



**VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA DISTRICT COUNCIL 22**

Secretary: *Bill Stockdale (Tatura)*

30<sup>th</sup>. August 2015,

Mr David O'Byrne,  
Fire Services Review,  
Level 30,  
121 Exhibition Street,  
**Melbourne, VIC 3000.**

**Re: Fire Services Review**

**Submission by: Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria  
District 22 Council**

**Provisions of Burning Off under Summary Offences Act 1966**

**Introduction:**

District 22 VFBV Council represents over 75 Volunteer Fire Brigades & Groups in the Shires of Moira, Strathbogie & City of Greater Shepparton in Northern Victoria.

**Relevant Term of Reference:**

*The interoperability across fire agencies responsible for preventing and suppressing all types of fire in Victoria, whether on public or private land.*

**Recommendation:**

That the CFA liaise with Vicpol in seeking a state-wide Memorandum of Understanding leading to stronger awareness, control & enforcement with regard to Section 11 of the Summary Offences Act 1966 - Lighting of Fires in the Open Air, incorporating:

1. A "zero tolerance" approach to enforcement;
2. Initiating a strong public awareness campaign;
3. Increasing penalties;

**Background:**

At the General meeting of the District 22 VFBV Council held on 6th. August 2015, a submission was received from Tatura Fire Brigade relating to burn-off controls outside the fire danger period.



District Chairperson: John Dunn (Violet Town)

This was as a result of the Brigade attending numerous unattended burn-offs immediately outside the Fire Danger period where dry conditions still prevailed & the fire had impacted on neighbors or the road reserve.

These incidents raise the question of what controls apply under these circumstances & how they being managed & enforced.

As administration of the Act relates to matters contained in the Terms of Reference under the Fire Services Review, and further that Volunteer Fire Brigades are largely impacted, this issue is submitted for consideration.

Part 11 of the Summary Offences Act 1966 provides for the control of the lighting of fires in the open air where the provisions of the Country Fire Authority Act 1958 outside the Fire Danger Period do not apply.

We understand that the Act is governed by the police with charges heard in the Magistrates Court.

Whilst the Act provides for specific offences & conditions relating to burning off, these do not take into account weather conditions, CFA or Brigade notification, traffic control, fuel hazard or allowance for additional conditions.

As climatic conditions are resulting in extended dry conditions, it is apparent that these controls are no longer adequate & are resulting in increasing time-consuming turnouts by volunteer Brigades & are a concern to the public generally.

If you require any further information or clarification, please contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully,

Bill Stockdale  
**Secretary,**  
**VFBV District 22 Council**

