outlined in Laming et al (2022):

The author recommends that we need to learn these lessons and totally review the impacts of inadequate low intensity burning on communities, firefighters and ecosystems.

Assessment. Inadequate bushfire preparedness, the author considers our policies need major refinement.

3.3 Extent of bushfire fuels from large scale bushfires in previous years with dense understories and standing and dead trees

There are increasing areas of dense understories and standing and dead trees.

Fuel loads and strata across landscapes, including understorey vegetation and changes in shrubbiness, are at very high levels. This is due to inadequate mitigation treatments, dense regrowth following major intense bushfires such as 2019/ 20 and ongoing eucalypt decline due to inadequate low intensity fire across landscapes. More recent bushfires in these previous intense bushfire areas has been described as “like a knife through butter”.

Standing and fallen dead trees represent another major risk, including immediately beside major roads. This puts fire fighters and the travelling public at risk.

Assessment. Inadequate bushfire preparedness with increasing understory and dead tree fuels (standing and on the ground) across forested landscapes where intense/ severe bushfires have occurred. Taking this into account, future bushfires in these areas are going to be intense.

3.4 Effectiveness of fire interval and community and firefighter fire safety policies

The author considers that current fire intervals, fire management and fire outcomes in SE Australia are not working effectively. There has been a resurgence in eucalypt decline, extensive wildfires and loss of species over recent decades with reduced prescribed burning.

There are differing time intervals for vegetation associations, flora species, fauna species and EEC’s across NSW. It is extremely hard to manage prescribed burning under this complex fire interval approach considering all these matters and the very long fire intervals involved.

Large proportions of some vegetation associations that were burnt in the NSW 2019/ 20 bushfire firegrounds were wet sclerophyll forest types which are listed with very long fire intervals and have rapid rates of fuel accumulation. This includes 51.24 % of Wet Sclerophyll (grassy sub formation) and 48.81 % of Wet Sclerophyll (shrubby sub formation). These proportions were considerably higher than other vegetation associations burnt in the NSW 2019/ 20 bushfire.

A key question relates to are fuel ages up to 40-60 years for differing associations within a reasonable and sensible threshold? If the fuel age is beyond 3-6 years, the author seriously questions how that can be within a sound threshold to protect forests and ecosystems, communities, infrastructure and firefighters. In relation to the use of thresholds, there are large areas of contiguous similar threshold forest areas across eastern NSW, these are mapped in Map 22.2a and b of NSW SOE (2021). These are often very large is size, this was a large factor in the rapid spread of the 2019/ 20 bushfires in long unburnt and within threshold areas.

There is a considerable amount of important information in relation to fire intervals for planned burns and bushfires that is not available, and needs to be, so there is optimum forest fire management and the public is adequately informed in relation to these issues. Resilient safe, healthy landscapes is a critical issue being considered in many countries across the world, including mitigation/ adaptive management work in the US on resilient landscapes in relation to bushfires.

Considering the extent of chronic eucalypt decline and thick understories in many SE Australian forests, strategies and actions to address these major issues across forested landscapes and reduce intense bushfire risks are opportune but overdue, using regular low intensity maintenance burning and mechanical treatment of forests.

Current theoretical fire intervals are not going to get us close to establishing and maintaining resilient forested landscapes in SE Australia. The safety of fire fighters entering forested areas, particularly where there are high fuel loads, is a critical issue, and is a major risk area and has been for a long time.

Jurskis et al. (2003) highlighted the importance of refocussing fire management in Australia:

Precautionary fire management should be encouraged by:

- *developing guidelines and prescriptions for landscapes, not individual plants and animals*
- *developing prescriptions to control the extent and spatial variability of fires by controlling fire behaviour, rather than prescribing artificial exclusion zones and fire intervals*
- *recognising that low intensity burning protects edaphic controls and sensitive species, so that perceived conflicts between human and environmental protection are largely unreal*
- *recognising increasingly extensive high intensity fire regimes and eucalypt decline as consequences of fire exclusion that must be considered in planning.*

It is suggested that there needs to be a total review of current fire intervals, noting current theoretical fire intervals set at very long timeframes that allows the build-up of high fuel loads and strata across landscapes and restricts low intensity burning across landscapes. The optimise the safety of fire fighters, communities, forests, the environment and heritage sites using regular low intensity fire and sensible fire interval prescriptions is an important issue.

