

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Environment portfolio**

**Question No:** 15  
**Hearing:** Additional Estimates  
**Outcome:** Outcome 1  
**Programme:** Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division (WHM)  
**Topic:** Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area – Bushfires in Tasmania  
**Hansard Page:** 113  
**Question Date:** 08 February 2016  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Back asked:**

**Senator BACK:** We have been focusing on response and recovery; I want to take you back to prevention. In the case of major bushfires, given the tragic circumstances that my colleague has quite rightly addressed and given that prevention can only be achieved by some means of fuel reduction, what action or policy, if any, does the department have with the Tasmanian department, in this case, or anybody else, to achieve fuel reduction in these highly-prized areas about which we are speaking?

**Mr Oxley:** The Director of National Parks, Sally Barnes, earlier in the day addressed a similar question in relation to her own arrangements and how they varied from jurisdiction—

**Senator BACK:** With respect, I have to interrupt you: my questions to her were more about response. I am going back now to prevention.

**Mr Oxley:** I was going to come to that. In terms of the preparedness for fire within the Tasmanian wilderness, there are, within the whole parks network in Tasmania—a large part of which is the wilderness—regional fire management plans. An important component of all of their work is around activities, such as controlled burning of areas, to protect assets—and here I am talking about environmental assets. Where we have areas that are highly fire sensitive, for example, they will do some controlled burning work in a way to protect those assets—not within those assets, but in order to buffer those assets—so active management of fire is part of the management tool kit used by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service.

**Senator BACK:** Perhaps you can take it on notice for me and give me some idea of what areas, both in terms of hectares and percentages, have been the subject of that.

**Mr Oxley:** I am happy to do that, with the observation that all of that work will be focused on the fire management regime necessary in order to sustain the environmental values of the place.

**Senator BACK:** Sure. I understand.

**Answer:**

The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service's *'Evaluation report: Fire management in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area'* (November 2015) states that from 2003-04 to 2012-13 planned burns were undertaken on 21 913.7 hectares, or 1.38 per cent, of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

This information is publicly available from:

<http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=5957#Evaluation>.