

The Budawang Committee Inc

Incorporated in NSW

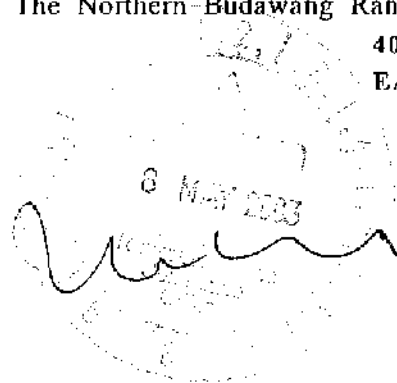
ABN 77 617 314 034

A Non-profit Organisation founded in 1967

Trustees of the books "*Pigeon House and Beyond*" "*Fitzroy Falls and Beyond*"
"*The Man from The Misty Mountains*" - J. H. Sturgiss
and G. Elliott's sketch map of The Northern-Budawang Range.

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6th May, 2003

Parliament of Australia
House of Representatives
Select Committee of the Recent Australian Bushfires

**Re: ENQUIRY INTO THE INCIDENCE AND IMPACT OF
BUSHFIRES**

Dear Committee,

The Budawang Committee has had an interest in the Morton and Budawang National Parks and has published the above mentioned books and Budawang sketch map as stated in the letterhead on these parks.

CROWN LAND MANAGEMENT

Before European settlement, there is considerable evidence of aboriginal usage throughout these parks. It is a well-known fact that these inhabitants roamed this country and burnt off sections to bring on the green feed for the kangaroos and other wildlife with no evidence of loss of plants and wildlife species.

For well over the last hundred years, the graziers and farmers from Milton, Sassafras, Nerriga and Braidwood districts grazed their cattle and sheep on the plateau country (Wog Wog, Corang Peak to Sassafras to Little Forest Plateau) and continued the same practice as the aborigines, burning off in a mosaic fashion, the grasslands for green feed for their stock. They only left their stock for no more than six to eight weeks due to the lack of nutrients in the herbage. The wildlife and stock grazed together on these Crown lands.

2.

Some of our committee members have been walking and exploring this scenic country since the 1950's, with mainly parish maps and air photos. We met some of the graziers, sometimes on horseback, who had leases over this country. Committee members found the grassland plateau country a pleasure to walk over the and to see considerable numbers of kangaroos and wildlife. This pattern of burning by the stockmen, who were familiar with the country and knew when to burn, cut down the incidence of wildfire.

NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE MANAGEMENT.

After 1970, the Crown lands were declared national parks under the management of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Leases were cancelled, and all stock removed. In the last thirty years, the committee has observed a change in the ecology with a massive growth in hakea and other flora over these previous grasslands with the resultant loss of wildlife. It is now almost impossible to walk through the thick scrub. The vast majority of these parks were declared Wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1987, and since this wilderness declaration there has been little hazard reduction.

Dr. Tim Flannery, recently in a radio interview was critical of the NSW park service in its management and lack of wildlife in a couple of the parks.

On the 18th August, 2000 we had a meeting with Superintendent Brian Parry, of the Shoalhaven Rural Fire Services, of the Shoalhaven City Council. We pointed out to him about the growth of fuel and state of the fire trails, especially the trail south from Sassafras to Newhaven Gap. He stated that the NPWS had done little in reducing fuel for a considerable number of years and he was very concerned at the state of the above mentioned fire trail and public access trail.

On the same day we had a meeting with Wayne Smith, now former MP for the South Coast and Diane Garrod, Regional Manager Nowra District NPWS about the above matter who stated that the Service did not have the funding to comply with the legal requirements of the Rural Fire Services Act in relation to this trail or any other fire trail under their control.(Stated in letter to Wayne Smith of 2nd September, 2000).

3.

There were major fires in Morton National Park, mainly declared wilderness, which swept across to the coast with the loss of life and property and causing complete devastation.

SUMMARY

In our two publications, 'Pigeon House and Fitzroy Falls and Beyond' covering some 650 pages of Aboriginal and European history, flora and fauna, bushwalking, park and fire management, was a collaboration of authors well known for their expertise in the various subjects. About 1980, Barry Peick from Forestry, and Roger Good NPWS both stated the necessity of hazard reduction in our parks and Roger Good especially pointed out the necessity of hazard reduction around ecologically sensitive areas.

In closing the Budawang Committee agrees with hazard reduction but does not agree with whole parks being declared wilderness such as southern Morton National Park. The Wilderness Act prevents proper management under the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

Yours faithfully,
Colin Watson OAM

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'C. Watson', written in dark ink.

OAM 1989 for Conservation and Bushwalking

Copy of Northern Budawang Range sketch map enclosed.