

## Call to re-introduce alpine grazing trial heard

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RENEWED calls for alpine grazing trials have been answered by the Victorian Government this week.

A permit has been lodged with the Federal Government for a three-year cattle grazing trial in the Wonnangatta Valley, with environment minister Greg Hunt to have the final say on the issue.

A spokesperson for Environment Minister Ryan Smith said the referral was sent on Monday and they await the decision.

"The referral relates to a small section of the Alpine National Park, the Wonnangatta Valley which was previously grazed for more than 170 years," the spokesperson said.

"The Victorian Government is honouring its commitment to land management and reducing the risk of bushfire.

"The experience and expertise of the cattlemen gathered during 170 years should be included in the way we manage our land and bushfire reduction." The new proposal would see 60 head of cattle being reintroduced into the area which sits between Mount Buller, the Great Dividing Range and the Snowy River.

This would be a major downs ize from the 400-head trial blocked by then Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke in 2010.

Victorian Farmers Federation Omeo branch president and mountain cattleman Simon Turner has called on Minister Hunt to fast-track the approval.

"We are hoping that common sense prevails and that the ecological future of our alpine regions can be protected," he said.

"The former Labor Government's refusal to revive alpine grazing has damaged the alps not only has it left the area bushfire prone, it has risked wiping out a 200-year-old tradition." "Since alpine grazing came to an end, fuel loads have reached dangerous levels and valleys have been choked with weeds.

"The re-introduction of grazing will help re-establish native grasslands in the Wonnangatta Valley." Victorian National Parks Association spokesperson Phil Ingamells said moving the proposed trial to the lower altitude area of Wonnangatta Valley was an admission by the Napthine Government that cattle don't belong on the high plains.

"His government has already spent many hundreds of thousands of dollars in staff time, lawyers and media blitzes trying to justify its attempts to return cattle to the national park, when there is abundant evidence that cattle grazing in the alps is not effective in reducing bushfires, and does considerable harm to the high country," he said.

"There are far greater priorities for spending precious fire funding, such as designing and building effective fire shelters." JAMIE.LEE OLDFIELD