



Photo credit: Burnt Ironbark and stringybark Mottle Range Mar 22 © T.Bartlett

2. Executive summary

This independent panel's report examines the impacts of the 2019–20 bushfires on a wide range of forest-related values covered by the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs). It includes findings and a series of recommendations for consideration by both the Victorian and Australian governments.

2.1. Background

In accordance with the requirements of the Victorian RFAs, the Australian and Victorian governments commissioned a Major Event Review to assess the impacts of the 2019–20 bushfires on RFA matters, acknowledging the significant impacts the bushfires had on forests, biodiversity, forest industries and regional communities.¹ This report reviews the substantive impacts of the 2019–20 bushfires across Victoria's five RFA regions – East Gippsland, Gippsland, North East, West Victoria and Central Highlands.

Victoria's Black Summer bushfires commenced on 21 November 2019 with an estimated 60 fires across the state. The last major fire complex in East Gippsland was declared contained three months later on 27 February 2020, with more than 1.5 million ha burnt, including nearly 1.39 million ha of native forest or 18 per cent of Victoria's public native forests. The fires had a devastating impact on Victorian communities, infrastructure and environmental services, the economy, environment, cultural heritage and community assets. Tragically, these bushfires resulted in five deaths in Victoria.

1. The Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Victoria (September 2020) [Scoping Agreement for the Major Event Review to assess the impacts of the 2019–20 bushfires](#), the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Victoria, accessed 2 February 2021.

During the season, every Victorian RFA region was impacted by bushfires to varying extents. The most impacted by the bushfires was the East Gippsland RFA region (Figure 3), where over 67 per cent of the total area and 70 per cent of the forests were burnt. The East Gippsland fires² (covering East Gippsland and Gippsland RFAs) impacted many communities within the RFA regions – in particular, Mallacoota, Genoa, Cann River, Orbost, Goongerah, Wairewa, Sarsfield, Bruthen, Tambo Crossing, Swifts Creek, Omeo and Buchan. In all, more than 60,000 people were estimated to have evacuated from the East Gippsland and Hume regions.

The North East fires burnt more than 270,000 hectares of native forest and impacted on many communities in the Upper Murray and Ovens regions.

2.2. Independent Panel and scope of review

This Major Event Review was undertaken by an independent Panel between March 2021 and March 2022. The Panel comprises:

Dr Gillian Sparkes AM, Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability; Dr Tony Bartlett AFSM, independent forestry consultant; and Victorian Traditional Owner Katherine Mullett.

The Panel was tasked with investigating the impact of the 2019–20 bushfires, gathering and analysing a wide range of information and scientific data on the fires and their impacts as well as undertaking a comprehensive program of community and stakeholder consultation.

As required according to Victoria's RFAs and described in the Scoping Agreement,³ this Major Event Review considers:

- the operation of the five RFAs
- ecologically sustainable forest management
- the Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system
- the effective management and protection of Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES)
- harvest level
- the long-term stability of Victorian forests and forest industries.

2.3. Stakeholder consultation

Despite the challenges of COVID-19 restrictions, this report includes input and commentary from a wide range of stakeholders from local communities, Traditional Owners, environmental NGOs, industry and professional associations, academics, plantation owners, apiarists and local government. Traditional owner groups agreed to meet with the Panel and gave valuable feedback and depth to the report.

The Panel offered and held a series of open online consultation sessions for communities that were most impacted by the bushfires, including the regions of Mallacoota, Bairnsdale, Orbost, Omeo, Corryong, Myrtleford and East Gippsland. The public consultation process also involved written submissions, online surveys and 47 face-to-face engagement events. This information is included in the Appendices of this report.

2. DAWE and the State Government of Victoria (2021) [Victorian Regional Forest Agreement Major Event Review of the 2019–20 bushfires: Summary report: information and data to inform public consultation](#), DAWE and the State Government of Victoria, accessed 1 March 2022.

3. The Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Victoria (September 2020) [Scoping Agreement for the Major Event Review to assess the impacts of the 2019–20 bushfires](#), the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Victoria, accessed 2 February 2021.

The views and information provided were independently analysed and the key findings summarised and reported under six themes:

- regulations and role of the government
- local economies and communities
- protect, conserve and restore native forests
- destruction and loss of natural environment and biodiversity
- timber harvesting
- future of ecosystem services.

