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From:
Sent: Thursday, 8 May 2003 10:03 PM
To: Committee, Bushfires (REPS)
Subject: Submission

I feel that the bushfires were so extreme this summer because the undergrowth has been allowed to develop unchecked due to the prevailing "Green" pilosophy in the State Government departments. This, combined with the long period of drought gave the fires unprecedented amounts of fuel.

Warnings by rural fire services were ignored by he "green thinking" bureaucrats whose knowledge starts and finishes in books, and whose absence from the fire front came as no surprise to those heroic men and women who had to retrieve the situation at the risk of their lives. These bureaucrats made sure they stayed well away from the heat of the fires, but it is time some "heat" was applied to them.

The same chairbound bureaucrats foisted ridiculous restrictive regulations on these courageous firefighters some of which would have prevented them getting a cup of tea from "unaccredited" housewives. How can we handle the problem of bushfire prevention and firefighting when COMMON SENSE has been thrown out the window?

My suggestions are [1] Fire prevention strategy and methods should be under the authority of the local Country Fire Authority Regional officials, and totally removed from the control of the Department of the Environment. Give the people on the spot who KNOW the local conditions and have to risk death and severe burns fighting fires the control of decision making in this area. Take it away from the armchair book-learning bureaucrats who have made a complete mess of it with their airy-fairy ideas.

[2] Abolish stupid restrictive frustrating childish "regulations" such as the above example of accreditation required for a cup of tea. [3] Governments to supply the very best equipment available and not quibble about it.

The heroic and courageous men and women who saved Bright, Beechworth, Omeo and surrounding smaller townships deserve the highest praise. They also deserve more - to be equipped with the very best equipment available at State Government expense, and not have to run cake stalls and raffles struggling to replace equipment supplied after Ash Wednesday 20 years ago. Governments can fritter away money on frivolous things. It's about time they got their priorities right!