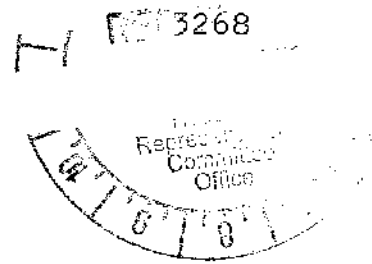


Submission No.333

16/5/03

The Committee Secretary  
Select Committee On The Recent  
Australian Bushfires  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT



Dear Sir,

Having spent 40 years developing a productive cattle farm in stages from native bush and with a policy of leaving 10% in native vegetation, I feel my experience dealing with bush and fires may be of value.

The Victorian Heytesbury Settlement Commission which was developing bush into dairy farms in the 1960s employed me to burn, which I carried out on a motor cycle and burner. This was done in the Autumn to avoid the risk of spring fires breaking out again in summer.

After the Ash Wednesday fires when my wife and I were delivering Red Cross parcels to fire victims, I noted that many homes had been saved by fruit trees and fire resistant species surrounding their properties.

The food we eat is introduced to Australia, whether it is vegetables, cereal crops or meat grown on introduced pastures and the large variety of fruit grown is also from introduced trees. But when it comes to planting trees or shrubs for shade and shelter and to purify the air, there appears to be some fanatical obsession to surround homes with volatile native vegetation which needs fire to survive. Many of our roadsides are being planted with such volatile native species which only adds to the danger for unwary motorists trying to escape bush fires.

The old time Foresters knew when and how to burn. It needs many years of hands-on practical experience to know how to manage the bush, and our Fore-fathers in their wisdom avoided planting volatile species in the towns and cities - Ballarat is such a city, with avenues of beautiful autumn tints from introduced fire resistant trees.

A balanced commonsense approach to bush management is vital.

Yours faithfully,

*Dennis Bettens*

Dennis Bettens