



30th. April 2003

Committee Secretary,
House Select Committee on the recent Australian bushfires,
Dept. of the House of Representatives,
Parliament House.
Canberra. ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

I SUBMIT that the Country Fire Authority be given authority over its own volunteers when fighting a fire. They should not be totally under the control of the Dept. of Sustainability or Parks Victoria, or any other similar organisation.

In the recent fires in this district, there are numerous examples of brigades being stopped from going to a fire in their area, after having being called in. They were left sitting on the side of the road, while the department in charge of the fire monitored it, but let it burn on. While they sat, under threat of removal altogether if they moved on to the fire, there were fires approaching their own properties, in many cases.

I SUBMIT that local volunteers' knowledge of the terrain be taken into account when searching the best way to attack a fire to put it out. Advice offered was disregarded.

I SUBMIT that bush fire brigades, in areas such as this, be supplied with a vehicle of the type of the Toyota Landcruiser, robust enough to carry a tank of water in the back, and a passenger in the front. Local brigades, in hilly areas such as this have been provided, in recent years, with heavy trucks, which are usually too cumbersome to go up the hills to where the fires are. Local members have their own utilities of the type I recommend, equipped with manageable-sized tanks, and use them very efficiently stopping the fire before it gets out of control, in nearly all cases.

I SUBMIT that managers of national parks and state parks set up and follow a programme of weed eradication and weed prevention. Our parks have been choked with weeds, and things have been seen since the fires that hadn't been seen for decades. It is a good opportunity to do so, now.

I SUBMIT that a programme of slow-burning of the parks be set up and followed, also. At a suitable time of year, and in patches of a size that can be managed. This does not mean summer, or winter, when the bush is either too damp to burn, or it is too dangerous. A sensible programme, followed year by year, would have prevented the loss of 1.6 million hectares in Victoria alone, and a similar amount in New South Wales.

I SUBMIT that there should be caution exercised about proclaiming new parks, when there doesn't seem to be the will or the money to look after the existing ones.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ruth Nicholas". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop at the start of the first name.

R. L. Nicholas