

**SUNNINGHILL SUFFOLK
SHEEP**

Flock no. 339
Established 1960

**THE NAAS MURRAY GREY
BEEF CATTLE**
Herd No. 2355
Established 1977

Richard and Josephine Martin,



ABN 23 716 260 399



SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES reference to the 18th January 2003 Bushfires in the ACT and surrounds.

I have been a permanent resident of the Naas Valley for thirty eight years. My husband Richard, (40years) and myself farm/graze 800 hcs of beautiful rural land, raising Murray Grey cattle, fine wool merino sheep, and cross bred lambs. I am a retired Architect, he is a retired Solicitor.

I served approx five years on the ACT Bushfire Council, as secondary member for the NSW Farmers' Assoc, Queanbeyan Canberra Branch. During this time there was much discussion on fuel build up in National, Nature Parks, and Forestry. 1994 the McBeth Report was submitted, and not accepted by the Government, but much discussion and agreement with its contents occurred. Following this the Glen Inquiry was set up, with a very suitable panel, and the following report gave excellent recommendations. But nothing much was done, and it was only a matter of time and conditions for the catastrophic firestorm that occurred to occur. This was not a one in a hundred year fire, it was a never before fire. The extent and hardness of the fire, and damage not only to the environment and wildlife, but private property completely unacceptable, as it was avoidable.

I cannot believe anything but The Bushfire Council/Emergency Services, Environment ACT, the ACT Government and land managers for National Parks completely failed in their duty of care. 1/ Fuel reduction should have occurred in National Park, Reserves and Forestry. 2/ When the fires were started by lightening, given the overall circumstances, they should have been put out. In our day when lightening struck one New years Eve, Richard was one of a few men, armed with those fire rakes and a chainsaw, taken in by helicopter, dumped on a high rock in the then Gugenby Nature Reserve, and told to just go and do it. (and they did it). 3/ Fire trails and good access into these areas should fully maintained. 4/ Consideration should be given to equipping appropriate private vehicles.

I was the first representative of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects on the first Council of the National Trust of Australia ACT, 1978, serving on the Council and Executive, and the first Chair of Classifications Committee, and still serving on their Heritage Committee. I served two terms on the ACT Heritage Council, and was a

member of the Natural Environment Committee, also the Buildings Committee. I was the first female Councillor of the Australian Institute of Architects, inaugural Chair Marion Mahony Griffin Measured Drawing (Heritage) Competition and inaugural member of the Register of Twentieth Buildings Committee, both RAlA sub Committees. The number of registered Heritage buildings and places lost in this inferno was appalling, a tragedy, a disgrace.

I have served on the ACT Rural Lessees Association Committee since 1989, as Vice President for a number of years. Environment ACT had a briefing Thursday 16th January for lessees on the interface with the National Park/Forests. Richard my husband attended, and felt it was very low key, fires contained, all under control. Val Jeffery, Tharwa, same day issued a different warning, copy attached, which was far more to the point. The same day I am told a delegation of Lessees met with Environment ACT, because they were fearful of the volatile situation that existed. I believe they did not feel their fears were taken seriously, maybe even humourously. There have been warnings, and warnings, for years.

