

Ian McCallan.

15-4-13.

Senate committee; The impacts on health of air quality in Australia.

I apologise for this late submission, we have only just found out about this senate enquiry. I understand this will probably not be accepted as a submission, but would like to request that a copy of this letter be given to all the senators on this enquiry.

We live in far north Queensland and we have an extremely serious air pollution problem that affects the health and well being of everyone in this area.

The Queensland government has recently greatly extended deliberate forest burning, giving National Parks, QF&R and private landholder's, via the system of fire permits, free rein to carry out extensive burning of Queensland forests. These fires now occur continuously for about nine months of the year.

Due to the prevailing South Easterly winds, the whole of the central and northern part of the coastal regions now has serious smoke pollution for a great deal of this time. To give you an impression of the scale of destruction, source of dangerous pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, in Cape York, approximately 85% of the forests are burnt annually. In our area we often have to put up with dense smoke from the destruction of forests on Hinchinbrook Island, for weeks at a time.

We believe this is an extremely serious threat to the health and safety of everyone in these areas of Queensland.

The decisions to continually burn our forest lies in the hands of a tiny number of individuals who have created a totally useless industry for themselves, this industry employs them. We have approached the Queensland minister for National Parks who we found to be totally ignorant of the situation and heavily defended his department heads.

This cavalier approach to the continual destruction of forests by continually burning them, often every year, is based on the theory of "Aboriginal Traditional Burning"

This theory has recently been proved to be entirely false after extensive research into the history of fire throughout Australia covering the past 70k years, discovered that forest fires increased dramatically following European settlement, a situation which has continued to this day.

The study could find no indication or change to the natural incidence of fire following Aboriginal settlement of Australia. The research results were published in 2011 and have been completely ignored.

Deliberate burning is also carried out on so called safety grounds. However the incidence of deaths from forest fires in Queensland currently averages slightly less than one death every four years.

This clearly shows that the risks associated with creating huge quantities of highly toxic and dangerous pollution, far exceed any theoretical reduction in forest fires.

The simple fact that prescribed hazard reduction burning has never been properly tested shows the clumsy and amateurish approach to a risk that clearly is not a problem.

As you are probably aware, biomass smoke is almost entirely made up of Pm.2.5 particulates. This is one of the most dangerous types of airborne pollution. The affect of continuously breathing these toxic substances for months at a time every year, are well known, but are completely ignored by the Queensland government minister who considers it to be a slight but necessary nuisance.

Deliberately lit forest fires are now by far the largest source of dangerous airborne pollution in Queensland. The same situation exists in Western Australia and in the NT.

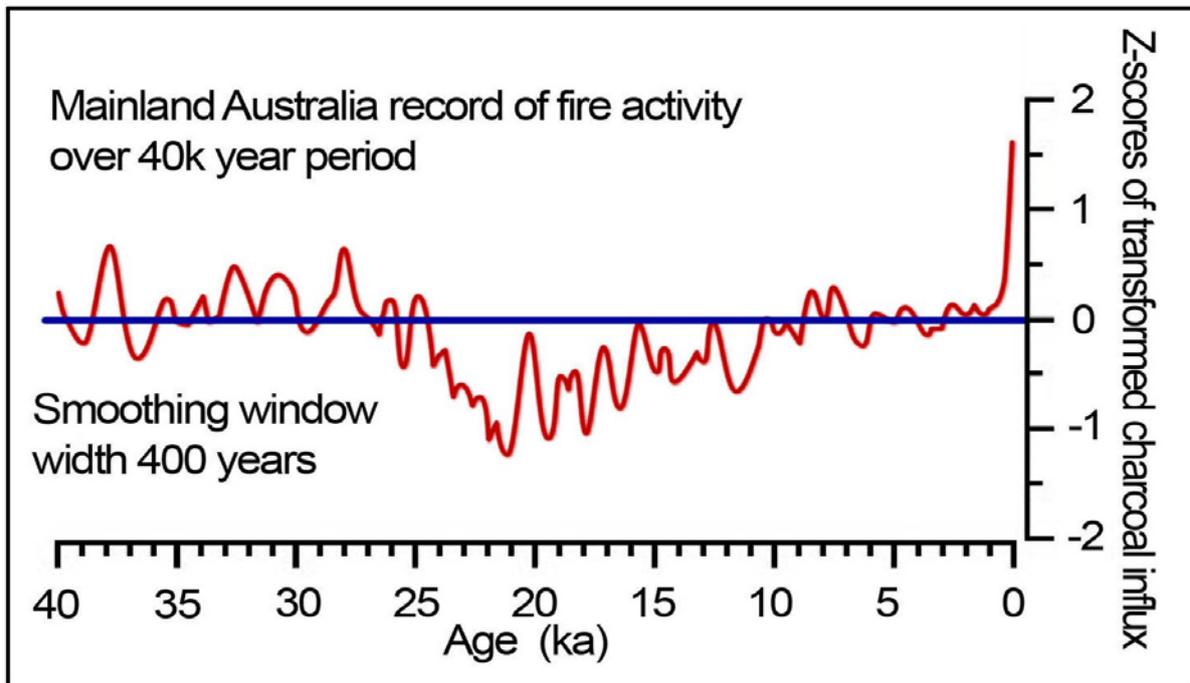
In all three states greenhouse gas emissions are also substantially increased by deforestation by fire.

