



WILDFLOWER SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA (Inc)

# Media Release

---

## Perup Prescribed burn

**Perth, 12 May 2021:** The Wildflower Society of Western Australia (WSWA) is concerned about the reported impacts of a prescribed burn carried out by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) in the southern Jarrah forest adjacent to Perup Nature Reserve.

Perup and its surrounding forests are important habitat for rare numbats (walpurti) and for more than 600 species of native plants, some of which are rare and threatened.

There are conflicting reports on the effect of the fire on the numbats and native vegetation.

The fire was reported to be very hot, killing mature trees and completely burning fallen logs. Hollow logs are used by numbats as dens for shelter and protection, and fallen rotten logs house the termites on which numbats feed. The numbats in turn break up the logs and recycle nutrients, helping maintain a healthy forest.

Dr Kevin Thiele, President of the Wildflower Society of WA, says that controversy about the burn and its impacts has not been adequately addressed by the Department, its Minister or the Premier.

“WA’s Premier Mark McGowan says there is no evidence numbats were killed or affected by the prescribed burn. But this is not the same as saying there is evidence that numbats were not affected” said Dr Thiele.

WA Environment Minister Amber-Jade Sanderson said DBCA had advised that there were areas where the intensity of the fire was higher than planned and that the impact on the local numbat population is still being determined. The Minister informed the media that an internal audit of the fire will be completed this month.

Dr Thiele called on the government to ensure that the full internal audit is released to the public.

“If the prescribed burn was well-managed and numbats and the vegetation they depend on was not severely impacted, then the government has nothing to fear from releasing the full report. If the burn was not well-managed and damage has occurred, the government is obligated to make the report public, to ensure that this never happens again” said Dr Thiele.

The Wildflower Society strongly urges the Premier's and Minister's offices to address the following questions:

- were any numbats killed because of the fire, and, if so, how many?
- were adequate steps taken by DBCA to protect numbat dens and habitat?
- was the fire 'catastrophic' for the forests, native vegetation and numbats of the area?
- if the fire was hotter than planned and damage to the vegetation and fauna in the area has occurred, what steps will be taken to rectify the situation?

Media attention on the Perup burn has also raised broader questions around the government's prescribed burning strategy in the south-west.

The Wildflower Society joins calls from other environment groups for an independent review of the government's prescribed burning program in Western Australia and its benefits and risks to the environment.

Contacts:

Dr Kevin Thiele, President, 0407 509 778

Mr Brett Loney, Chair Conservation Subcommittee, 0417 977 548