I represent both the ACT Rural Lessees and the NSW Farmers on the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Coordinating Committee, and was a member of the ACT Landcare Committee. My interest in the environment is very complete and strong. I am also a committed supporter of the rural community, and feel much blame is put on them for many things unfairly. ie I believe the rabbit plagues were the major cause for much of the erosion and land degradation, more so than sheep and cattle. I believe tis fire will do more damage to erosion problems than sheep and cattle ver did in the hot areas. Settlers were given an axe and told to clear! It has been said the only way to hazard reduce is to mow, slash, burn or, (neally considered a dirty work by some), GRAZE. Grazing is an excellent tool for fuel reduction, fires are somewhat unacceptable to many, abnd of course control fires can get out of control whreaking their own havock. (Australias largest tree last week damaged.), I enclose a copy of a sketch/chat map I did in connection with a heritage rural landscape assessment. It was taken from a 1952 tenure map, and indicates the extent of rural grazing, freehold and lease. There was a small area end of Tidbinbilla Valley a Nature Park, I think Black Mountain, and that was about it. There has been determined removal of grazing, and no appropriate land management practises to compensate, and they are still rabbiting away at it! I am told, (not by John Hyles), that they are still after more of Booromba, in my opinion the most beautiful rural property in the ACT, and comparable anywhere in quality and beauty. The heat of the fire in the removed areas from grazing must tell a story. I would like it noted on my sketch plan the size of Booromba 1952, and the infilled colour shows what it is being reduced to. When I first knew Tidbinbilla the Nature Reserve was a lovely open valley, surrounded by stunning hills. Last time I went there it was all scrubbed up, and full of tea tree, which burns extremely hot. No wonder the damage, and the incineration of 98% of the animals in the reserve. And they want to get the Naas Valley!

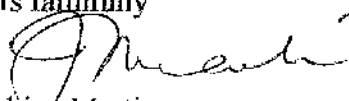
I have removed my three page description of the fire, and the following days, but the stress, hard work and expense, which are ongoing, are major. We faced this with all fire units removed from the Valley, nothing. Graeme Oldfield and Fred Blundell were alone at Rocky Crossing with backpacks, and they saved the Homestead and shearing shed, even with the 100 foot wave of liquid fire that rolled over out of the Park. (a kilometre wide it was as it rolled over into the Naas Valley from the park I estimated,

watching in horror). At Tharwa and Tidbinbilla children down to the age of ten were fighting. Disgusting. [Heritage comment, Oldfield name, 1830's Lanyon, Blundell, soon after Duntroon, Flint, 1829 Flint went with Murray of Yarralumla's father to Collector, and Yarralumla with Murray 1832, Gregory, miller for Campbell Duntroon 1842, (it was Flint and Gregory children fighting), they are survivors. It is amazing how many of the very old names still also exist as Rural Lessees, Webbs, McKeahnies, Moores, Hyles . Tongs, Reads etc]

No more National Park/ Reserves until appropriate management established. Fire trails and access, hazard reduction. We never had pigs or feral dogs until the graziers were removed behind us and in they came. The aboriginal people fired the land, so did the early graziers, with success. The Scots fire their heather in rotation every seven years, or it become woody, rank, unpalatable for sheep, and also believe it or not, a fire hazard. A problem palm in Florida is fired every two years. It is just appropriate management. I suggest not as dangerous would be to conservation graze many areas again. We note how nice it is to see a few cows on the hills around Canberra suburbs, what we are all about, the bush capital. (Unfortunately peoples dogs destroy sheep, just as the feral dogs from the Park are into our sheep again).

I am familiar with, and fully support the submission placed before you by Val Jeffery, Tharwa.

Yours faithfully



Josephine Martin

4th May 2003

Attachments

- 1/. Sketch tenure map, areas not coloured in all grazed, small amount crown land southern area, some of the larger properties have been separately identified.
- 2/. The McBeth Report. *(front page only)*
- 3/. My reaction to Mcbeth report.
- 4/. Task Force announced. (Glen)
- 5/. Task Force Report. I believed it would be seriously acted on. *(front page only)*
- 6/. Another warning, mentions removal from rural landuse, which I believe has been a major factor in the type of this fire. 2 of 6 pages
- 7/. Val Jeffery thought it fit to warn the Bushfire Council about the situation in 1995, page 1 of 4
- 8/. A small number of Rural Lessees have been very concerned for a long time, and did they cop it.
- 9/. Val Jeffery to Tharwa/Naas residents 16 Jan 2003-05-07
- 10/. Extracts from Tidbinbilla Pioneers Assoc news sheet
- 11/. A letter
- 12/. Motion for New South Wales Farmers' Assoc AGM, from the Bungendore Branch, approved (with addition) by the Molonglo District Council.