Below are two images, the first one is the history of fires in Australia over the past 40 k years. The graph shows the recorded quantities of transformed charcoal flux. This is the residue left after wood has been burnt.

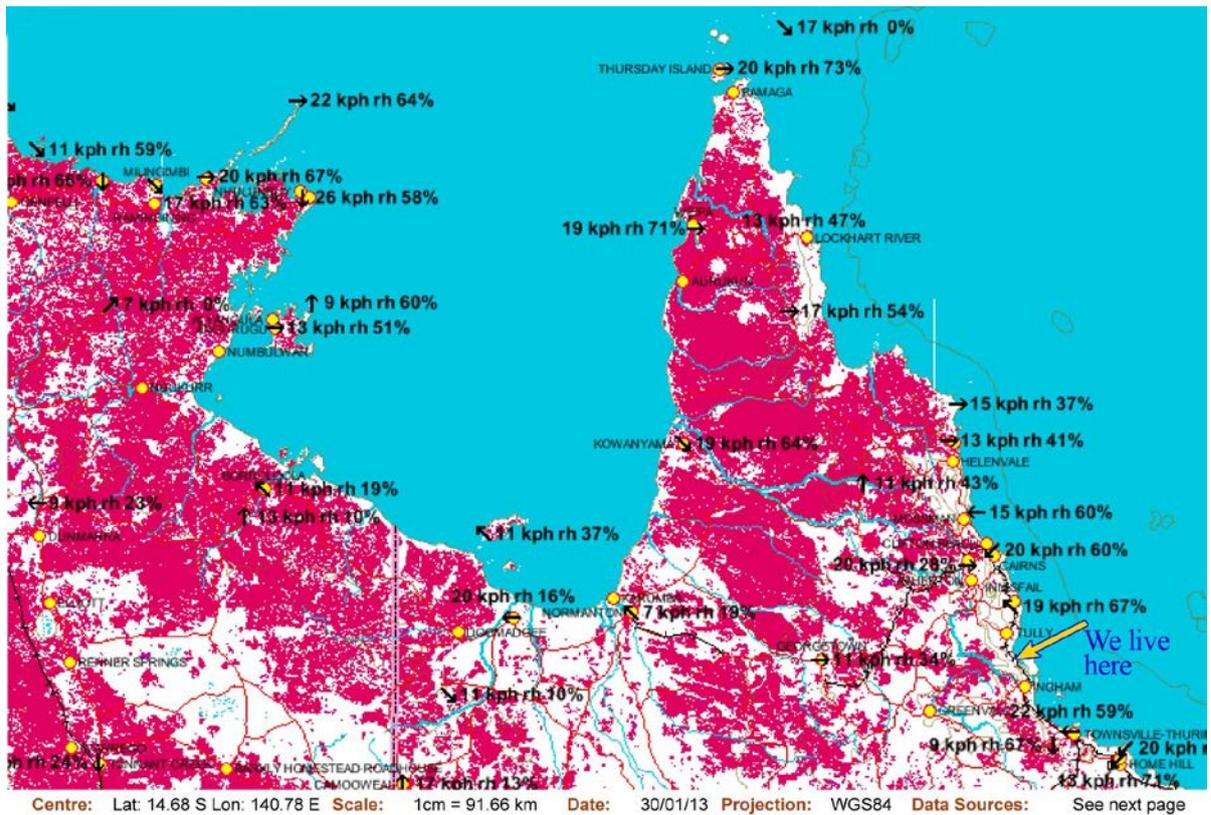
The second image shows the area burnt in North Queensland and part of the Northern Territory over the past three years

Regards,

Ian McCallan



Ref. Dr Scott Mooney, Bob McDonald, et al.



This map shows the huge and unsustainable area of burns carried out over the past three years. This satellite mapping of fires is not complete as fires are not recorded under cloudy conditions.