

Committee Secretary  
House Select Committee on the recent Australian bushfires

Submitted by:

IAN BEACIK

Address:

Date:

4 / 5 / 2003

**INQUIRY INTO THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES**

Dear Sir / Madam,

As victims of the recent bushfire in the Mt Buffalo National Park region we submit the following information & observations which may assist the Committee.

1. FUEL REDUCTION: During the 8 year we have owned our land no fuel reduction has been undertaken consequently the dense undergrowth resulted in a conflagration impossible to contain.

2. FIRE TRAILS Existing fire trails bounding our property have had no maintenance during our ownership apart from our own efforts which provided a reasonable navigable surface. Desperate last minute efforts at the height of the fires to open up these fire trails resulted in bulldozers providing a surface far worse. Had these tracks been maintained on a regular basis Fire Units would have been able to engage the fire on a number of fronts resulting in far less damage.

3. C.F.A. FIRE BRIEFING 19 JANUARY 2003

On Sunday 19.1.03 Buffalo Creek residents were requested to attend at 6.30 pm a fire briefing at the Buffalo Creek C.F.A. Building. My wife & I duly attended with other residents & during the most long meeting the information & issues raised had no relevance or pertinence to our region.

The C.F.A. Official who addressed the gathering clearly had no local knowledge & obviously had no idea where he was & might just as well given us a description on the fires

3. cont. burning out of control in the forests of Indonesia. This official was obviously a salaried O.K.A. individual who frankly should donate that days pay to the Bushfire Appeal because he certainly didn't earn it. In future might I suggest that the local Captain be given full & unfettered responsibility in all aspects of fire fighting in his local.

4. BACKBURNING On Sunday 19 January 2003 at about 8.30 pm our Homestead was seriously threatened by bushfire coming within 15 metres of the southern side. Our Homestead was saved at that juncture because of the actions of an experienced local volunteer who unilaterally backburned along the southern side of our Homestead. This prompt action by this volunteer created sufficient space between the Homestead & the core of the fire to enable the many Fire Units that arrived shortly after to contain the ferocity of the fire sufficiently to save the building. Of this I am certain! The intensity of the fire can be best gauged by viewing the attached photograph.

BACK BURNING cont. The fire continued past the Homestead on the southern side & the immediate danger passed at about 10pm that evening.

The local crews then assessed the situation deciding that backburns on the eastern, northern side would be crucial should the wind shift & threaten the Homestead & other buildings from those fronts.

Permission was sought to undertake this action at about 10pm. I then watched in disbelief as many crews surrounding our Homestead waited inert until 2am the following morning to be told that permission was denied. Consequently the following day when conditions were far from ideal crews were forced to backburn in order to save our buildings.

5. BUREAUCRACY In complete contrast to the Volunteers who exhibited commonsense & professionalism, sadly the performance of many of the Public Servants / Officers causing ANU after the Bushfires can only be described as lamentable, resulting in an obscene waste of Taxpayers money. There are too many to list, however will describe some structures exemplified

5. BUREAUCRACY cont Shortly after  
our harrowing experience, two (2)  
not one (1) Officers from DARE?  
D.S.E.? D.P.I. (Who knows) arrived  
cupboard in hand dispensing  
gratuitous advice & asking silly  
questions designed primarily to  
provide them with employment.  
One of these Officials sagely  
suggested we should have  
installed a sprinkler system on  
roof as a preventative measure.  
I didn't have the heart to tell  
him that our water supply is  
provided through poly pipe which  
had vaporized in the Bushfire  
2 days previous. He just wouldn't  
understand.

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