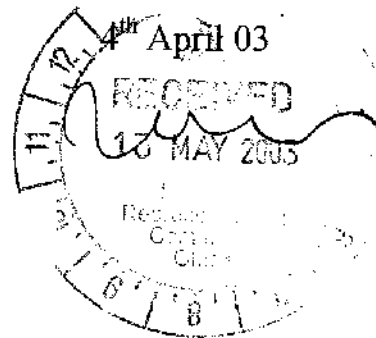


Joanna Gash, MP
Select Committee on Bushfires.
24 Berry Street
Nowra 2541.

Submission No.238



Dear Mrs Gash,

Please accept these observations on management of Australian bushland to protect and nurture both wildlife and human activities in what can become a hostile environment.

My experiences are collected over a lifetime that included Bushfire captain for the area north of the Katherine River in the NT.

Every year an aircraft fitted with a machine for dropping incendiary capsules would visit the area and assist ground crews to burn in preparation for the dry season. With this type of assistance most of the work was completed in a week of intensive operations.

The following is my opinion of a safe and effective method for bushfire control.

Never fight a bush fire on its terms!

1. You put men and equipment at risk.
2. You lose perspective of what is happening.
3. The temperature of the fire will be beyond your control.
4. The fire has no limitations.
5. Wildlife will be devastated. (Mans responsibility is conservation)

Start fighting the fire before it is started!

1. Assess your area of responsibility.
2. Divide that area into sections, remembering the general direction wild fires take.
3. Each section should be an area that is suitable for the type of country under your control.

4. Develop fire trails or boundaries (eg a river), from which you can back burn, around the perimeter of each section.
5. Any buildings or specific assets within that section should also be surrounded with a suitable back burn perimeter. (a fire trail)

Develop a register of private equipment and operators available to be utilised in an emergency.

Have a map of your area of responsibility developed with each section clearly identified and information of bordering areas and who and how to contact in those areas.

Have separate maps for each section within that area, great detail of that section should be shown and regularly updated. Reference grids included. Every person within your area should have a set of maps; spare copies will be available for visitors.

Conservation of the area is essential and to avoid hot wild fire destruction careful responsible management is required. Some areas will be protected from fire at all costs while other areas might be control burnt every year.

The decision to burn or not to burn an area during low fire danger periods should be at the sole discretion of the local community under the management of a community elected fire captain.

That community and in particular the fire captain should be free from fear of litigation on any fire protection decisions made.

Aircraft with fire starting capabilities should be available to those communities to assist in the controlled burning of areas by increasing the number of ignition points in the area.

Controlling the fire with many ignition points keeps the fire as cool as possible wild life and vegetation are not subjected to an impossible situation with a hot fire and ignition in the treetops.

At the same time the perimeter is being back burnt, units attend buildings or assets within the section and under direction from the captain, proceed to back burn from around that asset to make it safe.

The objective should be.

1. Locals become the one's controlling the situation.
2. The communities feel secure and involved.
3. Conservation is managed for its own protection.
4. In the event of a wild fire, you have managed sections that can be sacrificed in a controlled manner ahead of the wildfire. (Starving the wild fire).
5. No man is put at risk.
6. You will need a lot less resources.
7. You will use a lot less water.

Yours truly,



PS I also believe watering points both natural and man made is needed to assist wildlife to survive and flourish. Locking up large areas without attention to this is a wasted asset. Kangaroos have flourished because of man made watering points.