

News

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Forestry Tasmania burns planned for harvest areas across state

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FORESTRY Tasmania plans to set 150 burns during autumn aimed at regenerating forests after harvest.

The burn-offs will dovetail with a program of fuel reduction burns promised by the incoming Liberal Government in the wake of the Dunalley bushfires in 2013.

Burns have been contentious in recent years, with complaints that the smoke causes asthma and other respiration problems.

Forestry Tasmania said its 150 burns would range in size from a couple of hectares to approximately 100ha and would be undertaken in coupes across the state's permanent timber production zone.

It told the *Mercury* that autumn was the safest time to do regeneration burns and it also stimulated the germination of seeds.

Forestry Tasmania will also be involved with fuel reduction burns across the state as part of a larger, inter-agency fuel reduction burning program, expected to be detailed soon.

The Liberals promised fuel reduction burns of about 60,000ha a year.

However, in December the promise was modified to about 27,000ha this year with the 60,000 figure becoming a longer-term target.

'Our target is to increase the fuel reduction burning program to a target of 60,000 hectares of ... burns per year,' a government spokeswoman said in December.

'The best available advice tells us this is the best way to reduce fire risk. 'The program will ramp up to this target over the next few years, with this year's target being 27,000 hectares.'

Tasmania has some 55,000 asthma sufferers who have complained about smoke on still autumn days.

The Tasmanian Bushfires Inquiry report said conflicting interests had been the cause of a lack of progress in preventing and mitigating bushfire risk through fuel reduction burns.

The Inquiry found that the situation was complicated by several factors:

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The limited number of days when conditions were right for fuel reduction burns;

The risk of such fires escaping and damaging property or impacting on air quality and public health; and

Competing land uses and legal requirements.

Forestry Tasmania will publish the planned burn program on its website and also notify neighbours and stakeholders.