The author considers that there should be major reviews of bureaucratic, theoretical and excessive bushfire and prescribed burning fire interval prescriptions by states, taking into account the above factors. Considering all the bushfire disasters that have occurred over a long period, and imminent future disasters, this is not an unreasonable suggestion, let alone adopting the practical opportunities available to address the issues.

The author also considers that there should be a review of the low use of prescribed burning in LMZ's which make up 90% of the parks and reserves in NSW. The author considers that the ring of confidence approach doesn't work. The Office of Environment and Heritage (2013) notes "some changes to current land and fire management practice will be necessary if these escalating risks are to be managed" but the author hasn't seen any major actions to address these changes and certainly no real changes in prescribed burning. As well, management of fire and fuel needs to apply across all land tenures to be effective.

The author considers that regular burning every 3 to 6 years is needed across forested landscapes to reduce fuel loads and strata, intense bushfires and better protect sensitive areas, this reduces fuel loads and strata, firebrands and also reduces eucalypt decline. Following high intensity burning and consequent dense regrowth in many cases, prescribed burns need to be undertaken as soon as possible after these intense bushfires to maintain previous forest structures and reduce massive fuel loads and strata.

The author considers that bushfire and prescribed burning, bushfire and fire interval prescriptions across forested landscapes should be redesigned into one practical fire prescription document.

Assessment. Inadequate bushfire preparedness in relation to fire interval policies. Current fire interval and community/ firefighter fire safety policies do not appear to be effectively linked, putting communities, fire fighters and indeed whole ecosystems at risk. Prescribed burning fire intervals are too long and fire return timeframes are increasing. There is inadequate fire mitigation close to towns and cities, within towns and cities and also across landscapes with very high fuel loads, often contiguous high fuel load areas. It is also essential to understand the difficulty of fire fighting in such situations on bad fire days, the 2019/ 20 bushfires highlighted this. Other factors that need to be considered include days with numerous lightning strikes and firebrand generation and travel.

3.5 Initial and ongoing bushfire suppression attack effectiveness, including use of backburning

Fire services do a massive amount of good work, including by bushfire volunteers, and this needs to be recognised.

In South East Australia there is a focus on bushfire suppression at the expense of bushfire mitigation. In these days, most fire services focus on suppression with limited mitigation in forests, so bushfire attack effectiveness and opportunities in forested areas are reduced.

Adams et al (2020) noted:

More recently, an international group of authors emphasized that an ever-increasing focus by governments on fire suppression was a trap, as it allowed fuels to accumulate to levels that would eventually burn at intensities well beyond the capabilities of any fire fighting service, anywhere (Moriera et al., 2020). Sadly, these predictions have proved correct in Australia.

Boer et al (2009) in Western Australia highlight that prescribed burning pronouncedly changed the spatial distribution of fuel age in the study area and has significantly reduced the incidence and extent of unplanned bushfires.

As noted in the US, minimising prescribed burning and adaptive management can increase suppression time considerably, equipment needs, personnel risks and costs of bushfire suppression. In relation to the US 2021 Dixie Fire at Chester, this was readily apparent, they noted that they spent nearly $700 million on the Dixie Fire, we could have spent a fraction of that to thin and burn and tend land around Quincy, Greenville and Chester.

Underwood (2020) observed:

that emergency services and national parks agencies these days will often "watch and wait", rather than pounce aggressively on a fire when it is small. And there seems to be a reluctance to fight fires at night when, traditionally, control is easiest. Reading about a fire in a national park that was left untended for three weeks before control was attempted left me speechless with disbelief.

The author understands that watch and wait approaches still occur in firefighting.

The author understands that there is often reticence to use backburning, which in a number of cases reduces bushfire attack effectiveness. Saying that, there are times where backburning should be avoided.

Assessment. Reasonable bushfire preparedness, with a number of refinement opportunities in relation to issues such as speed of attack, backburning, evacuation and other issues.

3.6 Equipment extent, type, location and availability, volunteer strength and other fire activities

In the main, there are reasonable firefighting fleets, in some cases getting old. It is understood in Victoria that hundreds of Mercedes-Benz firefighting vehicles used by Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV) have been pulled from duty after faults allegedly related to their appliance bodies were discovered.

