



Gareth Kimberley

5 September 2003

Mr Gary Nairn MP  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

SUBMISSION NO. 498

Dear Mr Nairn,

**PURCHASE OR LEASE OF CANADIAN CL-415 FIREFIGHTING AIRCRAFT**

Please find enclosed information which I hope will convince you of our urgent need to obtain the use of these aircraft, if not through purchase, at least through leasing them from Canada during our Australian bushfire seasons.

It is disappointing to note that after 70 years Australian governments are still using light aircraft and helicopters with tiny buckets to drop water on raging bushfires as the primary means of aerial fire fighting. The very high temperatures present in the bushfire environment means the tiny amount of water released vaporises almost instantly and does not reach the base of the fire. You can have as many of these aircraft as you like but if the water they drop does not extinguish the fire you are simply wasting time, effort and resources. A smaller number of larger, specialist firefighting aircraft dropping fire-suppressing foam is a far more effective method of fighting fires from the air.

The value of aerial firefighting resources is particularly important at "firestart" – before the fire becomes too large. Here the Bombardier CL-415 really comes into its own; its speed and range with a heavy payload of foam enables it to fly to even the most remote fires and start controlling them quickly before they are able to grow and spread. Two or three CL-415s scooping water from Lake Burley Griffin would have been invaluable in the recent Canberra bushfire tragedy.

You should be aware, however, that the CL-415 is not solely dependent on open stretches of water for its water uptake. The aircraft's tanks can be quickly replenished from water tankers. All it needs is a suitable airstrip which is accessible by locally based water tankers.

The fact that Australian governments and firefighting agencies continue to reject the CL-415, even though it is used in many other countries and proven itself to be probably the best firefighting aircraft in the world, makes one think that either our evaluation methods are flawed or there are vested interests at work seeking to maintain the status quo. In any case, I believe the nation's massive environmental problems – and our bushfire problems in particular – have become so critical that we can no longer rely solely on light aircraft and helicopters for aerial firefighting. We must use all the tools available to us and the CL-415 is clearly one of the best.

Perhaps I should make it clear I have no connection with Bombardier nor any other vested interest. My sole interest is in the future of our nation and protecting its fragile environment.

Yours sincerely,



**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION HELD BY THE COMMITTEE**

**ATTACHMENT TO SUBMISSION NO.498**

**ATTACHMENTS PROVIDED WITH SUBMISSIONS ARE HELD IN THE  
COMMITTEE OFFICE**