

Appendix A:

Submissions and comments

We have consulted with the department and CFA, and we considered their views when reaching our review conclusions. As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, we gave a draft copy of this report, or relevant extracts, to those agencies and asked for their submissions and comments.

Responsibility for the accuracy, fairness and balance of those comments rests solely with the relevant agency head.

Responses received

Agency	Page
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	A-2
Country Fire Authority	A-5



Department of Energy, Environment
and Climate Action

PO Box 500, East Melbourne,
Victoria 8002 Australia

SEC-260400379

Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
Level 31, 35 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Auditor-General

Proposed report – Follow up – Reducing Bushfire Risk

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Victorian Auditor-General's Office's (VAGO) proposed report – *Follow up – Reducing Bushfire Risk*, received on 30 April 2026.

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) recognises the need for accurately acquitting completion of actions in response to audit recommendations and is continually improving the quality of the acquittal assessments.

DEECA is strongly committed to reducing bushfire risk in Victoria, and I thank you and your team for the work they have done to identify opportunities to improve. Attached is a management action plan for the department, which sets out the work DEECA will take to strengthen the state's approach to bushfire risk management.

DEECA accepts or accepts in part the 4 recommendations detailed in the report and commits to the actions outlined in the enclosed action plan.

I thank your staff for their work and look forward to a continued productive relationship with your office.

Yours sincerely

Kate Houghton PSM
Secretary

14/05/2026



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DEECA Action Plan

Action plan to address recommendations from VAGO's report: *Follow up: Reducing Bushfire Risks*

No.	VAGO recommendation	Acceptance	Agreed management actions	Target completion date
1	DEECA strengthen assurance processes for completing actions in response to our recommendations from all engagements to ensure progress attestations are reliable. This includes strengthening their Risk and Audit Committee's role in monitoring delivery.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part <input type="checkbox"/> In principle	DEECA will formalise its strengthened assurance processes which document the basis of action verification assessments and provide the Risk and Audit Committee transparency on whether the risk identified in an audit has been addressed.	31 January 2027
2	In collaboration with the Country Fire Authority, develop performance metrics and methodologies to quantify mechanical, small scale and linear fuel treatments' impacts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part <input type="checkbox"/> In principle	DEECA will work with the broader bushfire management sector to develop and provide options for performance metrics and methodologies to quantify the impacts of mechanical, small scale and linear fuel treatments. This will be done by progressing relevant elements of the <i>Roadmap for Future Bushfire Risk Management Targets</i> , including developing options for metrics suitable for roadsides and across land tenures beyond DEECA-managed public land.	31 July 2029
3	Improve data collection techniques to ensure fuel hazard assessments' accuracy and consistency	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In part <input type="checkbox"/> In principle	DEECA will improve the accuracy and consistency of fuel hazard assessments by reviewing current approaches and updating the fuel hazard assessment manual to strengthen data collection techniques. Australian fire agencies are currently developing and trialling alternative bushfire simulators to inform bushfire management decisions. DEECA will consider priorities for improvement of simulator inputs, including fuel hazard	30 May 2029

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No. VAGO recommendation	Acceptance	Agreed management actions	Target completion date
<p>Explore how fuel hazard assessments can help verify fuel accumulation curves</p>	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In part <input type="checkbox"/> In principle </p>	<p>assessments and their use in verifying fuel accumulation curves, in this context.</p> <p>DEECA will develop a statewide strategic plan for fuel breaks, using a strategic planning process to determine existing nominated and new fuel breaks for inclusion. Through this plan, fuel breaks with high operational value will be considered for inclusion, though fuel break establishment is subject to funding.</p>	<p>30 May 2027</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>DEECA action plan Follow up: Reducing Bushfire Risks</p>		



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Patron: Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria

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Mr Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
Victorian Auditor-General's Office

14 May 2026

Ref: PC26-035

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Greaves,

RE: Proposed report – Follow-up of Reducing Bushfire Risks

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed report, *Follow-up of Reducing Bushfire Risks*.

I have considered the report's findings and recommendations as they relate to Country Fire Authority (CFA), and appreciate the clarity provided in your correspondence of 30 April, including the acquittal of our earlier feedback.

We acknowledge the progress made since the 2020 audit and recognise the opportunities identified to strengthen assurance over progress reporting and to improve the way the impacts of different treatment types are measured and communicated.

CFA is committed to addressing the matters identified within the scope of its responsibilities and will continue to work collaboratively with relevant agency partners, including the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, to support ongoing improvement.

In accordance with your request, CFA's agreed management actions and timeframes are set out in the attached action plan.

Should you require any further information, please contact CFA Chief Risk Officer, Rebecca Holding, via [REDACTED].

I trust the above is helpful and thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed report.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Greg Leach', is written over a horizontal line.

Greg Leach AFSM
Chief Executive Officer

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Country Fire Authority action plan to address recommendations from Follow-up of Reducing Bushfire Risks

No.	VAGO recommendation	Acceptance	Agreed management actions	Target completion date
1	<p>Strengthen assurance processes for completing actions in response to our recommendations from all engagements to ensure progress attestations are reliable.</p> <p>This includes strengthening their Risk and Audit Committee's role in monitoring delivery</p>	<p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part <input type="checkbox"/> In principle </p>	<p>CFA agrees with this management action.</p> <p>A number of improvements to VAGO audit oversight have already been implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> from FY25, all VAGO audit actions are tracked in Protecht and require formal executive sign-off to close; from FY26, VAGO performance reporting is a standing agenda item at the Audit and Finance Committee. <p>To further strengthen accountability, CFA will include dedicated reporting against VAGO performance audits on an ongoing basis.</p>	<p>Complete and ongoing</p>

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