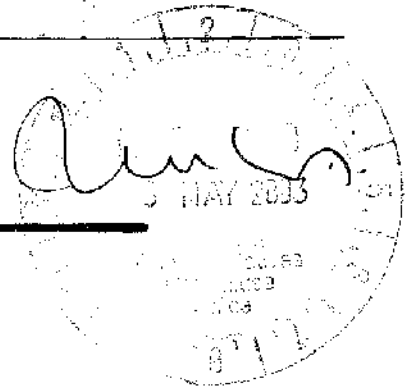


W J & K M Parker



1st May 2003.

To whom it May Concern.

I wish to present our family's observations regarding the Macintyre's Hut fire as seen from our property in the Cooper mine Hill area on South Wee Jasper Station during the initial days, and subsequently from Limestone, Clear Hills and Nottingham areas.

We were astounded to watch the progress of this fire with no visible intervention other than aerial observation from time to time over the initial days after it's ignition.

Weather conditions were mild for the time of year and one would have believed that earliest response to a fire in such an enormous area of extremely dry bush would be the highest priority.

The fire was allowed to expand apparently for at least three days with little effort to control it observed.

With available resources, particularly having observed the defense of the Bondo and Buccleuch softwood plantations during the latter days of the fire with fixed wing aircraft and fire retardant complementing helicopter and ground resources, one would be pretty sure that this fire, in at least the first three or four days, was controllable and with helicopter backup and access established to allow ground resources to be deployed, this fire should have been controlled and extinguished.

One gained the feeling, as the fire progressed, that there might have been intent to do a fuel reduction by default by some parties involved.

The fire continued to expand over the following week and while some great control lines were established, defense of these failed from time to time.

About the 15th the personnel deployed in the Limestone area including NPWS representatives requested permission from RFS to burn blackberries on the river frontage as we felt these posed the greatest threat to the Western bank of the river. The reply was "let sleeping dogs lie".

These blackberries caused the fire to cross the river on 17th in a period of gusty variable wind North of Limestone and presumably the outbreak in the Wyora property area, which appeared to occur at the same time. With limited resources the fire became established and continued to expand, the Wyora and the North Limestone outbreaks meeting on the afternoon of 18th.

The defense of this area West of the Goodradigbee River often did not rate enough significance to require the presence of RFS personnel or equipment except after extreme crises, and for very extended periods, only private units and no RFS officers were apparent.

The rest is history and massive losses of softwood, private and public hardwood and private property, houses and infrastructure eventuated.

WJ&KMParker

The eventual control of this portion of the fire was largely due to NSW State Forests intervention, without this, far more country would have been affected.

The enormous damage to the environment as a result of this fire is still evident as the countless tonnes of topsoil and debris continue to flow down the rivers and streams.

The image of environmental vandalism that has been attached to the farming industry has been surpassed by the inaction of the public sector on this occasion in devastating such an enormous tract of once beautiful country.

I cannot understand why retardant was not utilized on this occasion, one can only believe that ignorance or incompetence of those in command is responsible. Even in the latter stages the fire could have been rendered more manageable with the use of this resource.

The performance of retardant was clearly demonstrated by NSW State forestry when the threat to the Buccleuch softwood plantation occurred, and under heavy fuel loads and thick bush, the fire outbreak was extinguished by initial retardation with fixed wing aircraft, water application by helicopters then mopping up with ground crews.

Relatively minor expenditure incurred applying retardant as a means of gaining control of the fire in its infancy would almost certainly have saved hundreds of millions in assessable firefighting costs and losses of property, also the incalculable cost to the environment, flora and fauna, which conceivably may never fully recover.

I strongly support the need for fuel reduction in most bush country, but at the right time of year, as a cool burn, causing minimal damage to the environment, not incinerating all in its path, creating massive damage not only to flora and destruction of fauna, but sowing the seed for stripping of the topsoil into the waterways.

I am a lifetime farmer in my 60th year and I hope never to see or be involved with such destruction in future. I am not a "Greenie" but environmental vandalism of any kind I cannot abide, and the lack of early intervention and not utilizing all available means on this occasion I feel is nothing less than that.



John Parker and Family
The Dip, South Wee Jasper Station.