

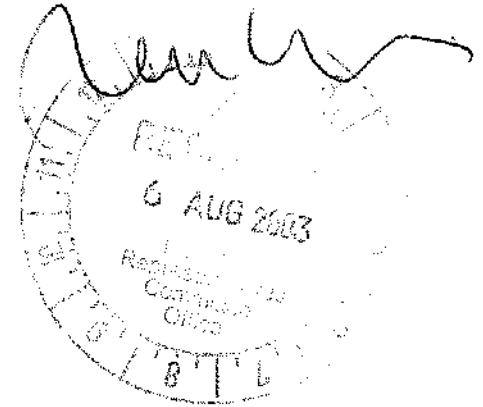


R.M.B. 2196

HORSHAM 3401

29<sup>th</sup>. July 2003

(03) 5384 3226



House Select Committee on recent Australian bushfires  
Department of House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra 2600

Dear Secretary of the Committee,

1. Too many bushfires are caused by controlled burns.
2. Enclosed is correspondence re a controlled burn in the Grampians National Park during the Easter School Holidays.
3. Complaints made about the C.F.A. in the 1999 Mt. Difficult (Grampians) bushfire are being repeated now.
4. controlled burn regimes

Two weeks before Easter there was a controlled burn near Daylesford (in the Wombat State Forrest?). A.B.C's John Faime on his Monday program commented on the scary flames. The fire did get out of control. It was prevented from spreading onto private land by the efforts of 300 firefighters – probably volunteers.

In DECEMBER 2002 (a hot spring & summer after 6 dry years) someone started a control burn in Big Desert National Park. Much of the park & private land was burnt in the 10 days it took them to control the fire.

I have found out that 6 causes of 1939's Black Friday were controlled burns.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment's Fire management Officer, Mr. Geoff Evans, purposely chose "the last week of the school holiday period" given precedence that visitors during the busiest holiday period in many years could not have their safety guaranteed. (People needed only to take 3 working days off to enjoy a 10 day holiday & this year South Australian school holidays matched Victorian school holidays.)

The Grampians was in its 7<sup>th</sup>. dry autumn.

Local farmers safely did a lot of burning prior to Easter. They are still burning off.

Horsham C.F.A. told me the smoke was from controlled burn of 3000 hectares!

This morning on 3 WV callers were making statements about this year's Gippsland fires such as "We felt safe because Channel 9 was saying there were no fires in our area.... Our back fence was burning."

Approximately 4.30 p.m. 6/1/1999 we rang Horsham C.F.A. about the smoke spreading to Roses Gap the day after lightning had struck Mt. Difficult. We were told that there was no fire at Roses Gap; it was spreading to Laharum. Come evening some of our guests stood on our verandah to video the flames at Roses Gap. My neighbour advised me to ring the police for more information as the C.F.A. would be busy. Around 10 p.m. we rang the Horsham police & enquired about danger to us from the pink glow behind Mt. Stapylton. "There's a pink glow behind Mt. Stapylton? I'll go & check." We hung up after holding the line a couple of minutes. I wasn't really worried after all I had made some preparations & I would be warned when the situation was considered dangerous but

1. A neighbour and 1 of his relatives were the only people at his fence to fight the flames
2. Another accommodation business had it's guests (new to the Grampians) evacuated at night without the guests being directed which direction to go

At a meeting a fortnight later at the Roses Gap Recreation Centre Mr. Geoff Evans stated

- Communications could not be improved
- Dadswells Bridge **volunteer** C.F.A. should have upgraded their radios so that they could communicate with Mr. Geoff Evans' professional C.F.A.
- The police representative said that I should not have been surprised that they didn't know about the fire being behind Mt. Stapylton because police & C.F.A. need information from locals.
- Mr. Geoff Evans' insistence that fire retardant had been proven over 40 years in U.S.A. to be absolutely safe to use anywhere was then contradicted by the Monsanto representative that it really shouldn't be used within 250 metres of water storages or tributaries.
- I don't remember his reply to the person who had had to direct the helicopter mechanic to the helipad
- I don't remember his reply to the person who had stopped C.F.A. trucks from continuing along tracks that diminished to walking paths

Laharum people were annoyed that they hadn't been informed of the meeting. Among other complaints they would have asked why the professional C.F.A. were driving past 2 fire dams to refill at a 3<sup>rd</sup> dam.

If you consider controlled burn regimes

- Koori firestick burns would not have purposely been hundreds or thousands of hectares to catch some animals for food
- I doubt they would have risked firestick burns in summer
- The regeneration of many plants has not been studied – so we do not know how often they can cope with fire. In Kakadu, after many annual burns they have noticed that some plants such, as orchids, are no longer there
- One of the easiest bits of bush in the Grampians to walk through is just north of Heatherlie Quarry. It has not been burnt in white man's memory. One of the most impenetrable pieces of bush is almost across the road. It was burnt in 1963
- Please explain to me how animals escape 3,000 or even 300 hectare burns.
- Perhaps there should be 2 practices of preventative controlled burns.  
A. one around the edges of national & state parks to stop fires escaping from parks; &  
B. within the parks a special set of practices designed to protect indigenous plants & animals.

Yours truly,



Ms. Angela Turner.

P.S. Maybe you can get me a copy of the environmental assessment of the Grampians Easter burn?