

Committee Secretary
House Select Committee on the recent Australian bushfires
Department of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA



Mrs Leisa Caldwell

Submission No.227

Dear Sir/Madam

INQUIRY INTO SNOWY MOUNTAINS FIRES

We feel its about time that some facts were brought to light regarding the bushfires of the Snowy Mountains in 2002-2003 after crossing two state borders over 3 months.

Possibly the largest area fire in Australia since before white man arrived.... Firstly, it is shameful that media chose to keep a cone of silence for the Carr Government on the holocaust which has devastated "wilderness" areas (more than ¾) of Kosciuzko National Park and many thousands of hectares of private property. These fires started a week before Christmas in NSW and continued until March.

- **The local communities of the Snowy Mountains have been telling NPWS for more than 30 years that the mountains will burn in an inferno which will end at the coast unless green lobbied management policies are changed.**
- There was much public outcry about the many wild horses slaughtered at Guy Fawkes National Park in 2001, now hundreds of brumbies and untold wildlife have perished by torturing situations in Kozciusko National Park and many will be still suffering today and yet these facts are kept quiet.
- **NPWS outdoor AND administration personnel automatically had their hourly pay rate doubled when in fire mode (section 44) from Dec 20 and hundreds of Volunteer Rural Fire fighters as well as other volunteers have to actually take time off their regular jobs and lost money. Some park workers even took to bragging about the money earnt to date.**
- In the southern end of KNP (where we live) approx. a whole 200 acres had been reduction burnt in the past 20 years!

- **Local fire controllers in NSW have stated that it took 3 days to clear one fire trail to access fires because they had not been maintained by NPWS. This track may have had a direct influence on the Canberra fires. Most trails are still to be maintained.**
- Scientific research on fire management which is implemented by NPWS is commissioned or pressured by green groups. They recommend a "no burn policy" and trail revegetation. See Aust. Heritage Somm. Website.
- **There was a shameful conflict of interest with Bob Debus being Environment Minister AND Minister for Emergency Services, how convenient.**
- Many fires directly affecting private property were from NPWS backburns left unattended. On some occasions, volunteers arrived to take over NPWS shifts to find them asleep or had already left the site.
- **Local communities in NSW, Victoria and ACT are locked out of their traditional land because of "wilderness" policies...when they could be used to help management as they have in the past. Policy written by city bureaucrats seems to resent the local knowledge.**
- Lastly, a memo has been sent out to State Government departments emphasizing that public servants are not to speak out against NSW Government Policies. How many of the people who really know all the facts are being gagged at this inquiry today?!

The people of the Snowy Mountains have had their cattle taken from the mountains, their homes and history flooded for Hydro Electricity, the Man from Snowy River prohibited his own traditional land and now to top it all off, have had their beloved mountains burnt to cinders irrespective of the years and years of warnings.

Its about time for local knowledge to be implemented into management practices of publicly own land.

**Please don't let this holocaust go with out scrutiny.
This was not "Nature taking its course" the mountains were not
drought declared,
this was "Nature's revenge on the land's misguided management".
Tragically our beloved mountains,
their wildlife inhabitants
and our local mountain communities
are now paying for it and not the instigators of it.**

I look forward to your reply.
Yours Sincerely

Mrs Leisa Caldwell

Moonbah