

Submitted by: Edward J. Baynes



Date: 9 / 5 / 2003

INQUIRY INTO THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES

Dear Sir / Madam,

I write these points as an individual with 47 years service with the Country Fire Authority. I served 27 years as either Group Communications Officer or Group Officer, 4 years as Brigade Captain and the last 2 years as Training Officer (and re-elected for the next 2 years) of our local Rural Fire Brigade.

The fires of Eastern Victoria have shown that planning for fire prevention and fire control requires some deep thinking so as to ensure that these matters will be given the priorities which they require.

Fire Prevention

Over perhaps several decades there has been a lowering of the priority previously given to fuel reduction in public lands and fire prevention in general.

As these areas of our nation are very fire prone and are increasingly populated, either permanently or through tourist type activities, this is totally illogical. It is taught throughout the fire service that each time you double the fuel load you four times the intensity of the fire.

Continually tracks are being closed in Parks for either traffic control or cost of maintenance reasons. These tracks are absolutely necessary for effective and safest fire fighting – to just open them for major fires is also illogical as they are most important access for crews committed to first attack on lightning strikes. All of the 2003 fires were small at one stage.

INQUIRY INTO THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES

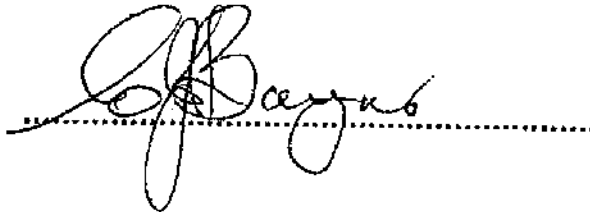
Eastern Victoria has a massive interface between Public and Private land and yet there is no attempt to manage this interface on a co-operative basis. It is imperative that planning for fuel reduction in what could be referred to as a "buffer zone" should occur as a joint operation. There needs to be compensation for damage to fencing, pasture, livestock and structural assets where the fires burn from Public to Private land. There is also the issue of the safety of landholders working under trees which overhang the fence lines; presently only three metres may be cleared which is totally inadequate.

These are but a few points which I feel are most important. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss dozens of issues with the House Select Committee, however I guess this cannot happen.

Yours faithfully

E. J. BAYNES **AFSM, OAM**

SIGNED:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. J. Baynes', is written over a horizontal dotted line. The signature is fluid and cursive.