

SUB 409
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3rd June 2003

The Committee Secretary
House Select Committee on the recent Australian bushfires
Department of the House of Representatives
Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600


10/6/03

Dear Secretary

the following is a submission to the Select Committee.

I write as a Member of several Learned Societies, in the aftermath of the Canberra fires and others, to strongly endorse the call for a full and wide ranging inquiry into Forest Management and Conservation policy. The Bushfire CRC is a welcome advance in this area.

I hope that your Committee will take detailed evidence from the "hero" of Tharwa.

The necessity to reduce undergrowth is paramount, and the use of grazing animals to achieve this in suitable areas, vital.

Clearly the Departmental leadership was lacking in both foresight and competence, and a change of personnel is definitely needed at this time. As a former resident of Canberra for some years, while at ANU, I well recall a characterisation of the typical bureaucrat as Wombat-like, ie the wombat is largely unaware of what is going on in the wider environment and is content as long as everything in it's little patch, SEEMS fine. This characterisation is perhaps apt for the responsible Departmental leaders!

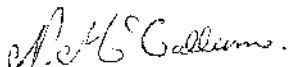
I, and my family, in visits to Canberra, over the last 30 years, have noted a very concerning, increasing proliferation of trees and undergrowth, in and around Canberra. It is my understanding, that there was a strong resistance to spending funds to actually reduce this hazard.

In Canberra's own terms of reference, the loss of the Mt Stromlo resource could be considered a catastrophe. Clearly it was an avoidable catastrophe (see Tharwa fire break and management strategy)

The Hon Minister Tuckey has advanced many valuable protocols to address these issues, and it is to be hoped that your Committee is fully acquainted with his work.

On behalf of Members of several Learned Societies, with an ongoing input to Australian policy matters, we wish your Committee a very successful outcome to its deliberations.

YOURS FAITHFULLY



Mrs Nola M. McCallum
Samuel Griffith Society
Lavoisier Group