



SUBMISSION TO SELECT COMMITTEE
ON THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES

At its meeting held on 28th April, 2003 Council received advice from Steve Gibbons, MP, Federal Member for Bendigo advising that he had been appointed to the Select Committee on the recent Australian Bushfires. Council requested that CFA members who attended the bushfires be approached to provide comment and input to this review.

Letters were forwarded to six CFA Group Officers enclosing the terms of reference, seeking their comments and input on this important review.

It is understood that the Country Fire Authority has already forwarded copies of the terms of reference to a number of local fire brigades and Councils request for similar input was seen as an unnecessary duplication.

However, two Group Officers have responded to Councils request and the following points summarise their concerns:

- Property preparation
 - reduction of trees and shrubs near houses (permits to reduce the fuel load to be issued at certain times of the year).
 - reduction of other rubbish around homes – fuel, excess leaves and bark, firewood located too close to residences.
 - fire breaks need to be enforced if there are no natural breaks, eg. roads.
 - encouragement for home owners to install fire fighting equipment, eg. sprinklers on the roof, a pump linked to a water source and other means of self protection in rural areas.
- Roadside, Council preparedness
 - insufficient slashing along roadsides, fire corridors near crops.
 - no clearing of excess rubbish from roadsides, no reduction of undergrowth near residential areas.
 - no fire breaks around town areas, eg. school properties and LPG tanks.
- Fire Access Tracks
 - insufficient tracks in some areas causing access problems for local brigades.
 - clearance on some tracks need to be reviewed as there are branches overhanging tracks in some areas.
- Closer liaison with Government Departments in particular Fire Prevention Officer working closely with the Department of Sustainability and Environment – more scientific data required on bush fuel loads.
- Fire breaks on the outskirts of townships need to be increased and cleared more often – particularly prior to the summer period.

Loddon Shire Council