The Panel had briefings from affected local governments, Bushfire Recovery Victoria, Regional Development Victoria, Office of the Conservation Regulator, Hancock Victorian Plantations and VicForests. It also had briefings from the Country Fire Authority (CFA), Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) and some of DELWP's regional staff on both fire management planning and the management of bushfire suppression operations.

The Major Event Review takes into consideration a full spectrum of values and beliefs about forest management related to Victoria's RFAs. This report recognises the differing and often polarised views about ecologically sustainable forest management held across the diverse range of stakeholders that participated in the review process.

2.4. The long-term stability of forests

Victoria is one of the most fire-prone and fire-adapted regions of the world.⁴ Over millennia, fire has influenced the richness, composition and distribution of Victoria's ecosystems.

Around 1.39 million ha of state forests, parks and reserves were burnt in the 2019–20 bushfires across the East Gippsland, Gippsland and North East RFA regions.⁵ Importantly, a total of 683,555 ha or 45 per cent of the total fire extent across these three RFA regions was burnt at high severity. The bushfires impacted significantly on 78 per cent of Victoria's warm temperate rainforests and burnt about 88,000 ha of ash forests, of which about half was killed by these fires. The 2019–20 bushfires potentially have had a very significant impact on the extent of old growth forests in Eastern Victoria, with an estimation that there may have been a loss of 62,126 ha of the modelled old growth. This represents an additional 15 per cent decrease in Victoria's remaining old growth forests, which means that about 60 per cent of Victoria's old growth forests have been lost, predominantly as a result of severe bushfires, since 2000.

Victoria's privately-owned softwood and hardwood plantations were also significantly impacted by the 2019–20 bushfires, with a total of 8,354 ha worth an estimated \$75 million destroyed in the North East, East Gippsland and Western Victoria RFA regions. The increasing occurrence of bushfires impacting on plantations and the ongoing cumulative loss of plantation timber resources presents an escalating threat to the stability of wood processing industries in Victoria.

4. Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) (December 2019) Victoria, [Overview of Victoria's forest management system, DELWP](#), accessed 24 February 2022.

5. DAWE and the State Government of Victoria (2021) [Victorian Regional Forest Agreement Major Event Review of the 2019–20 bushfires: Summary report: information and data to inform public consultation](#), DAWE and the State Government of Victoria, accessed 1 March 2022.

The report's analysis also shows that over the past 20 years more than five per cent of Victoria's public land has been burnt multiple times by large bushfires, and all of this is in eastern Victoria. About 276,000 ha (6.3 per cent) of the public land in eastern Victoria has been burnt multiple times within 20 years.

Given the reported research on the impacts of major bushfires on forest stability in Victoria and the increasing proportion of the public forests that have been impacted multiple times by major bushfires within 20 years, the Panel considers that it is likely that the 2019–20 bushfires have resulted in a decline in the long-term stability of some forests within the East Gippsland, Gippsland and North East RFA regions. With climate change, the extent, frequency and intensity of bushfires is increasing. This has implications for the stability of Victoria's forests, most notably the ash forests, rainforests, alpine forests and a number of ecological vegetation classes that have limited natural distribution.

The long-term debate about the value and appropriateness of timber harvesting operations within Victoria's state forests continued to play out during this Major Event Review. The Scoping Agreement for the Major Event Review is very clear that the Major Event Review process will not open the Victorian RFAs up to renegotiation and that the Parties (i.e. the Victorian and Australian governments) are committed to ensuring that the obligations and commitments contained in the RFAs are delivered to ensure effective conservation, forest management and forest industry outcomes.

2.5. Active, adaptive and accountable forest management

Victoria's forest management system⁶ comprises a complex suite of legislation, policy, regulatory instruments, plans, management standards, programs and monitoring arrangements that regulate and support ecologically sustainable forest management and the protection and management of environmental and heritage values.

The Major Event Review Panel assessed the bushfire impacts on various RFA values and uses as they related to the Scoping Agreement categories, drawing on the available data and stakeholder feedback. The frequent exposure to intense bushfires is presenting a major and increasing threat to the effective operation of Victoria's RFAs, to the stability of the forests and the achievement of ecologically sustainable forest management. There is ongoing loss of old growth forests and ongoing decline of forest-dependent threatened species and communities. These bushfires had significant impacts on four different sectors (i.e. native timber industries, plantation industries, apiculture and tourism-recreation) within the forest industries, the ongoing provision of ecosystem services as well as on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage sites.

