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MEDIA RELEASE – Save Our Strathbogie Forest Inc.

Planned burns not exempt from Federal environment law

Save our Strathbogie Forest President Bertram Lobert expressed the group’s disappointment at the decision handed down by the Federal Court on Tuesday, April 2nd, which will permit four planned burns in Strathbogie Forest to proceed. The group believes these burns threaten one of the healthiest populations of the nationally endangered Southern Greater Glider and will further degrade the outstanding values of the Strathbogie Forest.

“We are dismayed that despite all the scientific evidence presented in court about the impacts of these planned burns on the Southern Greater Glider and its habitat, the government has been given the green light to proceed. This case highlights the failings of the existing laws to help protect nationally threatened species and we urge the Federal Government to clarify and strengthen the law as part of its current review of environment law”, Mr Lobert said.

The group was heartened, however, by Justice Horan’s ruling that planned burns are not exempt from the requirements of Federal environment laws. “We take this as a significant win for the environment. It’s now clear that planned burns are subject to the requirements of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, contrary to the State’s claim. This decision now makes it clear that the State of Victoria and other jurisdictions have to meet a higher bar of environmental standard before they can burn”.

On the matter of the four planned burns at the center of the case in the Strathbogie Forest, Mr Lobert said, “We are discussing options with our legal team and we believe there may be grounds for appealing the decision to not grant an injunction to stop the four burns. There is an existential crisis facing nature, here in Victoria and all around the globe and whilst we can do little about what’s happening on other continents, our group is determined to fight for the Strathbogie Forest as a refuge for the Southern Greater Glider, for the raft of animals plants and fungi that depend on the forests and for the people of Victoria.”

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