

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

**Question No:** 292  
**Hearing:** Additional Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 1  
**Programme:** Environment Standards Division (ESD)  
**Topic:** Referral surveys  
**Hansard Page:** 29  
**Question Date:** 04 March 2016  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Rice asked:**

**Senator RICE:** Mr Gaddes, with some of the referrals that have been made, have you required surveys to be done through those referral processes?

**Mr Gaddes:** My area of the business is not the referrals area. I look at the people that are unregulated before they take the action, and we try to encourage them and work with them to enter the regulatory spectrum—the scheme—and refer. Then, at the end of it, my projects would monitor the conditions. So I do not have anything before me that would allow me to provide any more detail.

**Senator RICE:** Perhaps you could provide on notice the details of the referral and what conditions were asked for, until now, before we got the strategic assessments. What is the time line for expecting to have similar processes operational in other states?

**Answer:**

Most features in the Australian environment have some fire tolerance, which means that one-off impacts from fire don't usually have a significant impact on matters protected under national environment law.

The Department engages with state fire management agencies to ensure they are well informed about the requirements of national environment law and seek that potential impacts from prescribed burns are minimised. For these reasons, prescribed burns on a small-scale have not typically required that surveys be undertaken, or that conditions be met, before proceeding.

The cumulative impact of multiple prescribed burns in the same area or large-scale prescribed burns are more likely to have a significant impact on matters protected under national environment law. This is why strategic assessments, which can better capture multiple or large-scale activity, have been pursued as the best way of regulating fire management.

For example the strategic assessment for fire management in South Australia requires a range of surveys and planning be undertaken, and conditions be met, as part of their approach. Details are available at:

[http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/firemanagement/Fire\\_and\\_the\\_Environment/strategic-assessment](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/firemanagement/Fire_and_the_Environment/strategic-assessment)