Victoria demonstrated its capacity to implement active and adaptive actions following the 2019–20 bushfires. These actions included the application of the precautionary principle in relation to timber harvesting in bushfire-affected areas, the implementation of enhanced immediate protection measures for threatened species and the ash forest restoration program, that treated 11,587 ha of fire-affected young ash forests within state forests and national parks. Each of these are good examples of strategies implemented to reduce the impacts from major bushfires.

6. Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) (December 2019) Victoria, [Overview of Victoria's forest management system, DELWP](#), accessed 24 February 2022.

These bushfires have highlighted the need for greater adoption of active and adaptive forest management practices. Almost all forest and park management plans covering the fire-affected forests were prepared in the 1990s or early 2000s and they do not adequately address the impacts from repeated severe bushfires. There is a strong case to be made for further refinement and better integration of Victoria's forest and fire management planning strategies in a way that puts into practice the intent of the RFAs to promote active and adaptive management of forests, address the decline in forest resilience, improve the protection of rural and regional communities and ensure that both Traditional Owner matters and environmental values are adequately managed and conserved.

2.6. Recommendations

This Panel has prepared a suite of 37 recommendations, identifying remedial actions for the Victorian and Australian governments to address the impacts of the bushfires on RFA regions. The recommendations cover many RFA matters including old growth forests, listed species and communities, commercial native forestry, plantations, apiculture, forest and fire management and Traditional Owner matters. The recommendations are designed to work within the provisions of the existing RFAs and to support other important initiatives.

2.7. Traditional Owner engagement

This Major Event Review included an extensive program of engagement with representatives of Traditional Owner groups from across Victoria. Eight Traditional Owner groups with legal recognition and eight groups that do not currently have legal recognition met with the Panel and gave valuable feedback and depth to the review process and content of the report. The Panel also engaged with relevant Victorian Traditional Owner co-governance groups/forums (e.g. Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations) and Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations. During the engagement process a total of 21 online meetings and one face-to-face meeting were held. A comprehensive report on the Traditional Owner engagement process is included in the Appendices of this report.

This major event brought up years of trauma for the Traditional Owners. Aboriginal Victorians have deep spiritual connection and cultural obligation to care for Country and hold thousands of years of intimate knowledge for Country.

During the engagement process, Traditional Owners spoke to the Panel about nine main areas of concern:

- engagement process
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management
- economic impacts
- access to Country
- healing of Country and culture
- implementation of Traditional Owner clauses
- cultural burning
- current condition of Country
- timber harvesting.

The Major Event Review consultation process found that many Traditional Owner groups feel very strongly that the current system for considering Aboriginal cultural heritage values during bushfire suppression operations needs to be improved and that there are significant disparities among Incident Control Centres on whether and how Traditional Owners are included in conversations, planning and operational decision-making. They also indicated that the impacts from the bushfires were exacerbated as they were not supported to access Country to heal or to heal Country, immediately post-fire.

There was support from stakeholders across a broad spectrum of sectors, communities and interests that the Panel engaged with for increased Traditional Owner involvement in caring for Country and the management of Victorian forests. The Panel considers that Victoria has the policy frameworks, architecture, strategies and authenticity to give life to the ambitions of the RFAs for Traditional Owner rights and partnership in forest management.

2.8. Knowledge gaps

The Panel was provided with data from DELWP and the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment (DAWE) that had been compiled for the Assessment of matters pertaining to the extension of the Victorian RFAs, from regular reporting functions of the Parties and through surveys conducted following the bushfires. The Panel used this data to consider the environmental aspects of the Scoping Agreement. The Panel also received qualitative data from community members about the environmental impacts of the fires and logging operations. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Panel was unable to conduct field trips and personally verify data provided. In addition to quantitative data supplied by the Parties, the Panel received data from other agencies, academics, industry bodies and businesses that was used in the Panel's deliberations.

There were two components of the Major Event Review scope for which the Panel did not have access to sufficient data to fully assess the impacts of the bushfires: Harvest Level and CAR reserve system.

