



Submission to the “Inquiry into the incidence and impact of bushfires”

We the undersigned submit the following concerns we see occurring in the management of Forestry SA and Crown lands in the Cuddlee Creek/Lenswood section of the Mt. Crawford Forest. We believe that failure to address these issues adequately poses a serious risk not only to our immediate property but will inevitably, because of poor hazard reduction, result in serious loss of life. Under the guise of “clean and green” and a return to nature large sections of pine forest have, following Ash Wednesday February 1983, been left to rot while feral pines have recently been cut down and left on the forest floor creating an enormous fuel load. In essence the more productive areas have been retained for pine and native timber production while a large section on Croft Road/Fox Creek Road is in the process of being handed to the control of Bicycle SA. While not directly opposing the opening up of Forestry land to recreation usage we believe that the potential fire risks and fire response arrangements of this development have not been given appropriate resources or consideration.

Following is a list of our concerns:

- We desire an immediate assessment/clean up of feral and fallen (cutdown) pines to reduce the immediate threat.
- We desire a rethink of the policy of letting logs rot away. After 20 years much of the debris of logs left to “rot away” is still clearly visible in such areas as firetrack No 1. making one question the wisdom of such a practice.
- High grass and weeds are a constant and present danger particularly as trail bike riders are in the forest on almost a daily basis, especially on the weekends. If a hot bike exhaust should result in a fire there would be little hope of escape for the rider given the long grass and high fuel load.
- With no Forestry officer in residence in the local headquarters, people are free to enter, even to light fires on extreme fire days as has been witnessed on many occasions. With no policing or Forestry SA presence, fires are inevitable.
- There needs to be put into practice a regular fuel load reduction program (including the use of “Cool fires?”) where the local CFS are given the major hand in assessing reduction opportunities.
- There is a distinct lack of adequate water to fight a fire given the fact that all dams in the Crown land have been breached in a misguided green bias against dams. The result is a serious lack of fire water as well as adjoining properties having to put up with wandering kangaroos looking for a drink.
- The increasing use of the area for mountain biking poses immediate and potential risks for bushfires.

Bikers are often seen in summer camping with campfires lit in hot and windy conditions, whilst landowners are subjected to total fires bans for periods of over five months annually. While potentially there is the hope of self regulation by these groups already it can be seen that there is a large section who regularly go outside the assigned areas where policing of any kind is impossible. Given the growing popularity of this sport and the promotion of special days where up to 20 000 people will be drawn to the area, bush fire prevention and response arrangements will be critical if major fire incidents are to be avoided. Given the present unsatisfactory circumstances it is hard to see how fire disaster is to be avoided to say nothing of the potential liability issues.


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1 May 2003