

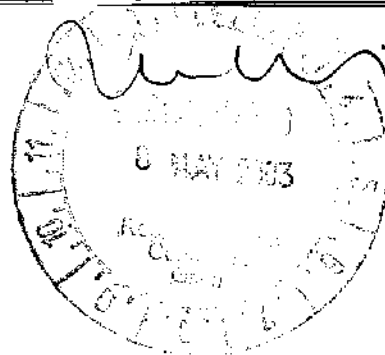
DR. RICHARD N. KOCSIS

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6th May 2003

Committee Secretary
Select Committee on the Australian Bushfires
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600
Australia



Dear Sir or Madam.

**Re: Submission concerning the recent Australian bushfires
'Bushfire Arsonist Research Project'**

By way of introduction I am a private forensic psychologist located in Sydney, Australia who has conducted much research in the area of arson. My recognised area of expertise is in the understanding and assessment of violent offenders and their crimes in both law enforcement and legal contexts. I am the author/co-author of over 70 scholarly articles that have appeared in both academic and professional mediums within Australia and throughout the world.

In 2002 I was commissioned by the Australian Institute of Criminology to write a manuscript that would offer the lay person a basic introduction to the psychological factors typically encountered in fire setting behaviour. For the Committee's reference I have included a copy of this manuscript. Of particular interest I would draw your attention to my concluding comments in this manuscript where I emphasise the deficit of empirically rigorous research on the specific topic of bushfire arsonists in this country. It is my belief that any genuinely effective future policy in this area must be well grounded in a substantive body of empirical research that provides a cogent understanding of the problem.

Consequently, it is my submission to the Committee that it consider funding a focused and empirically driven research project aimed at specifically understanding the constituent psychological factors underpinning bushfire arsonists. There are enormous benefits to be gained from such research that would enlighten our understanding of the aetiology and preventative issues, investigation and apprehension, and ultimately rehabilitation or incarceration of such individuals. I would be happy to assist in the undertaking of such research and am available to discuss such a prospect should the Committee desire.

Yours faithfully,

Richard N. Kocsis Ph.D.