

4 July 2017

The Director
Environmental Protection Authority
Level 8 The Atrium
168 St Georges Terrace
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Sir /Madam,

Fires in the Kimberley

I wish to draw your attention to the increased aerial incendiary burning now taking place in the Kimberley and request that you take action to have this practice reduced substantially. Millions of hectares of country are now being destroyed every year by this burning.

In 2006, your Department under the directorship of Dr W. Cox, - undertook a survey of burning practices up here, concluding – as people were telling you – that there was indeed too much burning taking place. Your report was tabled in Parliament in 2007. Since then no action has been forthcoming on this report's recommendations.

Now – with Commonwealth money for Carbon Trading being given to the Kimberley Land Council, the burning and country destroyed, has increased dramatically from 2007.

The attached Appendix 1 is a printout from NAFI of the fire scars overlaid on Google Earth in the Kimberley from January to June 22nd 2017. It can be readily seen how much area has already been burnt this year. KLC's burning is now in addition to the increased burning of DPAW and DFES. Please note that these fire scars are from deliberate burning only and NOT from wildfires or campers' fires. Some scars are from Station burns.

Appendix 2 shows the fire scars by year from 2001 to 2016. The situation is disturbing to say the least.

Much of this burning is being done in totally remote and uninhabited areas where there are no people or infrastructure to protect. Appendix 3 shows the aftermath of the burning. With the regularity of this burning the Kimberley Landscape is being denuded more and more each year.

Whilst all these entities sell the practice to Government as 'controlled burns' to reduce late season fires, there is nothing 'controlled' about aerial drops. They were started in May this year and are still being carried out. This is our dry season and windiest time of the year. We have now had constant SE winds for over 6 weeks. Incendiaries are dropped in the mornings and fires will burn for weeks at a time, destroying huge areas of country.

This practice focuses only on burning and is not taking into account the overall affect it is having on the environment. It is also contrary to the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1986, the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1950, the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act of 1999, the Soil and Land Conservation Act of 1945, the Soil and Land Conservation Regulation of 1992 and the Conservation and Land Management Act of 1985, which prevent pre-emptive burning and soil degradation except under strict management practices.

I have lived in the Kimberley for 37 years and walk a lot of the country each year. I have seen the landscapes change from dense woodland with understory and cover, to no understory, no dead wood and very little wildlife. Photos in Appendix 4 show this change.

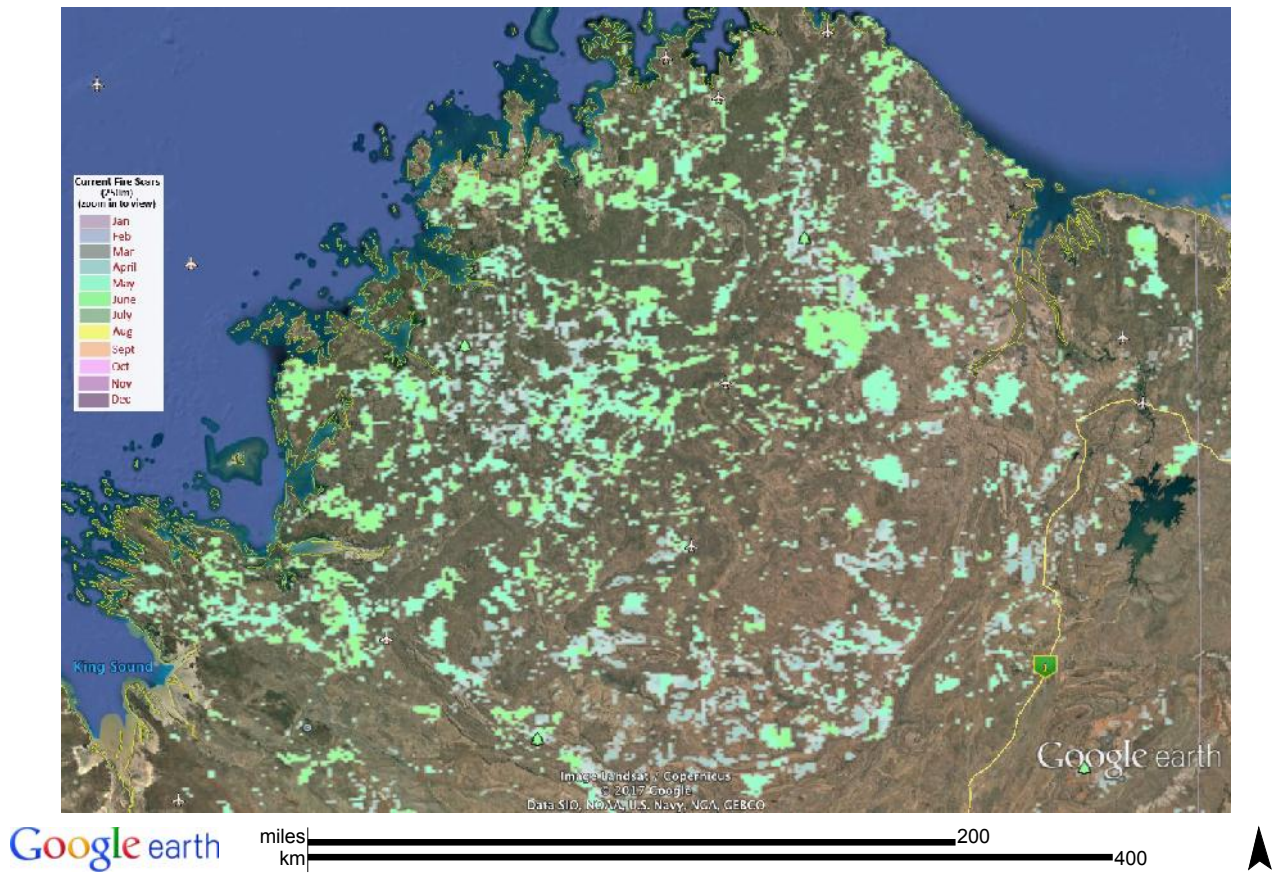
Could you please advise me if your Department would investigate this uncontrolled aerial burning and have the practice cease?

