

The Secretary
Senate Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir or Madam

RE: INQUIRY INTO BUSH FIRES IN AUSTRALIA

We, the undersigned wish to bring to the attention of the committee the following matters we believe are pertinent to the inquiry into bush fires in Australia.

1. Do not compare Western Australia with Victoria. Our hazard reduction is far better than any that is carried out in Victoria.

Despite this situation, more protective burning needs to be carried out in WA. Over a number of years, C.A.L.M. and subsequently DEC. have been battling for money to carry out their full hazard reduction program. In past years, pressure from the "Green Mafia" initiated the splitting of CAL.M. into two and forming the Forests Products Commission and the Department of Environment and Conservation, thus further reducing the workforce available for prescribed burning.

2. Bushfire vehicles need to be designed to be efficient in the area and on the terrain where they will be used. The "one size fits all" policy does not work to the best degree of efficiency in a number of areas.

The Victorian style vehicle that was brought to WA has its application in a limited number of situations, and has proved to be quite inefficient in a number of places. e.g. in sand plain areas and in hilly country. A point to note is that Bush Fire vehicles do rarely operate from sealed or unsealed roads, their work is on tracks, bulldozed breaks or no roads at all.

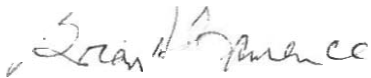
3. **COMPLIANCE WITH FIRE BREAK ORDERS.**
WA has legislative powers to ensure mitigation of fire hazards and enforce imposition of firebreaks around boundaries and around buildings and structures. These powers are necessary and help protect the community immensely against

severe fires. However, local law enforcement officers regularly report offenders that continually ignore these requirements and put their neighbours and community as a whole at risk. Failure to comply with these legislative requirements should negate insurance in the event of bushfire damage.

4. In the event of loss of house and / or possessions, there is usually a fund raised to assist people who have suffered loss. Unfortunately when funds are distributed, all those people who have suffered loss receive equal treatment irrespective of whether they have complied with legislative requirements. This is unfair to those who have complied with regulations.
5. Issues have arisen where other Acts of parliament have taken precedence over the Bush Fires Act in WA. An example of this is the Native Title Act, which has prevented fire mitigation works being carried out on public land without considerable cost for an interpretive study into aboriginal heritage. Whilst respecting the history indigenous Australians, including their traditional use of fire, public safety should not be compromised when such work has been identified as being needed to be carried out.

We have briefly outlined the following issues for your consideration. Please feel free to contact us if you would like any further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely



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