

# Duncan Kirkland

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Wednesday, October 24, 2001

*Duncan Kirkland*  
210603

Committee Secretary  
Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA  
A.C.T. 2600

**Reference : Submission re Bushfire Enquiry**

My apologies for the lateness of this submission, unfortunately I was unaware of it till after the closing date.

I would submit the following points to be addressed :-

The supply of Personal Safety Equipment appears to be either in limited supply or haphazard in distribution. There are volunteers who do not have the full kit which creates a risk to their safety. There also appears to be different designs for the (SUPPOSEDLY?) same items.

Replacement of equipment appears illogical i.e. one large and one small vehicle being replaced with one large vehicle (if and when it happens, this was promised 2-3 years ago and was touted pre the last state election as something NEW), this in a brigade with 25-30 active members. the total equipment available means total response equals 20-25% of available personnel.

Most of the permanent employees (F.C.O.'s, etc.) are sadly lacking in management skills and are at times wasting resources or creating dangerous situations. People skills (or more correctly(?) human resource management) are very obvious by the absence.

Interagency rivalry amongst the permanent staff is a threat to the safety of the people at the coal face (the volunteers) and detrimental to effective firefighting.

There is a school of thought which advocates extinguishing, or trying to, every fire that occurs. When one considers that some of these fires are a natural phenomenon and there are also cases where allowing the fire to burn to a location which it would probably reach in any case, would allow easier and more effective control/extinguishing of the fire.

The moneys wasted on caps, badges, letters, certificates, etc., would be better spent on equipment for assist in the effective control of fires.

The creation of another tier ( Group Captain/Vice Group Captain) creates further interference/static to communications within the organisation and creates the appearance of distancing the "management" from the volunteers.

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The practice of councils in allowing people to build houses in obvious danger zones because these people "love the closeness of nature" is ludicrous, particularly when they expect someone else to save them and their property at great personal risk. This is even more galling when they blame everyone else for their problems.

Last but not least, if we are to be hit with further levies (as is being promoted), then I and, I would suggest, a great many other **VOLUNTEERS** will cease to be volunteers and leave it to the "professionals", bear in mind we already pay fire levies and, we pay (small amount though it is) "membership in the bushfire brigade". I can imagine the cost that will incur since we have some indication from the National Parks & Wildlife Budgets for this purpose.

Yours faithfully,

Duncan Kirkland

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Duncan Kirkland', written in black ink on a white background.