

**Federal Government Bush Fire Enquiry 2003**

**The Federal Government  
The Committee Secretary  
The House Committee,  
on the recent Australian Bushfires**

**Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT, 2600**

**Strathbogie Ranges at Risk**

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## **STRATHBOGIE RANGES AT RISK**

This submission is made on behalf of the outraged residents of Violet Town and Euroa communities as to the planned decommissioning of the Honeysuckle Creek Reservoir at Violet Town by Goulburn Valley Water.

Nearly 900 submissions, copies attached were presented to The Hon. Robert Mitchell MLC on Monday 12th May 2003.

This reservoir **has previously been used for Aerial Fire Fighting** to contain a fire in the State Forest, this would have threatened many houses and lives if the helicopter had not contained it as the fire site was impossible to access using fire-fighting vehicles.

According to statements made by Goulburn Valley Water and the Department of Sustainability and Environment this reservoir has never been used by helicopters for fire fighting, **these statements are untrue**, and confirmation of the use of helicopters to fight this fire may be obtained by contacting the Captain of the Boho Fire Brigade Mr Kerry Davis who was in charge of the whole operation until eventually N.R.E. arrived to mop up.

Goulburn Valley Water state the Dam Wall is unsafe and the Reservoir is no longer required by them and is excess to their requirements.

Engineering reports, (ref Tasmanian Hydro Electric Corporation Aug.2000). shows the Dam Wall is sound in everyway structurally; however the size of the spillway does not meet the current standards. Our professional advise to us is, that if the water level was lowered by 1 metre which is one third of total reservoir capacity, and the spillway modified this will bring the reservoir into A.N.C.O.L.D. standards, the cost to fix the spillway would be no more than the options put forward by Goulburn Valley Water

If this work was done these communities would have infrastructure in place for:

- 1 A substantial guaranteed mass of accessible aerial water storage.
2. A return back to the natural flow of the creek of water downstream.
3. Storage of raw water that is available to service future potential development and growth of Violet Town and district.
4. At some time in the future the raw water could be used to save unnecessary waste of the Euroa supplied potable water, where alternative low cost raw water use would be appropriate.

At this point the Question must be asked:- If there was a wild fire within the region and an electricity shutdown, and the power supply was cut off between Euroa and Violet Town as the water supply to Violet Town is limited by the electrically pumped water from Euroa.

### **Would the Violet Town residents have any water?**

**History** shows that the holding capacity of the G.V.W storage tanks have been inadequate at two previous local fires eg (the Ellen Frances Hotel fire and the Violet Town Saw Mill fire).

It must be noted that this Reservoir is a major community asset and situated midway between Benalla and Euroa and is the only public mass supply of Aerial water that services some 25,000 plus hectares of rugged terrain including State Forests and Soft Wood plantations, specialty farming activities, including our Premier Equine Industry Assets.

Considering this is the First Weir to be earmarked for decommissioning in Victoria for forty years. **We strongly** believe this is a **step backward**, as there has been no forward strategy and planning put in place for the progressive and aggressive action of aerial fire fighting by helicopters. We believe that there is a lack of strategic planning and aggressive action to provide substantial reserves of water which will supply the large helicopters. The Strathbogie Ranges are suitable for large units like "Elvis" to control fire in this region. An accessible large volume of aerial water supply is the key to the effective use of helicopters as fire killers. **Infrastructure such as the Honeysuckle Creek Reservoir should be retained, maintained and eventually upgraded and certainly not demolished as is currently proposed.**

We understand the Honeysuckle Creek Reservoir is one of seven reservoirs' to be demolished across Victoria. It is now up to a progressive Government to step in and put in place, a strategy state wide to accommodate a new Aerial Fire Fighting Strategic plan.

**LOYAL VOLUNTEER FIRE FIGHTERS WHOSE LIVES ARE ON THE LINE AT THE COAL FACE OF ANY FIRE TO SAVE OUR LIVES AND PROPERTIES DESERVE THE SUPPORT IN THE RETENTION OF THIS VITAL HONEYSUCKLE CREEK RESERVOIR.**

Please remember safety first

**No man, no Authority, no Government can justify the removal of any existing water supply reservoir, water storage, or catchment dam after what we have now learnt during the most recent bush fire emergency in NORTH EAST VICTORIA.**

**SAVE HONEYSUCKLE RESERVOIR COMMITTEE**



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