

SUBMISSION RE THE IMPACT ON AGRICULTURAL SECTOR OF VEGETATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT POLICIES, REGULATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS.

My name is Lex Lawrie and I was involved in the grazing industry for 70 years. I was an active member of the Rural Fire Brigade for 54 years from the age of 16 and held the position of 1st Officer for a number of years.

During my years as a grazier we conducted an annual burn to control weeds and sucker regrowth. This also kept the fuel load of debris under control. We also maintained our firebreaks of 3.5m on an annual basis. Neighbours were always notified of any burn and often did likewise at the same time.

The Rural Fire Brigade was totally voluntary and all monies raised were used within the local Brigade. Crews were composed of many age groups, with the younger ones learning from the experience of the older ones. No diplomas, courses etc were necessary as these members had the experience of years of hard, varied work on the land. This system had proved itself.

With the current Vegetation and Land Clearing Laws, property owners who were able to control their environment for the betterment of the land and native wildlife are now hamstrung by red tape introduced by "experts" who may have book knowledge but no experience and who are unwilling to listen.

Most fires can be controlled by back burning which entails two fire fronts burning towards each other. This enables a fairly wide firebreak to be established before the main front arrives. Maybe the impact of the recent fires would have been lessened had this method been implemented

The factors contributing to fire risk mainly stem from increased fuel load caused by these laws. Parks and Wildlife sections are underfunded and unable to police their burning off regime as they once did.

1. During my management period as a grazier, I burned once per year. This seemed to give some control over emerging sucker regrowth and helped to some extent with insect pests.
2. Most fires could be controlled by back burning which entails two fire fronts burning towards each other. This enables a fairly wide firebreak to be established before the main front arrives.
3. The economic advantages are as above (1). It became progressively more difficult to keep to a pastoral programme once government restrictions were implemented.
4. If neighbours co-operated there were very few incidents.
5. The factors contributing to fire risk mainly stem from increased fuel load caused by not being able to burn at a time of your choice and government restrictions.
6. The Parks and Wildlife sections are underfunded and unable to police their burning off regime.