Yours Faithfully,

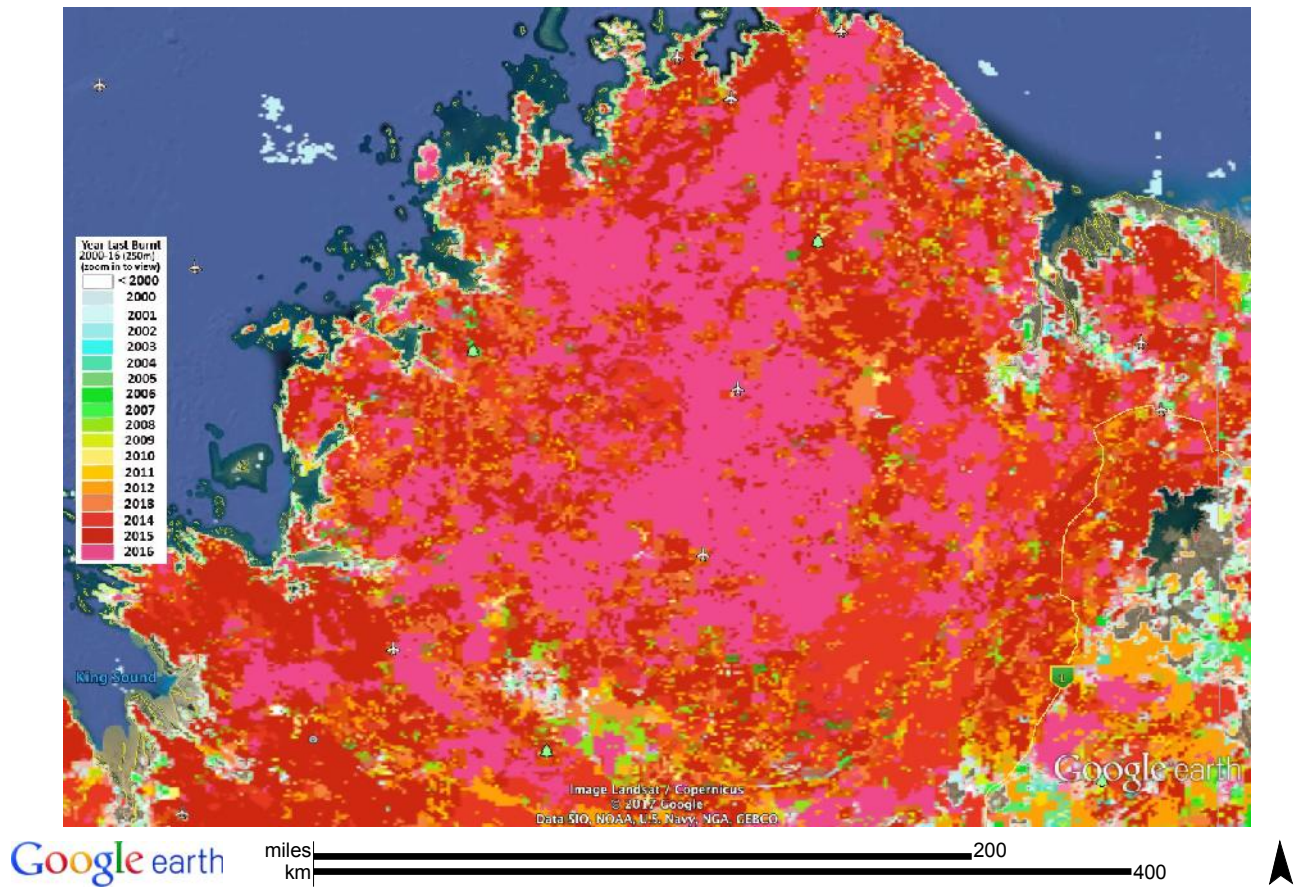
John Storey

Cc Minister for the Environment - Hon Stephen N Dawson MLC

APPENDIX 1 - FIRE SCARS JANUARY TO JUNE 2017



APPENDIX 2 - FIRE SCARS BY YEAR



APPENDIX 3. WHAT IS LEFT AFTER THESE BURNS.





APPENDIX 4

WHAT THE COUNTRY USED TO BE LIKE - GOOD UNDER STORY



WHAT THE COUNTRY LOOKS LIKE NOW,- NO UNDERSTORY, NO DEAD WOOD, NO NEW TREE GROWTH