There is increasing focus and reliance on very costly large plane fleets, to be frank these aircraft aren't all ways effective (in heavy fuel load forests with dense understories), but they can be. The author has seen one case in January 2020 where a super crane helicopter dumped all its water onto a small windrow and then 15 loads of water from a helicopter bucket, and the windrow was still not put out.

With the focus on bushfire suppression and limited mitigation in forests, bushfire attack effectiveness and opportunities in forested areas are reduced, the author believes that this reduces the effectiveness of large plane fleets.

Fire volunteer strength appears to be reducing and experienced volunteers are in many cases retiring or leaving.

Fire services undertake a lot of great work in relation to community protection, community activities and awareness days, get ready days, bushfire risk management plans, total fire danger management and other bushfire prevention activities. Bushfire risk management plans at state and regional levels are often generic, not updated regularly and often inadequate to tackle bushfire risks exposing communities to risk. To the author, this was apparent during the 2019/ 20 Australian bushfires.

Assessment. Mostly reasonable firefighting fleets, efforts and a number of positives, however there are concerns in relation to SE Australian bushfire preparedness in relation to equipment, loss of experienced volunteers and inadequate amount of fire mitigation and consequently high fuel loads.

3.7 Access tracks installation and maintenance and water supply and availability

The author is advised that it can be difficult for local bushfire personnel to get funding to maintain/ reopen fire trails and maintain water supply dams, and this can put firefighting at risk.

Many fire trails have been closed.

Multiple use and active/ adaptive management is essential to keep forests healthy and good access is essential to undertake regular prescribed burning, as well as for firefighting and other access.

Preferably prescribed burns need to be bounded by roads or tracks to enable rapid access by ground forces. Burns need to be in sufficiently large cells to be effective in retarding and controlling large bushfires.

Many trails have locked gates which can restrict fast initial attack.

An example is video of a fire trail in Gippsland Victoria, refer the link below:

https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1BT2A8vktm/

The author doesn't not have broad detail in relation to water availability, noting this can vary through seasons and can be minimal in very dry conditions.

Water needs are especially important in forest areas and are usually inadequate. It is not sound policy to send fire fighters into forested areas with high fuel loads and inadequate water resources for top up in forests. Water needs need to be provided in forest areas, increasing supply. This matter needs to be resolved urgently.

Water needs for bushfires would be markedly reduced if the government adopted sound and sensible prescribed burning across landscapes, around 10 % of forests per year across NSW forests, reducing bushfire extent. This is well document in WA research e.g. Boer et al (2009) and a review by O'Donnell (2022).

Assessment. Concerns in relation to bushfire preparedness, including access tracks installation and maintenance and water supply and availability

3.8 Bushfire disaster preparedness of towns and cities and individual houses

Fire services undertake a lot of great work in relation to community protection, community activities and awareness days, bushfire risk management plans, total fire danger management and other bushfire prevention activities. Bushfire risk management plans at state and regional levels are often generic, not updated regularly and often inadequate to tackle bushfire risks exposing communities to risk. To the author, this was apparent during the 2019/ 20 Australian bushfires.

There is also land use planning, zoning and approvals by local government. Fuel management within towns can be highly variable, putting communities at risk.

Many communities in SE Australia have massive fuel loads on their doorstep, the author considers that we are not adequately prepared in this area. As well, the author believes that safer together bushfire risk policies that have minimal prescribed burning and resultant high fuel loads have preparedness risks in relation to a number of communities.

A useful case study by Onfray (2025) in relation to Tathra "A case study in folly #4: The price of ignoring fire risks on the impacts of the 2019/ 20 bushfires" is outlined in the link below https://share.google/RnOmFCQEqRZlelZQ8

Another is by Onfray (2023) A case study in folly #2 – the 2003 Canberra firestorm 6 January 2023. https://www.robertonfray.com/2023/01/06/a-case-study-in-folly-2-the-2003-canberra-firestorm/

The Menzies Research Centre (2020) policy paper noted:

In addition to the recommendations outlined in the report; IAG urges governments at all levels to increase funding for mitigation works to make communities safer and more resilient for the long term. We look forward to working collaboratively with governments and community organisations to support our customers, our people and the community remain safe from natural perils. Chapter 3 of the report titled Prevention is better than cure is critical reading, I have teased out major points made as dot points including:

Despite this relentless commitment to inquiries, in 2014, a report released by the Productivity Commission into Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements found that government natural disaster funding arrangements had been inefficient, inequitable and unsustainable. 'They are prone to cost shifting, ad hoc responses and short term political opportunism.' The Productivity Commission lamented that the funding mix was disproportionately recovery-based and did not promote mitigation. It observed that the political incentives for mitigation were weak, 'since mitigation provides public benefits that accrue over a long-time horizon,' and that over time this would create entitlement dependency and undermines individual responsibility for natural disaster risk management.'

