


20 August 03

Mr. Kevin Broome

Mr. Gary Nain
Chairman
House Select Committee 2003 Bushfires
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Sir,

The best possibility of lessening the intensity of these bad fires which will occur is to allow more of the natural lightning strikes in the spring and autumn to burn out areas to Boundaries such as creeks, existing tracks, burns, or in some cases providing access tracks on adjacent ridges as fire lines.

This can be done at a fraction of the cost involved in trying to suppress a fire under extreme conditions, and thus avoid the ecological destruction by firestorm and the massive erosion caused by using heavy machinery in extremely dry conditions, which adds to the disaster. In my experience it is impossible to guarantee against fire and in extreme conditions [drought high winds, etc.], made worse by fuel buildup on the forest floor, it is impossible to stop.

I understand that fuel levels in the Brinderbella forest averaged near 40 tonnes per hectare. Many areas of East Gippsland forests have levels of fuel that will sustain similar fire intensity. My observations are backed up by research by Mr. D Williams [CSIRO Kapalga fire experience Kakadu]. This information is on the Internet.

I spent most of my life living and working in the Cann River area of East Gippsland. My grandparents and parents farmed there before me. Fire was a danger to life and property in the region which is heavily forested. It was a last minute wind change which saved the Cann Valley settlement in 1939. I can remember the glow of the fire to the north on the night of the wind change. Being involved in the timber industry I have helped in the suppression of many fires over the years and we were assisted in many cases by the presence of recent burns. An old pioneer resident once said to me that in 5 years the bush doesn't burn to remove litter, but past 7 years the litter burns too intensely, killing trees etc.

In the 1983 disaster, which I was actively involved in for many weeks I observed many instances where the big fire was subdued by recent, burns. The best example being where it burnt around the edge of a large fire that occurred in the Wingan National Park in 1979, 4 years previous. That evidence is there for anyone who wants to see it.

I understand that the Western Australian authority adopted an 8 tonnes per hectare max policy in the early 1960's and have not suffered a major disastrous fire since. In the Northern Territory they use a constant fire regime, as did the aborigines to great

effect. Surely it is not too much to select a significant ecological unit to use the above examples as a control to the insufficient fuel reduction policy of Victoria and NSW.

There have been many inquiries down through time I have covered coming to the conclusion that patch burning is necessary and has actually allowed the biodiversity that we inherited. They are ignored in favour of the "the no fire policy which causes the massive disasters that we have just witnessed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kevin Broome".

Kevin Broome