The Panel notes the outcome of Victoria's Harvest Level Review, which implies that the 2019–20 bushfires will not have impacted on Victoria's ability to continue to supply the levels of ash and mixed species sawlogs committed to under the Victorian Forestry Plan. The Panel did not participate in Victoria's Harvest Level Review.

The Panel made a partial assessment of the bushfire impacts on the CAR reserve system, but this was limited by the availability of data on the impact of the bushfires on important CAR reserve values such as old growth forests. The Panel acknowledges that a full analysis of the current status of old growth forest following the 2019–20 bushfires with field verifications has not been completed.

A key outcome of the Major Event Review is the importance of developing new perspectives on the gathering of science and data – moving away from 'issues-based' and 'reactive' data gathering towards a 'forest systems' approach. The RFAs are centred on forest systems and the whole forest ecosystem, so system-level data is required to get the full picture of the health and sustainability of Victorian RFA regions.

The Panel would like to acknowledge and thank all contributors to this report. Thank you to Parties from DAWE, DELWP, the Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR), VicForests, staff from the office of the Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability and to all the institutions and agencies that provided briefings and supplied the Panel with a wide range of information and scientific data.

3. Key recommendations

The Panel makes the following recommendations.

3.1 CAR reserve system

- 1 That the Parties validate the efficacy of the current CAR reserve system for listed species and communities in the next scheduled five-yearly review using information from the completed threatened species and communities risk assessments (scheduled for completion in 2023).
- 2 That the Victorian Government develop an action plan to expand protection areas for the seven ecological vegetation classes identified in this report as being under 60 per cent reserve status and having more than 50 per cent of their extent impacted by fire.
- 3 That the Victorian Government apply the outcomes of the research on Geometric Mean Abundance or more suitable alternative measure as an indicator of ecosystem resilience based on the Fire Analysis Module for Ecological values (FAME) currently being used by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. This indicator would provide a foundation for determining resilience of ecological vegetation classes under the CAR reserve system and inform fire management strategies and interventions that enhance resilience.

3.2 Matters of National Environmental Significance

3.2.1 World Heritage places

No recommendations were made.

3.2.2 National Heritage places

- 4 That the Parties research the impact of more frequent and repeated bushfires on threatened species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) and the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic) that have limited habitat distribution within the Australian Alps National Parks and reserves in Victoria.

3.2.3 Listed species and communities

- 5 That the Parties address knowledge and data gaps relating to threatened species listed under either the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) or the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic) for species that are identified as 'data deficient'. Effort should be focused on (a) species known to exist within fire-affected areas and (b) the 21 species that are listed as Critically Endangered in the FFG Act.
- 6 That the Victorian Government produce an outcomes report to review the effectiveness of the interim protection measures and the zoning system changes for listed species and communities.

- 7 That the Victorian Government prioritise completion of outstanding threatened species and communities risk assessments for the five Regional Forest Agreement regions and activate existing legislative tools (e.g. Critical Habitat Determinations) under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic), and that the Victorian Government make public the rationale for choosing specific legislative tools to protect listed species and communities.

3.3 Other environment and heritage values

3.3.1 Old growth forests

- 8 That the Victorian Government implement strategies to inform and enhance the protection of remnant old growth forest from the impact of bushfires. These strategies should include:
- researching the impact (spatial and temporal) of more frequent high-severity bushfires on remaining old growth forests
 - publicly releasing field verification results for the modelled old growth forest extent that has been impacted by high-severity fires in mixed species forests and potentially exposed to timber harvesting
 - implementing a mix of existing and innovative fire management practices that specifically focus on reducing bushfire risks to priority areas of old growth within each Regional Forest Agreement region.

- 9 That DELWP improves the resolution of the field identification assessment tool for forest patches to better identify remnant patches of old growth forest.

3.3.2. Wilderness area

No recommendations are made.

3.3.3. Historic heritage values

- 10 That, for future Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) reviews, the Parties develop baseline information for historic heritage values by RFA region and provide future review panels with information on impacts and rehabilitation plans.

3.3.4. Ecosystem services

- 11 That the Parties report on post-fire productivity and carbon-stock recovery of fire-tolerant forests after high-severity fires. The report should:
- consider the impact of changing fire regimes and future climate predictions
 - include analysis of short-interval high-severity fires
 - test current assumptions of forest carbon neutrality after bushfires in the National Greenhouse Accounts.

