



### **YWG Member Concerns - Increased Bushfire Risk to Upper Yarra Valley caused by Yellingbo Conservation Area re-afforestation program.**

The Yarra Valley is considered to be the second worst region in the world for bushfires. The Victorian Government recognizes much of the Upper Yarra Valley is considered severe to extreme bushfire risk.

The CFA, DELWP and DEPI also recognize in many documents, strategy plans, assessments and letters that adding higher fuel loads or more vegetation to the region, will increase fire risk.

The Yarra Waterways Group (YWG) believes the revegetation of thousands of hectares of public land (in the populated areas of the Yarra Valley) will threaten the safety of our community and our environment.

The YWG believes creating wide corridors of dense bushland (hundreds of meters wide in areas) will change the current riparian environment from a minor risk to a major threat. These forest corridors will connect many major towns and (heavily vegetated) residential areas with the fire prone Warburton State Forest, Yarra Ranges National Park, Powelltown State Forest, Dandenong Ranges National Park, Kurth Kiln Regional Park, Conservation Reserves and Private Bushland.

These forest corridors will be planted along the Yarra River, Little Yarra River, Woori Yallock Creek, Badger Creek, Don River, Dee River, Britannia Creek, Hoddles Creek, McCrea Creek, Menzies Creek, Emerald Creek and Cockatoo Creek.

These forest corridors also run alongside or very close to many major roads in the area. During a bushfire emergency (e.g. Black Saturday) these escape routes for residents will be at greater risk of being impacted by fire and these roads closed by authorities.

**Width of the proposed corridors is of Major Concern** to the YWG, over half the area to be re-afforested is much wider than the standard 20/30 meter riparian corridor. Widths between 100m – 300m is common along the Yarra River and some tributaries, please refer to YWG Bushfire Risk Map 2

YWG does not have confidence that DELWP can maintain the Crown Reserves during any transition stage from pasture to forest. This will result in an **immediate fire threat** with the development of long grass and weeds in revegetated areas.



The Victorian Government has also failed to provide the following to the community or our members:

1. Detailed specific fire management plans for the entire YCA indicating the location and dimensions of fire breaks along the river reserves.
2. Location of access for fire-fighting helicopters to safely draw water, rather than using private dams around the area.
3. Details on how CFA units will obtain access to the revegetated corridors to fight *wick, lineal and spot bushfires in the revegetated areas.*
4. Details of annual fire management programs and how they conform to all Royal Commission recommendations.

### **Increase in insurance premiums**

Much of our region already has significant insurance premiums on assets due to bushfire management overlays (BMO & WMO) due to severe bushfire risk. The re-forestation of these river corridors will put considerable upward pressure on insurance premiums for the entire Upper Yarra Valley.