

Submission No.452

*Richard
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THE DEVESTATING FIRES IN CANBERRA AND THROUGHOUT NEW SOUTH WALES HAS HIGHLIGHTED THE INADEQUATE BUSH FIRE POLICY OF HAZARD REDUCTION, MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF BUSH FIRE PRONE DISTRICTS.

THE CULTURE OF MAINTAINING TREES AND GROUND FUEL AT THE EXPENSE OF RISKING THE SAFETY AND PROPERTY OF RESIDENTS HAS TO CHANGE.

THE SHOALHAVEN WAS FORTUNATE THAT MORE SEVERE FIRE DAMAGE DID NOT OCCUR.

THIS WAS DUE TO THE BUSHFIRE FIGHTERS WHO, AT RISK TO THEMSELVES VOLUNTEERED THEIR UNTIRING EFFORTS TO PROTECT THE SAFETY AND PROPERTY OF RESIDENTS.

IN THE SHOALHAVEN THERE ARE 47 VILLAGES WHICH ARE BUSHFIRE PRONE, WHERE APPROPRIATE HAZARD REDUCTION WAS NOT UNDERTAKEN.

THE VILLAGES ARE SERVICED BY SINGLE ACCESS ROADS WHICH ARE OVERGROWN ON EACH SIDE WITH DENSE FIRE FUEL.

THESE ROADS SHOULD BE CLEARED OF THIS FIRE FUEL AND MAINTAINED AS CLEARWAYS TO PROVIDE FIRE BREAKS FOR RESIDENTS WHICH WOULD ALSO GIVE PROTECTION TO NATIVE ANIMALS TRYING TO ESCAPE FIRE.

THESE CLEARWAYS WOULD HAVE A DUAL PURPOSE OF ALSO IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY BY CREATING IMPROVED VISION OF NATIVE ANIMALS CROSSING THESE ACCESS ROADS AND WOULD REDUCE THE ANIMAL INJURY AND ROAD KILLS AS WELL AS REDUCING MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS.

CONSISTANT REQUESTS TO SHOALHAVEN COUNCIL TO HAVE THIS WORK UNDERTAKEN HAS BEEN IGNORED.

THESE VILLAGES IN THE MAIN ARE SURROUNDED BY NATIONAL PARKS AND OTHER STATE OWNED LANDS AS WELL AS SOME SMALL PRIVATE HOLDINGS.

THESE LANDS ARE THE MOST FIRE PRONE AREAS IN THE SHOALHAVEN, NO FIRE MANAGEMENT PLANS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC SCRUTINY AND COMMENT IDENTIFYING SPECIFIC FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION PROGRAMMES, OR FIRE BREAKS AROUND PROPERTIES, OR FIRE MANAGEMENT AND FUEL REDUCTION TRAILS.

THESE NATIONAL PARKS WHICH WERE ADDED TO BY TRANSFERS OF STATE OWNED LAND FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS DO NOT HAVE UP TO DATE MANAGEMENT PLANS.

FOUR YEARS AGO, CONJOLA NATIONAL PARK WAS EXTENDED BY THE TRANSFER OF CROWN LAND FROM THE N.S. WALES FORESTRY DEPT.,

THE FORESTRY DEPT., TO PROTECT THE VALUABLE ASSET THAT THEY CONTROLLED, HAD A MANAGEMENT PLAN IN PLACE WHICH INCLUDED FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION PROGRAMMES WHICH CONTROLLED GROUND FUEL AND FIRE TRAILS WHICH ALLOWED THIS WORK TO BE UNDERTAKEN.

SINCE THE TRANSFER OF THESE LANDS TO THE NATIONAL PARKS, THIS DEPT., HAS CLOSED THE FIRE TRAILS AND CEASED THE GROUND FUEL HAZARD REDUCTION PROGRAMMES

THE NATIONAL PARKS HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT FAUNA AND FLORA AND TO ASSURE THAT PUBLIC SAFETY AND PROPERTY ARE NOT PUT AT RISK.

BY ALLOWING THE BUILD UP OF GROUND FUELS AND NOT FOLLOWING A MANAGEMENT PLAN, THIS INCREASES BUSH FIRE INTENSITIES WHICH RESULTS IN THE FAUNA BEING BARBECUED AND THE FLORA BEING SEVERELY DAMAGED OR DESTROYED.

NATIONAL PARKS HAVE DEVELOPED A CULTURE OF PLACING TREES AHEAD OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY OF PROTECTING FAUNA AND FLORA AND PUBLIC SAFETY AND PROPERTY.

SINCE THESE FIRES LAST YEAR SOME MINOR CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED. ONE OF THESE IS THAT DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS TO COUNCIL'S ARE REFERRED TO THE RURAL FIRE SERVICE FOR COMMENT IN RELATION TO BUSHFIRE CONTROL.

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE INADEQUACY AND THE GENERAL FAILURE OF THIS POLICY.

A D.A. WAS LODGED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DWELLING ON THE EASTERN SIDE OF CORNELIUS PLACE, NOWRA WHICH IS A CUL-DE-SAC OFF MCKAY STREET.

THE BUILDER WAS REQUIRED TO ERECT A 1.8M. METAL BOUNDARY FENCE TO OFFSET THE FIRE HAZARD, CREATED BY THE REAR BOUNDARY PROPERTY, WHICH IS OVERGROWN BY TREES AND OTHER BUSH FIRE FUEL. THE PROPERTY IS QUITE SOME HECTARES IN AREA AND ZONED FOR MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
THIS PROPERTY ALSO ABUTS OLDER EXISTING RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES IN MCKAY STREET. THESE PROPERTIES HAVE 1.8M. TIMBER FENCES.

IT IS OBVIOUS THAT A SUBSTANTIAL FIRE BREAK SHOULD BE CREATED BETWEEN THE REAR ALIGNMENT OF THE EXISTING RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES AND THE OVERGROWN ABUTTING PROPERTY.

THIS HAS NOT BEEN DONE AND IS NOT BEING DONE IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES.

TO ASSURE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT A REVIEW AND CHANGE OF THE PRESENT POLICY MUST OCCUR.

THE PRESENT FIRE MANAGEMENT IS OBTAINED BY IMPOSING A FIRE TAX ON HOME OWNERS WHO INSURE THEIR DWELLINGS AND BUSINESS PREMISES THAT ARE INSURED. MANY DWELLINGS ARE NOT INSURED AND THEREFORE PAY NO TAX.

THE MOST FIRE PRONE AREAS IN THE SHOALHAVEN ARE THOSE PROPERTIES WHICH, THOUGH ZONED FOR RESIDENTIAL PURPOSES, ARE NOT SUB-DIVIDED, AND ARE BEING HELD FOR INVESTMENT AND SPECULATION.

NO FIRE TAX IS BEING PAYED ON THESE PROPERTIES WHICH ARE THE MOST FIRE PRONE IN THE SHOALHAVEN.

CONCLUSION.

ONE ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY TO MANAGE AND IMPLEMENT BUSH FIRE POLICY WITH AN EMPHISIS OF CHANGING THE PRESENT CULTURE TO ASSURE PROTECTION OF THE PERSONAL SAFETY AND PROPERTY AND FLORA AND FAUNA.

TO PROVIDE INCREASED FUNDING FOR BUSH FIRE MANAGEMENT BY ESTABLISHING A NEW SYSTEM OF BUSH FIRE TAXING WHICH IS FAIRER AND REMOVES THE INEQUITY OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM WHICH IS UNFAIR AND DISCRIMINARY.

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