

I have lived in the Whipstick Forest north of Bendigo for more than 30 years. This is a box-ironbark forest that has NEVER had a large major bushfire mainly because the vegetation does not burn readily.

I am greatly concerned about the miss information given to the public by the DSE and CFA about the threat of fires in this region. All our major fires occur in grasslands but it is the forests that are being burnt for fuel reduction by the authorities. There is little or no effort or joint efforts to cleanup weedy grassy blocks in or around Bendigo even though only 3 years ago fires burnt to within 3 kms of the Bendigo CBD.

It is very distressing to see vast areas of our local Greater Bendigo National Park burn and probably be destroyed permanently in many ways because these forests are not fire tolerant to the same extent as other Vic forests. It is a great shame for the public to believe the forest fires in this area should be feared more than grass fires.

In my area (opposite the GB National Park) we have a VPO Overlay to protect significant trees but my neighbours continually cut them down believing they are protecting themselves from fires. Council allow this to happen by largely ignoring the issue when they are supposed to be the compliance authority. Council staff seem to have had little training in these matters and often act and make ill informed decisions alone.

On extreme weather days trail bikes ride off road in the GB National Park. Surely trail bikes should be banned from use on such days.

Also I have noted that during 'Clean Up Australia Day' works on the local roadside, there are dozens of cigarette butts along the side of the main road near the west boundary of the GB National Park. Banning smoking in cars would seem a sensible restriction especially in rural areas.

New housing estates must be better planned so that our national Parks do not have to be destroyed in any way to protect people who get scared about living next to the forest. There needs to be a public awareness campaign to encourage people to move to a town or city centre if they are scared of fire, and that they should not expect the authorities to rescue them if a fire does threaten their home. Living in the bush has consequences that people need to take personal responsibility for.

Thank you for an opportunity to make a submission. i would be happy to talk further to someone about these matters...and the matter of possible arson and this council's lack of ability to deal appropriately with such threats.

Vanessa Richardson