

**Kelly Crosthwaite
Regional Director
Port Phillip Region
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Private Bag 15
Ferntree Gully Delivery centre 3156
DX12005**

Dear Kelly,

Thank you for hosting the joint meeting between the Yarra Waterways Committee and yourselves, and for the light supper which was appreciated by everyone.

Our committee met last night and discussed the outcomes of the meeting and the minutes provided by Victoria, which were also appreciated.

The Bushfire issue is the primary concern of both the committee and our community which as you know, is very fire conscious. As you mentioned during the meeting " Warburton has been identified by DELWP as having the highest bushfire level in the State". DELWP has already acknowledged that " There is the potential for bushfire risk to increase due to the creation of the new reserve" [Yellingbo Conservation Area Implementation brochure distributed in September 2016.] I hope you would agree that our concerns are justified.

Bearing in mind Minister D'Ambrosio's statements last thursday on the Channel 10 News [12.10.2016] " That Bushfire Safety and preparedness is at the forefront of our governments mind ", **our committee decided to request that you approach the Minister to place a moratorium on the implementation of the Yellingbo Investigation until the site specific fire management plan you committed to at our joint meeting is produced and approved.**

We believe it is totally reasonable to remind the Minister of the recommendations of the Bushfire Royal Commission into the 2009 Bushfires and the Statements of subsequent Premiers of the State of Victoria " **that the path forward that unites all Victorians in one commitment to do all we can to preserve Human Life in the face of the threat of Bushfire"**

As you must be aware the implementation so far, primarily carried out by, and funded by Melbourne Water's healthy waterways stream frontage management program has been carried out without any consideration of the risk of bushfires, its only aim being to fence off as many of the waterways crown reserves as possible and plant out every metre with native vegetation. No firebreaks or even the potential threat of Lineal fires have been considered or discussed with the adjacent landowners, and in the majority of cases no suitable tracks have been provided within the reserves for Fire Management Vehicles, nor any access for pumping by the CFA and DELWP tankers from the waterways, now inaccessible due to the dense plantings.

We have provided you with ample evidence to illustrate that the accepted 200 metre defendable space criteria between crown reserves and houses and assets is

dramatically reduced by the implementation process. As you are also aware this effectively increases the BAL rating on these properties.

The potential for residents not to be able to rebuild, or not to be able to finance a new home after a bushfire when their properties are within the Bushfire Management Overlay [Most of our Shire] which was prepared by your department, compounds the problem for residents, as we are well aware of how many properties burnt out during the 2009 Bushfires, have not been able to rebuild.

Newspaper reports in the Melbourne papers are already predicting a "potentially devastating bushfire season this summer in the Central and Western areas of Victoria" [Herald Sun 8.10.2016], prompting our committee to seek your urgent assistance, and that of your Minister to delay any further implementation of the Yellingbo Investigation, together with Melbourne waters program until such time as the Fire Management Plans, site specific as promised at our joint meeting, are produced and communicated to the communities being put at risk by the current implementation process.

History unfortunately also reminds us that Bushfires in California [number one in the world for Bushfires, we are rated number 2.] usually foreshadow a bad fire season in Victoria. The Herald Sun [July 16 2016 Page 22 'Freight train fire wipes out homes'] reported on the early ferocious bushfires which were devastating large areas of California. A warning we should not ignore.

Please remember that over 20,000 people reside in the Upper Yarra Valley and that it also recognised as one of the most important tourist and recreation destinations in the State as well as the source of most of Melbourne's drinking water..

We look forward to your reply.

Your faithfully,

Rick Houlihan
Chairman
Yarra Waterways Group.

8 October 2016.