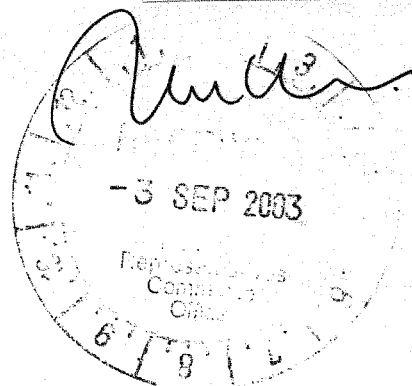


61 3 5144 3945

SUBMISSION NO. 501

To Peter McGauran,  
Federal Member for Gippsland,  
98 Raymond st,  
Sale 3850.



From ... Graeme Connley,

August, 2003.

I believe that government bodies, responsible as they are to the community, should be made accountable to that community for the major decisions that so vitally affect it's wellbeing.

I refer specifically to fire management policies of Victorian forests and put forward the following comments of concern.

For about the last thirty years no naturally ignited fires have been allowed to burn. As a result there has been no natural regrowth, no natural clearing for native grass to flourish and the consequence of this is loss of feed and habitat for native animals and birds. I contrast this with the state of the bush as I remember it forty years ago, when abundant animal and bird life, native plants and animals, bush orchids and clean water could be found everywhere.

This drastic change in forested areas can be attributed to the fact that dense overgrown bush allows no feed, no access to water and no escape from predators. Thus a habitat has been altered forever as result of the suppression of the natural balancing mechanism of the fire cycle.

I believe that if commonsense is not brought to bear on this, there will be no forest to enjoy with our kids or with anyone else's kids ie tourism.

All land- public forest, parks and private are one and should be treated as such on an equal footing and with equal accountability. Farmers, for instance, are learning from their mistakes -they must be accountable in both a conservation, financial and management sense or go down. Their engagement with the land is therefore of an immediate and very consequential nature with huge experience and knowledge of their environment bought to bear in every action and decision.

This seems not to be the case with government managed land. The administrative system allows a power base of unquestioned authority whose action or inaction is selfserving; such considerations as promotion or the money to be made in firefighting come well before the simple maxim that prevention of the circumstances that lead to disastrous fires is the accountable action.

A change of thinking is needed-such prevention is achieved if for instance, natural fires in autumn or winter are allowed to burn,not put out as is the case as is current government practice.

The practical nature of local knowledge where the function of the land and waterways is understood in an accrual of experience is often unfortunately bypassed in favour of decisions made by those whose education is largely theoretical ; a reservoir of expertise is thus lost and it is the land that is suffering.

Finally, the cost of rampant, severe fire is enormous and impacts upon forests and parks in all their significant aspects and also ,under the extreme circumstances we have experienced lately, threatens human life. The cost in dollar terms to the community is very significant but the loss of species diversity in our flora and fauna is the greater calamity for it is altering the environmental heritage of this and all future generations

The solution is to view fire as a natural insurance policy with the premium due annually.It makes much more sense to spend a little on prevention rather than pay the big dollars involved in suppression . The benefit to the environment cannot be costed .

Time is running out fast. Therefore I believe that all people who love and who are interested in the land should come together to share their thoughts and knowledge with the aim of demonstrating to the government that their management is interfering with nature's way of survival.

Thankyou for your consideration of my concern.

Yours faithfully,

G. Connley.

