

The issues surrounding the threat and existence of bushfires in Australia are many and complex. However, of particular concern to me at the root of many if not most fire tragedies in our nation are the deliberately misleading, deceptive policies of radical green members of the Australian Greens Party and other environmentalist groups.

The Australian Greens in particular claim they support fuel-reduction burns and try to back this up by publicising that their official policy states such support. In contrast, their claims show cynical double-standards because in practice they DO NOT support or encourage effective fuel-reduction burns. For years they and other radical environmentalist groups have influenced local councils to refuse to clear vegetation that provides the fuel for raging bushfires. Because they 'worship' the environment, their insistence on "rigorous" environmental assessments really covers up their underlying intention to eventually stop all interference with nature. For them, trees and nature are of far more value than the lives and safety of human beings.

This push for endless "scientific research" makes it practically impossible to undertake appropriate action to prevent bushfires via fuel-reduction burns. Exactly the same approach was applied by the tobacco companies for many years to try to hide any revelation of the 'yet unproven' smoking/cancer link. History has brought out the truth.

Why is it that the recommendation for effective fuel-reduction made in every bushfire inquiry since the 1930s has been ignored? Something essential is amiss somewhere. It has now been recommended that all relevant levels of state and local agencies should make it their top priority to apply an annual increase of 7% fuel-reduction on all crown land, with particular emphasis on areas surrounding towns.

As this is a Federal Inquiry, I'm sure most Australians, especially those affected by fires, can relate to the now universally known tragedy of the 7 Feb 2009 (Black Saturday) Victorian bushfires. The bushfire survivors themselves can provide the most realistic and practical response to the insane, radical environmentalist policies of the Australian Greens, local councils, Department of Sustainability and the Environment and other green groups - all of whom stopped them cutting down trees and removing them from their properties, from clearing debris away from roadsides and from having substantial firebreaks between small towns and state forests. To add insult to injury, some property-owners were charged hefty fines for 'breaking the law' to try to protect themselves, their families and their properties. It's time the law was changed.

Another vital aspect in the Victorian fires was the breakdown in communications due to the poor effectiveness of mobile phones. Successful contact ranged from good to non-existent. A major cause of limited communication is that mobile phone towers can't always escape the effects of fires because Telstra junction boxes, made of plastic, are above ground and lie in dense fuel areas. Since melting junction boxes are not conducive to timely, effective communication, Telstra should fire-proof them and submerge them underground, just as they do in the cities.

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