

Dear Sir

The recent devastating bush fires in Victoria (Black Saturday) I believe could have been avoided. Fuel reduction is absolutely essential to reducing the damaging effects of wild fires. This method of reducing the damaging effects of bush fires has continually been ignored. Every bushfire inquiry since the 1930s has recommended fuel reduction as an absolute necessity in preventing out of control bush fires. I will briefly explain what fuel reduction is - many people are confused about this. Fuel reduction is when a region has fuel loads reduced by a controlled burn when the weather is cool and the air is still. The Green lobby talks about not opposing back burning which can be far more destructive because it is carried out in extreme fire weather producing an intense and destructive fire, while fuel reduction burns are slow, much less intense fires in cooler weather.

It was very obvious during the the recent fires in Victoria that fuel reduction was not in operation because of the Green Lobby's sway against any such action. It was not the arsonists but the Greenies who caused the catastrophe. The terrible loss of lives and devastation incurred by these bush fires could have largely been avoided if fuel reduction had taken place on a regular basis over a few years before.

Also the mobile phones were effective in some areas, but in many fire areas mobile phone reception was poor and in others there was no reception. Mobile phonetowers are vulnerable to fires. As well the landline phone system can be the most reliable communications system as even if power lines are burned down underground phone lines can still work as they operate on their own power. However land lines all across rural and regional Victoria are vulnerable because Telstra junction boxes are above ground, and are made of plastic. They melt in a fire causing landlines telephone systems to fail. Telstra junction boxes should be fire proofed and placed underground.

Regional Telstra landlines and their junction boxes should be underground and fire proofed.

I hope the points I have made in my submission will be carefully read and taken seriously in order to avoid any more tragaic loss of lives in the future.

Yours truly

(Mrs) Gail Osmak