

SUBMISSION TO BUSHFIRE ENQUIRY

My credentials:- Executive and active member of Berridale Rural Fire Service for 40 years.
Involved in fighting most of the major and many other fire incidents across the Monaro since 1963.

*This year I spent several days and nights in Kosciuszko National Park trying to stop fires entering private land with limited effect. Trails had to be constructed or repaired as we went, and there was a huge build up of fuel with little evidence of hazard reduction for many years.

*Much of K.N.P. has not been "Managed" for fire minimization since the days of grazing snow leases combined with cool autumn burns as the stock came out of the mountains for the winter.

*On the 26th January 03 the fires came out of the park and we went to the Ingebyra area to protect assets on private land. It was obvious that the effect of fires on the properties that had been grazed, burnt or both over recent years was far less than properties that had little or no management. However there were assets needing protection and situated in very dangerous places with little or no regard to the danger of fire.

*Four days later on the 30th January the weather again blew up and the fire spotted across the Snowy River and east along the river gorge in a spot fire known as the "Avonside fire." This fire seriously threatened numerous houses that were saved thanks to a desperate effort by fire crews. However, the land within this rural subdivision that had been grazed burnt very lightly and was easily controlled. The land that was not grazed or "Managed" was just as hard to stop, as the fire in the National Park. We could not stop it until we fell back to the boundary of my property "Avonside".

*SOME CONCLUSIONS:- land of any tenure or title that is not "Managed" is at risk of extreme environmental and property damage from wild fire.

*Failure to manage and provide access to land is a threatening process.

*Rural subdivision blocks are often too big for the rural lifestyle ideals of their owners who do not attempt to manage their land, or who think that closing it up and "doing nothing" is a form of conservation.

This ideal sits comfortably with a significant number of the community:-

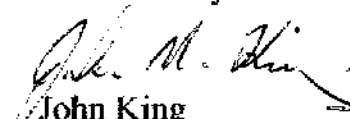
*Those who want large wilderness areas across the state –

*Those who think they are conservations.

*Those who choose a rural lifestyle but assume no responsibility for their land.

- *Those who promote or encourage the above for their own purpose.
- *There needs to be an ongoing public education process to provide guidelines to land management practices appropriate to different situations.

These actions or lack of responsibility will eventually result in disastrous results for the environment and the community. The results of the 2003 Fires prove it.


John King

2nd May 2003