



EAST GIPPSLAND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY TOOLKIT



we asked, we listened & we all learned

LAND USE/ BUSHFIRE

A combined community, DSE and CFA group meet regularly to create a win/win solution for the community's planned burning program.

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The Goongerah valley lies in the heart of East Gippsland's forests. Members of the community and local staff from the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) were concerned about getting agreement on DSE's planned burning program for Goongerah's community protection and for ecological purposes.

Some members of the Goongerah CFA were worried that properties were at risk and some were so opposed they would not take part in any planned burning operations.

In 2006, talks began between staff, led by Fire Management Officer, Anthony 'Coogee' Reed, and community members, who agreed to work together to plan the local burn program.

Everyone was invited to a meeting to discuss the planned burning program, its effects on fuel reduction and on the environment locally. The community had major concerns over potential ecological impacts. It was agreed that by working together, the community could help determine how, when and if the burns would proceed. Many community members were not convinced of the need to burn, but they still took part in the discussions.

A combined group has developed which utilises a range of resources to assess vegetation types, age classes and the role of fire in their regeneration. The community has learned about fire behaviour and burn planning, while DSE officers have learned more about the community's concerns, the ecology of the forest understory, and have benefited from listening to local knowledge.

According to 'Coogee' Reed: "What we have now is a group of people who have common goals for community and environmental protection purposes. We all have different points of view, but when you listen as a group and don't ignore, when you ask and don't tell, that is when you will find common ground – and that is one of the first steps towards a win/win solution."

