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Media Release

ENVIRONMENT SPRINGS INTO FIRE RECOVERY

Despite the intensity of the February bushfires, natural recovery and regeneration is taking place across Victoria and will be more noticeable during spring.

Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) Executive Director of Biodiversity Kimberley Dripps said some residents have been concerned about the slow progress of the regeneration but spring will demonstrate the resilience of our native species after fires.

“The experience following previous fires is that nature takes care of itself with only limited human intervention needed. We are monitoring the recovery of our ecosystems as well as conducting recovery projects targeting species which were threatened by the February fires but most of our native species will recover on their own,” Ms Dripps said.

“We are already finding seedlings of the nationally endangered Buxton Gum *Eucalyptus crenulata* in a severely fire affected area at Buxton, along with vigorous resprouting of shoots.”

“Grass Tree flowering spikes and orchids are emerging at Kinglake and will attract moths and other pollinators when in flower this spring. Dead trees are a natural component of bushland and although some trees were killed by the fires, they provide valuable wildlife habitat including hollows and cracks for shelter, and perching sites.”

“It is important that communities allow local plants in bushland areas to regenerate naturally and avoid the urge to replant. Naturally regenerated plants are the most appropriate species for their location. They offer the best environment for all aspects of faunal recovery from insects to birds and mammals.”

“Residents can play an important part in recovery by reporting weeds in their area. After a major fire, weeds can thrive and we will be working to minimise the opportunity for pest plants to take hold on public land.”

“Deciding whether a new plant is a weed or a native can be difficult, and people should work with their local environmental support groups and Parks Victoria.”

“Residents can also contribute by keeping cats and dogs under control and avoiding risks associated with moving soil which may be contaminated with pathogens.”

“DSE and Parks Victoria are intervening to support recovery where required, by running predator control programs to protect threatened species including Southern Brown Bandicoot, Broad-toothed Rat, New Holland Mouse and Brush-tailed Phascogale, relocating the threatened Barred Galaxias fish from fire affected waterways and planting cuttings of the threatened Shiny Nematolepis plant to suitable new locations.

“Flora and fauna assessments are ongoing across the fire area to ensure accurate knowledge of the effect of the bushfires on native species.”

For more information go to www.dse.vic.gov.au/fireecology or call 136 186.

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