Highlighting the importance of community safety, Davey and Sarre (2020) noted community deaths in relation to the 2019/ 20 bushfires. 2019–20 Australian bushfire season impacts are highlighted in the Wikipedia 2019–20 Australian bushfire season link below (date 29 April, 2025): The fires burnt an estimated 24.3 million hectares (243,000 square kilometres), destroyed over 3,000 buildings (including 2779 homes), and killed at least 34 people. According to the University of Tasmania's Menzies Institute, bushfire smoke was responsible for more than 400 deaths, reported by the Medical Journal of Australia.

Deaths and household impacts from past Australian bushfires is highlighted in the Wikipedia Bushfires in Australia link below (date 29 April, 2025): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bushfires_in_Australia

Deaths and impacts from bushfires is also covered in the Victorian link below:

https://www.ffm.vic.gov.au/history-and-incidents/past-bushfires

Impacts to towns in Australia impacted by the 2019/ 20 bushfires is outlined in Wikipedia (2025)

Impact to towns of the 2019–20 Australian bushfire season. The list is extensive, but likely not complete.

There are case studies of town and city bushfire protection case where prescribed burning and other adaptive management and mitigation have assisted in restricting bushfire impacts on communities across Australia and the US. These are outlined in the attached link.

https://arr.news/2025/06/04/town-and-city-bushfire-protection-case-studies-from-australia-and-the-us-john-odonnell/

There is huge variation in relation to household bushfire protection. There are a lot of household bushfire protection programs in place, however it would be beneficial if household bushfire protection could be increased.

Assessment. Inadequate bushfire preparedness in relation to the protection of many towns, cities and households. Due to the importance of this issue, the author believes an annual state status report listing all towns and mitigation treatments and ongoing needs could be included with state bushfire annual reports, if not, a separate annual report.

3.9 Evacuation options and safety arrangements

One example of a major bushfire evacuation route closure during the 2019/ 20 bushfires is provided by AIDR Knowledge Hub (undated) at Mallacoota:

https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/black-summer-bushfires-vic-2019-20/

Early in the morning on New Year's Eve, the Banana Track fire reached the coastal town of Mallacoota in the state's far east. Several thousand people were isolated in the town and more than

60 homes were destroyed. Escape routes were cut off and an estimated 4,000 people gathered on the town's foreshore, protected by the local Country Fire Authority (CFA) brigade, three CFA strike teams, FFMV firefighters and VIC Police personnel.

and:

On 4 February, the Princes Highway was re-opened from Orbost to the NSW border, although with reduced speed limits in some areas. The Mallacoota-Genoa Road was re-opened and Mallacoota reconnected to the main power grid on 8 February.

Underwood (2020) looked at bushfire evacuation issues in relation to the 2019/ 20 bushfires:

Once the fires got going, there were other factors that made things worse, or more confused, such as the lack of coordination across state borders and the attempted evacuation of whole towns, the residents of which were totally unprepared, and the evacuation routes uncertain.

There were huge evacuation concerns in the Australia, Los Angeles, Maui , Greece and other bushfires.

Little appears to have changed to improve evacuation outcomes and reduce risks.

There are going to large numbers of trees across roads and key infrastructure, putting evacuation outcomes and people at risk.

Assessment. Inadequate bushfire preparedness in relation to evacuation options and safety arrangements in many locations in SE Australia.

3.10 Bushfire disaster risks to firefighters, for forests and grasslands

The public don't have access to fuel load maps, but experienced fire personnel have access to fire history mapping and it highlights large areas of forested SE Australia with long periods without fire and heavy fuel loads across contiguous landscapes. As a result there are large risks to fire fighter safety, especially in high fuel load forest areas.

Davey and Sarre (2020) outlined key facts in relation to the 2019/ 20 bushfires:

"Thirty-three deaths occurred as a result of these fires, 25 of them in New South Wales. Nine firefighting personnel died, comprising three American aircrew and three Rural Fire Service volunteer firefighters in New South Wales and three members of Forest Fire Management Victoria. Fires destroyed 3100 homes."

