

# MEDIA RELEASE



South-West Forests Defence Foundation Inc

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## New Publication Highlights Severe Health and Biodiversity Impacts of WA's Ineffective Prescribed Burning

The South-West Forests Defence Foundation Inc. (SFDF) today launched its publication, "Prescribed Burning Fact Sheets – August 2024" ([Prescribed Burning Fact Sheets](https://southwestforestsdefence.org/prescribed-burning/) <https://southwestforestsdefence.org/prescribed-burning/>).

The Fact Sheets provide details of the scientific research which shows that prescribed burning as it is currently practised in the south-west forest regions does not give effective protection from wildfires, is hazardous to people's health and is causing irreversible loss of biodiversity.

Launching the comprehensive document, SFDF's President, Ian Maley, said that the meticulously compiled research challenged the general belief that burning is effective in reducing the risk to life and property from out-of-control wildfires, as well as the misconception that it is harmless. He called for an independent scientific review of prescribed burning (as recommended by the EPA) and an increased commitment to rapid detection and suppression of fires at their source, as a safer and more effective way of protecting life and property.

"The Western Australian Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) carries out an industrial scale prescribed burning program that targets an area of 200,000 hectares annually across the south-west forest regions," Mr Maley said.

"While the burns are underway, it is only through the smoke drifting across where most of us live that people are aware that the bush is being burnt. The community tolerates the severe health impacts of this air pollution and the real risk to life and property from escapes because of a misguided belief that prescribed burning is effective in reducing the risk of wildfire and has little impact on biodiversity.

"We are told that fire is a natural part of our environment and that flora and fauna are adapted to it, with the inference that this repetitive burning causes no long-term harm.

"This is not true. Frequent, repetitive prescribed burns, many indistinguishable in intensity from wildfires, cause severe ecosystem damage, pushing plants and animals closer to extinction. Since the beginning of this century, 51 plant species and 24 animal species have been added to the south-west's threatened species lists.

"Unfortunately, the general population, which has almost no first-hand experience or knowledge, of fire in the natural environment, does not realise the true scale and impact of this burning. SFDF has compiled this comprehensive and concise publication, containing information, images and references, to enable everyone to assess the facts about this important issue for themselves," he said.

In September 2023, the Environmental Protection Authority recommended a review under the 1986 EPA Act to be undertaken by a panel of independent scientists with expertise in the relevant areas. The review should identify, as the Fact Sheets do, the latest science and knowledge on the impacts of prescribed burning and bushfire mitigation on biodiversity, human health (air quality) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the context of climate change.

Based on the facts as presented in the Fact Sheets, SFDF contends that rapid detection and suppression provide the best protection from wildfires.

\*\*\* ENDS \*\*\* Media Contact: Gareth Widger 0419 918 272

Email: [admin@southwestforestsdefence.org](mailto:admin@southwestforestsdefence.org)  
Website: <https://southwestforestsdefence.org>  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SFDFinc/>

QR Code Link:  
[Prescribed Burning Fact Sheets](https://southwestforestsdefence.org/prescribed-burning/)



**South-West Forests Defence Foundation Inc. - Helping Western Australia's Native Forests Since 1975**

South-West Forests Defence Foundation Inc. (SFDF) is a not-for-profit voluntary group that has strived for almost five decades to ensure better management and protection of the forests of the south-west region of Western Australia.

It was formed in 1975, the year the woodchip industry began after the state government of Charles Court passed legislation to allow the forests in the south-west to be exploited for woodchips. At the same time, the forests of the Darling Scarp were being strip mined for bauxite. SFDF continues to vigorously, independently and critically examine all facets of the management of Western Australia's forests.