

Levan

Committee Secretary
House Select Committee on the recent Australian bushfires

Submitted by: Bob & Ren Bantick

Address: _____

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INQUIRY INTO THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES

Dear Sir / Madam,

(a) The impact of the massive bushfires was very great to the little businesses and townspeople / farmers of Mt Beauty, Tawonga and Tawonga South where for 4-5 weeks we were enveloped in smoke so thick that the doors and windows were constantly closed. Driving a car with headlights on. Some people, pro to chest complaints, wore masks. Many residents were left to look after as many as 5 homes, occupied by the elderly or neighbours who were absent or left town because of the threat. A great amount of stress when Big Hill was completely ablaze and out of control just above the town of Mt Beauty coming to within metres of houses. That night people were up all night collecting burning embers as they fell there was no Australia Day Celebrations or Presentation and to my knowledge has yet to happen or organized. The "Citizens of the Year" are still waiting! (in Mt Beauty our Monthly Community Market on 1st Feb. was cancelled but we brought everyone together instead to raise money for CFA raising \$10,000.00.

^B Due to the "Death" of logging in the region, and restriction on cattle grazing, both of which, help to reduce the undergrowth with breaks (or coupes) keeping tracks open and clear, we now have the practice where the words "National Park" means "Don't Touch It".

There is not much happening in the way of Land Management now, leaving build up of rubbish on the forest floor, impenetrable.

(C) Some people would complain about the slash burnoffs in Autumn and maybe the business people did complain about the smoke, but everyone realized, when these burnoffs needed to be done annually, it was for the benefit in not seeing a wildfire occur as has happened this year.

Our family have been bush people, working in the timber industry since before the 1939 fires. Much of the logging areas were resown and became a much better bush than the one logged. Now that wonderful regrowth is all destroyed. I must ask "Is it better to have National Parks and Wildfires, or to save Mills and Jobs - either way someone gets a job - eh?"

The bush workers loved the bush and gave assistance to many a bushwalker on his last legs and had, on many occasions assisted the Forests Commission with the use of their private Doyers during a fire - It's a sad loss because they were great people.

Let's Face It - If the work had been done during the years since doing away with our Forests Commission and the selling off of the S.E.C, both of whom knew the areas well, and did an excellent job keeping roads and Forests free of build up of fuel and their readiness at all times to extinguish a fire as soon as possible, If past practices were still in use we would never see anything like the 'Faux Pas' of 2000

② Just simply fight the damn fire as soon as it happens!!

Prevention is just about a bit of work during the colder times of the year. Of reducing fuel like the Authorities had been warned about, but chose to ignore.

③ Let people build where they want to - but also give back to the owners of the land and buildings, the power to clean up their own properties - in the interest of their neighbours, this should be a ruling. If a tree is leaning over a home or in danger of falling for any other reason, the owner of the home should have the right to have ~~the right to have~~ the tree removed in the interest of living humans and animals.

Not even the word adequate, equates to what we witnessed.

From our home in Tawonga South we watched the lightning hit Mountain Creek (as you would expect the Lookout people of "Parks" etc. to be doing)

The fires started instantly.

We watched also the lightning strike on Mt. Arthur.

We waited for the sirens and bustle.

While the smoke billowed from several small fires quite easily visible to us, the Mount Arthur fire gained momentum!

No sirens — No urgency!

Two hours it took before a spotter plane came overhead. Still no sirens. Amazing!

(11) Local people who knew the area, who have farms and machinery, C.F.A. and other volunteers seem to be paralysed by too many rules and regulations. C.F.A. were very good at keeping the towns safe but the "allowance" of that vast amount of loss just eaten up by the brutal fire, the trees, the God, the trees and the animals killed, all because the small fires which started were left for hours and days?

This could have been prevented.

Sounds like too many "officials" people out there governing the "who", does "what", when!

The volunteers were stifled. That's the issue.

5) The volunteers were eager and arrived to do a job, however the many C.F.A. units, who travelled great distances to help, were left standing around unable to help. They would have been cursing, to say the least, overpowered by authorities.

Would these volunteers return again under the same rules?

More detailed mapping of local landmarks would be a suggestion.

It's hard to know about the future

If we are to surrender more of our bush to National Parks Status and noting that this enquiry will not happen until the end of the year as well as the fact that logging of the burnt out ash timber has been knocked on the head. It's all a bit of a Shame.

Time Goes - Grass Grows + Who Cares?

R Basik Du Bantle

In comparison to the 1939 fires, this fire would have been so much worse if we'd experienced the same conditions they had. We were extremely lucky not have the high wind as predicted.