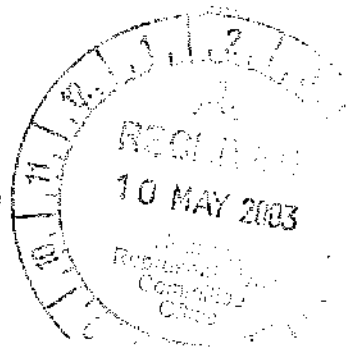


SAVAGE & LOVE

SOLICITORS

ABN 83 951 044 774



Your Ref:

Our Ref:

4443

Submission No.194

09 May, 2003

Committee Secretary
House Select Committee on the recent
Australian Bushfires
Department of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600 AUSTRALIA

Dear Sir,

RE: HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES

I enclose a submission by my client Vic Walker relative to this matter.

I note that submissions to the Select Committee must be received by Friday 9 May.

I also enclose a letter which I received from the Local (Nambucca) Rural Fire Service Superintendent in respect of Mr Walker's proposal.

I should be grateful if that letter of support could simply be attached to the proposal for circulation.

I would add that Mr Walker did not delay his submission to the Select Committee, he only learnt very recently of the opportunity to make a representation to the select committee.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "IAN R. LOVE".

IAN R. LOVE

Principal: Ian Love, LL.B.

Liability limited by the Solicitors Scheme, approved under the Professional Standards Act 1994 (NSW)

Victor Walker

09 May, 2003

Committee Secretary
House Select Committee on the recent
Australian Bushfires
Department of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600 AUSTRALIA

Dear Sir

SUBMISSION INQUIRY INTO THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES

***THIS SUBMISSION IS RECOMMENDING THE PRIVATE INSTALLATION OF
SELF CONTAINED DRENCHING SYSTEMS ON HOUSES.***

I have been a volunteer bush fire officer for some years now and I welcome the inquiry into the recent Australian bush fires which, amongst other things, devastated areas of the Australian Capital Territory.

I am making strenuous efforts to obtain backing to produce individual saturation fire prevention systems for individual owners and so far have not met with any success.

I propose to install systems which would in the main comprise a dedicated 5,000 gallon water tank, a five horsepower pump (seven horsepower for larger buildings) and a roof mounted network of PVC piping and sprinklers.

The system would be simply designed for all bush properties and for other properties including suburban properties near bush areas and would be separate from the domestic water supply and from the domestic power supply.

The pumps would be petrol driven and I estimate that a full tank of petrol would dispense three thousand gallons of water in an area which would exceed the surface area of the house in which the system has been installed by a margin of some ten metres on all sides.

As part of the system, gutter guards would be fitted preventing the build up of leaves and other inflammable materials and I anticipate that the parties installing the system would include one trained bush fireman who could advise generally at the time that the system is being fitted.

Until the demand for the systems has been tested the cost of installation and materials is speculative but I expect to be able to install each unit for a fee of \$6,000.00.

I have built a scaled down prototype for demonstration purposes and should be pleased to demonstrate it to the Committee.

Having regard to the Select Committee's terms of reference, I believe that my system could make a major contribution.

Using the lettering on your website:

- (a) "the extent and impact of the bushfires on the environment, private and public assets and local communities"

The system ought to prevent fires from damaging houses. The 3,000-gallon initial drenching should be sufficient but provided the house occupant refilled the petrol tank on the pump, a further 2,000 gallons would be available for any further contingencies.

The saving of property and perhaps lives clearly would be of benefit to private owners and the community in general. The freeing of fire fighting resources which would result from the installation of these systems should also benefit public assets.

- (b) "The causes of and risk factors contributing to the impact and severity of the bushfires..."

This proposal is not targeted at any property other than buildings but the saving of buildings would free fire fighting and other resources to deal with national parks, state forests etc. The system should indeed minimise the impact and severity of bush fires on houses.