3.4. Forest industries

3.4.1. Harvest level

No recommendations are made.

3.4.2. Commercial native forestry

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That the Parties examine the progress of expanding forest industries (e.g. clause 53A in the East Gippsland Regional Forest Agreement) and supporting communities to transition away from native timber harvesting, as per the Regional Forest Agreements (RFA), at the next scheduled five-yearly review of the RFAs in 2025.

13

That the Victorian Government identifies the strategies it will implement to maintain or enhance the sequestration and storage of carbon in forests and further investigate the mechanical thinning of dense regrowth forests, as a strategy to restore forest landscapes to a more open forest structure in order to enhance the resilience of forests to more frequent occurrence of severe bushfires.

3.4.3. Plantations

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That the Parties commission an independent analysis of the impacts of the 2019–20 bushfires on wood flows to the plantation-based industries in Victoria, as well as the feasibility of and impediments to more domestic use of existing plantation timber, to enable these matters to be further considered in the next five-yearly review of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements.

15

That the Victorian Government, in consultation with plantation businesses, improve the integration of forest industry brigades in bushfire suppression operations; identify options for reducing the risk to plantation assets from bushfires that originate on public land; and, where necessary, update the zoning system in the bushfire management strategies.

3.4.4. Apiculture

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That the Victorian Government urgently review the current arrangements for consulting the apiculture industry regarding planned timber harvesting operations and give active consideration to amending the silvicultural prescriptions that apply to timber harvesting of mixed species forests within the ranges of licensed apiary sites, in order to improve the floral reproductive capacity of the logged forests.

3.4.5. Tourism and recreation

No recommendations are made.

3.5. Other values

3.5.1. Economic impacts

- 17 That the Parties invest in the preparation of data on the current and expected changes by 2030 to social and economic benefits derived from forests, for consideration at the next five-yearly review.

3.5.2. Social impacts

- 18 That the Parties strengthen activities with all Traditional Owners within each Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) region to identify culturally significant species and cultural landscapes, as a component of Matters of Traditional Owner Significance, and have these included within RFA monitoring and reporting systems and considered in each five-yearly review of the RFAs.

3.6. Traditional Owners

- 19 That the Victorian Government enhance the implementation of the Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy (Victorian Traditional Owners, 2021) as a principal means of bridging Regional Forest Agreement commitments on Indigenous (Aboriginal) heritage, Traditional Owner rights and partnerships with the application of traditional knowledge and practices, such as cultural burning and forest gardening, in healing and managing Country.

- 20 That the Victorian Government review the forest management system and the existing fire management instructions and standard operating procedures to improve the management and protection of Traditional Owner identified living natural and biocultural values and uses. In future, all Traditional Owners, including Traditional Owner Groups without formal recognition, should be actively involved in site management decisions before, during and after fire-suppression operations, both in the field and in incident management teams. This includes ensuring that all Traditional Owners are notified of all bushfires on Country (in real time), to ensure awareness and ability to provide active input.

- 21 That the Victorian Government urgently implement, as a remedial action, a program of on-ground condition assessment with Traditional Owners for all known cultural sites impacted by the 2019–20 Black Summer fires. Future management advice and protection measures need to be put in place with consultation with Traditional Owners to protect, conserve and prevent future harm to these sites where possible.

- 22 That the Australian Government revitalise the 2005 National Indigenous Forestry Strategy to provide joint-funded programs that support Traditional Owners to manage Country, develop economic and employment opportunities from Regional Forest Agreement forests and partner with forest industry businesses that support self-determination of economic development opportunities.

- 23 That the Victorian Government establish an appropriate level of base funding to be provided to all Traditional Owner groups, including Traditional Owner Groups without formal recognition, to enable them to engage more effectively in the implementation of the Traditional Owner provisions under the modernised Regional Forest Agreements and support their ability to participate in consultation processes under Victoria's forest management system.

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That the Victorian Government at a regional level, in partnership with each Traditional Owner group and Parks Victoria, develop Regional Forest Agreement implementation plans for each Traditional Owner group, to ensure regular and planned engagement with Traditional Owners to:

- i. ensure oversight of the implementation of the relevant (Traditional Owner) clauses in the RFA
- ii. monitor the implementation of the government-accepted Major Event Review recommendations.

