

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 289
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Environment Standards Division (ESD)
Topic: Planned burn referrals numbers
Hansard Page: 28
Question Date: 04 March 2016
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Rice asked:

Senator RICE: I do not know how many referrals you have. If we could have on notice what the response to that referral has been—

Mr Knudson: Could I just clarify, though, that in most instances what we are going to try to do is work with the state agency. Remember, the trigger is that you are likely to have a significant impact, so quite often we will have discussions with private sector proponents, state governments et cetera to work with them so that they are comfortable that they are not going to have a significant impact and therefore do not need to refer even in the first instance, because it is a self-assessment.

Senator RICE: Yes. So, on that determination of whether it will have a significant impact, you say you have that process in place for South Australia but not the other states at the moment. So South Australia does not require surveys to be done for threatened species?

Mr Knudson: On the specifics of the strategic assessment, what I would suggest is that I think it is probably best to come back and talk through the very specific provisions through a question on notice on how it deals with doing surveying and what sort of mitigation and/or avoidance measures they would put in place for dealing with impacts on matters of national environmental significance—because, as I understand it, that is your specific question.

Answer:

The South Australian Government *Fire Management Environmental Assessment and Management Procedure, November 2014* Policy which was strategically assessed and endorsed under part 10 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) requires, as a component of the Fire Management Planning Process, field surveys for matters of national environmental significance to be conducted. In addition to the surveys, the following key sources of data must be reviewed:

- The EPBC Act Protected Matter Search Tool
- EPBC Act Recovery Plans
- EPBC Act approved Conservation Advices
- EPBC Act Significant Impact Guidelines
- Interested and known stakeholders

Should a matter of national environmental significance be identified, the endorsed Policy clearly articulates a range of mitigation activities that include but are not limited to:

- An alternate strategy/method to reduce the risk to a matter of national environmental significance
- Mechanical and/or chemical treatments
- Additional management activities to reduce the risk to a matter of national environmental significance
- Undertaking intensive fuel management (slashing, weed removal etc)
- Creating a buffer area in bushland at the urban fringe of a conservation zone
- Post-fire weed and feral animal control
- Community education

For further information please visit the departments website at;

<http://www.environment.gov.au/protection/assessments/strategic/sa-fire-management>