- (c) "the adequacy and economic and environmental impact of hazard reduction and other strategies for bushfire prevention, suppression and control"

The proposal would contribute to the suppression of bushfires leaving resources for controlling other affected areas. Bushfire fighters who are installing the systems would intend to educate property owners in bushfire prevention and control.

- (d) "appropriate land management policies and practices"

Other than the matters referred to more appropriately below in relation to paragraph (f), this is of no relevance to the proposal.

- (e) "any alternative or developmental bushfire mitigation and prevention approaches, and the appropriate direction of research into bushfire mitigation"

The proposal is indeed a bushfire mitigation proposal. I do not believe that bush fires can be altogether prevented but the proposal ensures that the property owner is ahead of the fire by having the fire prevention equipment on site. I believe that my system will empower the owners to look after themselves in the first instance and to live with confidence in bush areas or areas which might be susceptible to fires.

- (f) "the appropriateness of existing planning and building codes...."

I believe that a major initiative could be taken in this area. Incentives could be given to developers to install systems such as my system and in some cases it might be appropriate to make the installation of such a system mandatory.

The potential loss in a fire susceptible area in terms of life and property is out of all proportion to the cost of installing such as system.

- (g) "the adequacy of current response arrangements for firefighting"

The firefighting services are under great pressure when bushfires are burning. Installation of my system would release firefighters for other duties, allow firefighters to be rotated off duty for rest periods and would allow the firefighting services to re-prioritize their responses if they knew that some areas were served by saturation systems.

- (h) "the adequacy of deployment of firefighting resources..."

Widespread use of my system would take pressure off public firefighting resources and add to the overall fire prevention resources. The public firefighting resources could then be more efficiently and effectively used.

- (i) "liability, insurance coverage and related matters"

I believe it would be in everyone's interests: the owners, the insurance companies and the community at large, if an incentive was given to owners who took serious fire prevention measures into their own hands and if premiums were reduced for protected properties in proportion to the reduction in the insurance company's exposure which would result from the installation of the safety system.

- (j) "the roles and contributions of volunteers, including current management practices and future trends"

I see the installation of the fire prevention system as an extension of the volunteer contribution to fire prevention.

My interest in producing this fire prevention system has come from my involvement in fighting bushfires. It cannot happen without significant support. I am prepared to devote

all my energies to making the system work and am looking for a grant to assist me in doing so. If the venture were successful I would anticipate repaying any grant and I would also welcome input from the Government at all stages of the project.

I would expect any grant to be made on the basis of the needs of the development of the system for example, the \$50,000.00 fee which I was informed by an engineer would be necessary to modify his machine tools to my specifications, the working capital necessary to assemble the system and the advertising necessary to draw it to the public's attention.

I would not anticipate any need for continuing design research. The system is simple and intended to add to existing fire mitigation measures.

I attach a letter of support from my local Rural Fire Service Superintendent.

Yours faithfully,

VICTOR WALKER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Walker", written over a horizontal line.

0265682599

All communications to be addressed to:

NSW Rural Fire Service
Nambucca Rural Fire Service
PO Box 551
Macksville, NSW, 2447

NSW Rural Fire Service
Nambucca Rural Fire Service
Kelly Close
Macksville, NSW, 2447



Telephone: (02) 65 682536
e-mail: phil.evans@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Facsimile: (02) 65 683386

Mr Ian Love

Your Ref:

Our Ref: B2/c 7

Vic Walker

Thursday, 8 May 2003

Dear Ian

I have recently had a meeting with a client of yours, Mr Vic Walker of South Arm NSW. Victor has presented his house saturation unit and video to me for support with his project. I believe that this system while still in the production phase has the potential to save life and property once installed in the rural environment.

The concept follows the guides put down in planning for bushfire protection and I'm sure that with some research and funding support this project could be of value to the community.

For any further information please contact the undersigned during business hours

Thanks

Phil Evans


Superintendent
Nambucca Rural Fire Service