3.7. Ecologically sustainable forest management

3.7.1. Impacts on the implementation of ecologically sustainable forest management

No recommendations are made.

3.7.2. Forest management system

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That the Victorian Government improve the integration of zoning systems within the forest management plans, national park management plans and bushfire management strategies. This process should include coordinated revisions and an improved articulation of the nature of active management strategies required for each zone, to reduce bushfire risk and support improved resilience and recovery of forests and their associated ecological values.

3.7.3. Previously regenerated forests

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That the Parties undertake a study of the impacts of the 2019–20 bushfires on the regenerating mixed species trials within the former Silvicultural Systems Project at Cabbage Tree Creek, to improve knowledge about how the different silvicultural systems respond to severe bushfires.

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That the Victorian Government identify any finalised coupes where subsequently regeneration has failed and implement remediation to restore the coupes to their natural floristic composition. The progress should be assessed by the Parties at the next five-yearly review in 2025.

28

That the Victorian Government assess the regeneration status of mixed species forests that have been regenerated in the past 20 years and were subject to high-severity fire during the 2019–20 bushfires. This assessment should consider both the condition of the burnt regrowth and the implications for the requirement to maintain natural floristic composition on these sites. The outcomes from this assessment, together with any remedial programs that are implemented, should be reviewed by the Parties in the next five-yearly review in 2025.

3.7.4. Long-term stability of forests

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That the Parties commit to a comprehensive, long-term research and monitoring program to develop a better understanding of the impacts of repeated short-interval severe bushfires on the long-term stability of forest ecosystems.

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That the Victorian Government maintain and potentially expand its capacity to implement remedial regeneration strategies in sensitive forest ecosystems across all public land tenures. This requires processes to quickly and accurately determine the extent of impacts following major events such as bushfires, as well as maintaining the required technical knowledge, operational capacity and sufficient seed stocks of appropriate species and provenance.

3.7.5. Integrated forest and fire management

- 31 That the Parties develop an ongoing joint funding program to provide resources and capacity for active forest management in the Regional Forest Agreement regions, reflecting the legislative responsibilities of the Parties to protect and manage forest values under a changing climate.
- 32 That the Victorian Government enhance its support for the implementation of the Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy by working closely with all Traditional Owner groups to empower them to reintroduce cultural burning practices, and provide increased resources to Traditional Owner groups to integrate knowledge of how fire knowledge holders traditionally managed Country and build capacity and capability for improved implementation of cultural burning and cultural practices.
- 33 That the Victorian Government increase the number of jobs available for Traditional Owners within forest land management agencies, to allow more Traditional Owners to live and work on Country and have active roles in the management of native forests.
- 34 That the Victorian Government expand an active and adaptive management approach to scale up the implementation of ecological burning in public forests. Further research and development should be undertaken on how to better model reductions in risks to key environmental assets from the implementation of fuel management and ecological burning activities.
- 35 That the Victorian Government develop appropriate metrics for identifying landscape-level trends in biodiversity as part of its monitoring and reporting of ecosystem resilience and also include data on maintenance of strategic access to forests in its annual Managing Victoria's Bushfire Risk: Fuel Management Report.

3.8. Operation of Regional Forest Agreements

- That, to benefit the operation of future Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) Major Event Reviews, the Parties:
- 36
- i. Commence each review within six months of a major event, preceded by a detailed program of surveys and assembly of information relevant to all the matters to be assessed by the panel
 - ii. Ensure that the summary report and the detailed datasets used to produce that report are available at the time the independent Panel commences its work
 - iii. Ensure that the scoping agreement clearly defines the panel's role in assessing each of the matters to be assessed as listed in the RFA provisions
 - iv. Have access to appropriate data on impacts on CAR reserve values and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage values
 - v. Consider the impacts of the major event on listed species and communities across all land tenures regardless of the potential impact from forestry operations
 - vi. Determine how the independent Major Event Review Panel fulfills the RFA requirement that it assesses the impacts of the major event at harvest level.
- 37 That, in considering the findings and recommendations from the Major Event Review, the Parties consider how the package of Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) provisions and the components of Victoria's forest management system can be improved to provide enhanced resilience for the wide range of RFA forest values that are being severely impacted by repeated severe bushfires.