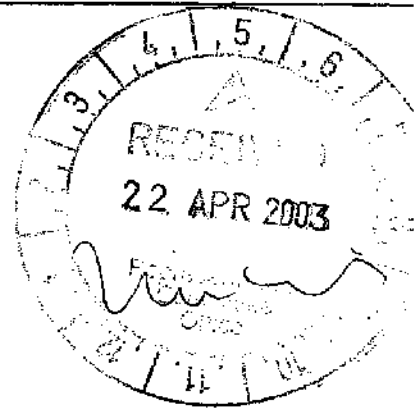


Committee Secretary
House Select Committee on the recent Australian bushfires

Submitted by: MICHAEL CHAMBERLONAddress: _____

_____Date: 15 / 4 / 2003

INQUIRY INTO THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES

Dear ~~Sir~~ Madam,

I have included a letter I had written to the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment after fighting the fires around Beechworth.

After seeing the devastation the fires caused in the N-E of Victoria I felt obliged to put pen to paper and vent my feelings on this subject and have inclosed a copy of this letter for your bushfire review. The wife and myself will be heading on a holiday around Australia in May+June but after this I could be contacted at the above address.

Yours in cooperation
Michael Chamberlon

Department of Sustainability and Environment

Dear Sir /Madam

We all agree on one thing that unfortunately fire will always be part of Australia's environment, but we must have a strategy to prevent wild fires as much as possible in the future of Country Victoria.

So I am writing to air some views of the C.F.A. Volunteers, especially in the North East of Victoria and hope you take into consideration some of these thoughts in future planing of fire prevention for Victoria.

Another valuable resource is the Army who helped in this latest fire and would have gained valuable experience for their staff. In future with World Terrorism on the rise who knows, fire might be one of their ploys as they see the devastation it can cause. As the fire buggs have been a thorn in the side of the C.F.A. for many years.

The Armed Forces may well use a Fuel Reduction Burn in the Autumn to Winter as part of their training programme if co-ordinated with your Department along with the C.F.A. Volunteers. This being done in a controlled situation which is your best learning curve for young Volunteers and the Armed Forces.

A Cool Reduction Burn carried out in all Forest and Park Areas every 5 years around the state would reduce the fire risk in these areas. Instead of the large Summer Crews employed some of these people could be utilised in the later Autumn to help in Fuel Reduction Burns with local C.F.A. Groups. These were some of the Policies of the old Forest and Land Departments before amalgamation into the DNR & E and was a prevention of wild fires. It will also keep C.F.A. Volunteers coming along to replace the older ones and is a hands on training programme for all crews in Truck handling, Back Burning and Radio Communication as well as building a better rapport between the C.F.A. and Department Crews, who after all have the same policy and goals to save Victoria from wild devastating fires. A few days by each Brigade in the cooler time will prevent many of the larger fires in the Summer heat.

During the late Autumn early Winter your major resources are under utilised C.F.A. trucks sitting in sheds and crews doing mundane Training instead of hands on, such as Fuel Reduction Burns. The coordination between your Department and the C.F.A Crews would be of the utmost importance, as any lack of communication would strain the relationship even further between C.F.A Volunteers and your Department Officers in Victoria. As I know already exists, being a Volunteer for the past 35 years and the latest involvement being in the Beechworth area where some 14,000 Hectares have been burnt over a few days.

Hind sight is a great thing to have behind us, but we must learn from this situation and become better at what we do to reduce these Wild Fire Incidents, because the whole of Victoria suffers with Personal Life and Property loss along with the Native Animals and our beautiful N.E. Country side with our Forests and Towns.

I know your Department will be gathering as much information as possible on these fires, and you will have obtained better information as to the cause of the devastating wild fires throughout the country side. But please do not disregard your local C.F.A. Volunteers as they are your major work force and contain a wealth of experience as most of these people live and will continue to live in Country Victoria and have its future and welfare in their hearts.

I hope we all can learn much out of this devastation but I can see this as a most important bridge building exercise between your Department and the C.F.A. Volunteers your most precious resource. I know you have a limited budget as we all have but some of my suggestions will not tax this any further, but utilise these resources to a better degree as your Volunteers see it and I know I am talking for many of my fellow Volunteers in the N. E. Region.

Yours Faithfully


Michael Chambeyron

C.F.A. Volunteer (Killawarra Brigade)