

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SELECT COMMITTEE OF RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES**

Parliament House Canberra  
Canberra 2600

Ian Dundas  
Committee Secretary

20/09/03



**Re: THE AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRE HOME PROTECTION INFORMATION PROGRAM**

Dear Ian,

Thank you for your time on the phone on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2003.

This letter is to inform you and your committee of the activities now in hand in relationship to the development of the **Australian Bushfire Home Protection Information Program** as was detailed in our proposal to the committee.

It is being reported in many quarters that Australia now faces its worst ever bushfire risk season. With this and many other elements clearly front of mind, we have commenced the energetic construction of this very proactive community information program.

As we discussed when we met in Parliament House, we intended to have the first phase of this program up and serving the Australian public prior to the 2003 – 2004 Bushfire Season. We are going to make this happen!

Up front, we again ask for the Governments immediate financial assistance / support in bringing this unique and desperately needed **Bushfire Home Protection Information Service** to the Australian community, prior to the up coming bushfire season.

**Development and undertakings to date:**

- Construction of the '**Australian Bushfire Home Protection Information Program**' is now well under way and on track for launching to the Australian community as at the first week in November 2003.
- We have now appointed **Community Information Program Coordinators** in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. Training of these individuals is now under way. Negotiations are in hand for both ACT and QLD. These are the people that will drive the establishment of the program within all 'at risk' communities / local regions, i.e., Adelaide Hills, Dandenongs, Blue Mountains, Canberra as examples only.
- We have now travelled throughout Australia and met with senior personnel within many of the Country Fire Services, alerting them to the development and objectives of the program.
- We have established direct links with many small Australian businesses that produce the products that are required by home owners to actually enact protective measures on their homes / properties.



**We feel it is vital to again clearly state the objectives of this information service to the Committee:**

1: There are many excellent Community Bushfire Protection and Prevention Information resources available to the Australian Community and it is proposed that these will be directly linked to this program as and where such organizations agree to do so.

Many of these information resources are maintained by our states' Country Fire Services and are backed with professional community training and support services.

**BUT ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION, all of these information initiatives provide the 'WHAT SHOULD BE DONE', but DO NOT provide information on the HOW TO and WITH WHAT!**

***With respect, this is like telling a drowning man to grab a life jacket but not telling him where it is or how to fit it.***

The **Australian Bushfire Home Protection Information Program** not only proposes to provide ONE STOP "access to" all existing bushfire information resources, but take the next vital step in not only providing members of our communities with easy access to the information on **what should be done**, but then enabling them to actually **do it** by way of **direct access to the actual products and services needed**.

It is now our experience having travelled extensively throughout Australia that it is **Australian SMALL business** that has adopted the responsibility for creating and producing the products that will enable a home owner to effectively address the further bushfire protective measures throughout their home and property.

This market sector is, at this time, so new and so small, in commercial terms, that the major national and international corporations have not committed the necessary resources to the development of such bushfire home protection products.

These small businesses that have excellent, quality, home bushfire protection products do not have the financial resources in their own right to effectively communicate with the Australian Community.

***SO the drowning man is never advised as to where the life jacket is or how to fit it!***

Rightfully it is not the role, nor is it politically correct for Country Fire Services to be seen as undertaking the referral of members of the community to commercial enterprise or their products. This role must be undertaken by a removed and specific initiative that does not stand politically accountable. We propose that the **Australian Bushfire Home Protection Information Service** fills this vital community information delivery void.

We are delighted to report that we have now established access to a range of Australian Made products that will enable home owners to correctly address all critical areas of bushfire protection around their homes. The foundation for identifying these '*at risk locations / items*' has been drawn from the Australian Bush Fire Code – AS3959 and the application of practical thought and observation. As applicable all products meet with the standards as demanded by the AS 3959.

So, we now have the information program under construction, the products and services in place from Australian small business, and therefore the ability **to effectively advise the drowning man as to where the life jacket is and how to fit it.**

We have appointed the IT services company Classical Pty Ltd to design and launch the information program web site and thereafter maintain its operation. This work is now well under way.

## Community awareness and access to the Australian Bushfire Home Protection Information Program

We feel it is very important to again provide an overview as to how the community will become aware of the program and how they will access it in practical terms.

We propose, in general terms, to take the **grass roots, local community approach** to both the promotion and access elements of the service.

### The local community partners and their proposed roles:

#### - Local Council – Municipal Libraries / Community Service Centres

Due to the fact that the only economical way to drive the program is through the Internet, we propose the following community access initiative is established and maintained.

Whilst many of the members of our community have access to the Internet, many do not. To this end we propose that municipal libraries become an access point for such members of the community. Both *'In Library'* promotional materials and staff information packs are currently being designed for distribution through the **Community Information Program Coordinators**. This will enable members of our communities to access the information within the program with no demands on them to be computer / IT literate.

#### - Local Media

We are currently creating a package of **'BUSHFIRE HOME PROTECTION HOT TIPS'** editorials to print / broadcast ready. These editorial / broadcast packages are to be presented to local media for inclusion within their publications / broadcast programming. The work is done, all that is requested, as a community service, is that such media houses adopt and deliver the information to their communities leading into and throughout the bushfire risk season.

All editorials will steer members of the community to the Information Program and its local access points.

#### - Local Retailers

Through our **Community Information Program Coordinators** we will be inviting appropriate local retailers (mostly hardware stores) to establish Home Bushfire Protection product stands. The appropriate products will be stocked in store thereby enabling members of the local communities to access the products proposed within the information Program. Products that are not retail applicable (Home Bushfire sprinkler systems is a good example) will be promoted in store but not stocked.

Local business plays a vital role in protecting 'at risk' communities!

#### - Local Schools and educational resources

Whilst not included in the initial launching strategy for the program, it is proposed that all schools located within at risk bush fire regions will receive a **Australian Bushfire Home Protection Information Program Awareness Pack**.



## A REQUEST FOR SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT

Whilst there is naturally far more detail that can be entered into pertaining to the development and launching of the Program, we trust that this brief profile on the actual developments currently to hand will further assist and encourage the Select Parliamentary Committee to seek out an appropriate avenue from which a tenable amount of financial assistance can be secured and applied to the final development and subsequent launching of this bushfire home protection community information program.

We have invested both in financial resource and labour some \$150,000 to date in the conceptualisation, design and now hands on construction / facilitation of this program. We have not waited for financial support from the Government to commence the program, we have put our time and money where our mouth is.

We now respectfully ask the Government to financially back the final stages of the construction and launching of this important community information program, our resources are far from endless; there are only three of us at the heart of driving this program.

An initial sum in the order of \$180,000 would greatly assist in enabling the program to be nationally launched with excellent and positive effect to the interests of all Australians living within Bushfire Risk Regions over the upcoming bushfire risk season and beyond.

Our investment continues!

We propose that the Federal Government would be clearly and publicly promoted and recognized throughout the entire program as the key founding supporter of this national community information program.

Yours truly,



Grant Dybing  
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