



STUART GRIMLEY MP

Member for Western Victoria
State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party

MEDIA RELEASE



Friday 7th February 2020

Grimley Pushes for Increase to Indigenous Burning Practices

State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party Stuart Grimley has asked the State Government to incorporate Indigenous burning practices into the state's fire management.

Mr Grimley asked the Environment Minister in Parliament if the Andrews Government is "considering including Indigenous burn-off and land management practices further in Victoria?"

He also asked about the extent of the consultation the Victorian State Government has undertaken with Traditional Owners with regards to land management practices.

Mr Grimley drew on knowledge from his earlier life as a principal in a remote Western Australian Indigenous community and a recent visit to the Northern Territory when asking the Environment Minister to consider the expansion.

Indigenous burning generally incorporates cool, controlled flames in a circle shape or 'checkerboard' rather than large, hot flames but traditional owners may alter the approach based on the landscape and vegetation.

Mr Grimley vouches for the techniques which allows wildlife the opportunity to flee, local flora to be rejuvenated, protect habitats of endangered animals especially and of course, to prevent future fire risk.

The Member for Western Victoria – like all Victorians – was devastated by the 2019/20 fire season, which is still threatening lives, homes and wildlife and as a result, can't understand why the State Government isn't looking at changing the way it back-burns.

Through asking the Government to increase Indigenous burning practices, Mr Grimley built on a question asked by Party colleague Tania Maxwell, about the Government not reaching fuel load reduction targets as recommended following the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires. The questions response was due 27 November yet has not been received as at 7 February 2020.

In his speech to Parliament on Wednesday, Mr Grimley noted a statement from the Emergency Services Minister which said Indigenous communities own the intellectual property attributed to burning off techniques. However in response Mr Grimley stated that Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous peoples are "crying out for their land to be saved".

There is currently some use of Indigenous burning practices within Fire Forest Management and other land management bodies in Victoria, but this is on a small scale and not widely incorporated.



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Quotes Attributable to Stuart Grimley MP:

“The fire season of 2019/20 has been devastating and now we need to look at other ways to reduce the impact of fire on the state.

Indigenous burning practices have been used for tens of thousands of years so it’s difficult for me to understand why the State Government haven’t committed to implementing them further.

I spent years teaching in a remote Indigenous community and upon a recent trip to Northern Territory I spoke to elders who couldn’t understand why these practices were being disregarded.

Despite these techniques being intellectual property of the Indigenous peoples, there are also Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous Victorians calling out for land to be saved and preserved. And this is one way to do just that.

Greater public awareness regarding fuel loading should have been provided to ‘at risk’ members of country Victoria last year. Minister D’Ambrosio should have responded to my colleagues question last year about releasing fuel load maps and increasing transparency of fire risk.”

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