

Media Release

9 April 2018 | Media contact: Brittany Evans 0447 389 726

Firefighters contain deliberately lit fires in the Upper Murray

Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) is investigating two deliberately lit fires in the Wabba Wilderness Park, near Corryong, during the weekend.

Both fires, totalling almost 14-hectares in size, are believed to have been deliberately lit.

FFMVic Upper Murray District Manager, Aaron Kennedy said, “The fires were allegedly deliberately lit, between late Friday night to early Saturday morning, along Gibb Range Road.”

“Twenty-four firefighters, two dozers, an excavator and four aircraft were called in to help bring the fires under control.”

“Fire investigators and Victoria Police are treating the fires as suspicious.”

“Crews patrolling planned burns and undertaking campfire checks in the area, were forced to be redeployed to fight the fires.”

“To have vital resources, including aircraft, deployed to a deliberately lit fire reduces our capacity to respond to bushfires elsewhere in the region and state.”

“Deployment of resources to deliberately lit fires have a significant impact on our autumn planned burning program, which is extremely disappointing.”

“Planned burns play an important role in reducing the spread and intensity of fires, making it safer for firefighters to limit the impact on communities and the environment.”

“Vigorous planning and checks are undertaken before we ignite a burn.”

“We work closely with the Bureau of Meteorology to assess weather conditions – such as humidity, temperature and wind speed – and will only carry out burns when conditions are suitable.”

Under the *Forests Act 1958*, it is an indictable offence to deliberately light a bushfire, or to place flammable material in a position where a bushfire is likely to be caused. The maximum penalty for this offence is imprisonment.

Anyone with any information about these fires is urged to call DELWP on 136 186 or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.