It is the author's belief that many of the forested fire grounds across south eastern Australia are way too dangerous to fight bushfires and for firefighter safety due to past intense bushfires, minimal prescribed burning and long fire interval policies. To be frank, we as a society have learnt very little following the 2019/20 bushfires and bushfires before that, especially in regards to bushfire mitigation and fire fighter and community safety.

The author identified 21 main areas of concern in relation to bushfire firefighter safety in forested areas with minimal rates of prescribed burning in O'Donnell (2023), these are outlined below across a number of heading areas. The 21 concerns are outlined in the link below:

https://arr.news/2023/11/16/inadequate-firefighter-safety-in-south-east-australian-forests-john-odonnell/

Dense understorey fuels and dead timber fuels represent a major current and ongoing fire hazard across large number of areas across SE Australia. Future bushfires dense fuel loads and strata under bad weather and drought conditions will likely be of high intensity, high severity and in many long combustion durations, depending on the forest type, history, fuel load and weather on the day. This makes firefighting incredibly difficult and puts their safety at risk.

This is much worse than could be imagined, as the 2019/ 20 bushfire impacts occurred over extremely large contiguous areas, so repeat long burnfire runs will very likely occur again in the near future where dense regeneration and a lot of dead timber present.

Large dead trees at firefighting locations are often very dangerous, including at locations where trees alight are falling down around fire fighters. Firefighting in such situations is going to be very very difficult with these understorey fuels, standing trees above and a large number of logs on the ground. In addition, standing and fallen dead trees represent another major risk, including immediately beside major roads. This puts fire fighters and the travelling public at risk.

Worse still, is when key accesses are blocked by fallen trees, restricting access, egress or retreat.

The Bushfire Front (2025 web) document “Impacts of Bushfires” also outlines firefighter considerations in relation to bushfire safety.

Firefighter and community safety is a critical issue. Maximisation of safety, including the preservation of life, health, welfare management, is the foremost considerations for all responders and should be across all levels of the government. Quick and safe fire management is recognised as an important firefighting principle.

Setting up sound development/ town planning controls in regards to new developments in bushfire prone areas is an important issue. This includes setting up water supply dams and pipes, hydrants and overhead stand pipes for tankers and slip on units in areas both inside and outside towns is a critical component of this.

Assessment. Inadequate bushfire preparedness in relation to fire fighter safety, a major issue that the author believes needs considerable action.

3.11 Seasonal bushfire outlooks and bushfire risk management planning

Bushfire outlooks are well done in Australia. The current outlook for the 25/ 26 season in parts of SE Australia (western Victoria and Eastern S Australia) has increased risk of fire. However, noting the assessments above and especially in relation to low levels of mitigation, there are major fire risks across parts of SE Australia.

There are many cases of ineffective and generic bushfire risk management plans not effectively updated annually to address bad fire seasons.

Assessment. Inadequate bushfire preparedness across parts of SE Australia, considering the current outlook for the 25/ 26 season in parts of SE Australia, including western Victoria and Eastern S Australia, especially in relation to low levels of bushfire mitigation across SE Australian forested landscapes.

4 Conclusions

In the public interest, community interest, national interest and in the interests of fire fighter and community safety, the author has prepared this bushfire preparedness assessment across SE Australia, examining a series of bushfire preparedness assessment factors.

The author has undertaken this preparedness assessment in as briefly as possible assessment, but taking a broad look at bushfire preparedness across SE Australia.

The author is of the opinion that there is inadequate bushfire preparedness across SE Australia for many of the bushfire preparedness factors outlined above for the 2025/ 26 bushfire season, an accountability issue that needs to be seriously addressed and tackled.

Likely containability of bushfires, including on bad fire days, is an important outcome consideration of bushfire preparedness. This includes consideration factors such as fire history, fuel loads, contiguous fuel loads, fuel older than 6 years old, fuel strata, accesses, water supply, safe locations for firefighters, bushfire attack approaches and preparedness for large number of lightning strikes that

could overwhelm firefighting services. Bushfire containability is going to be extremely difficult across large parts of SE Australia on many fire days over coming months.

There are large opportunities for governments at all levels, government agencies and communities to address the bushfire preparedness issues identified above in the public interest, community interest, national interest and in the interests of fire fighter and community safety.

John O'Donnell

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