

Submission No.313

Secretary,
Select Committee on Recent Bushfires
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Sir,

I have just completed a submission to the Victorian Enquiry. I also wished to respond to the Commonwealth invitation, but cannot produce another paper of substance, customised to your TOR requirements, within the time limitations you have set.

In any case, I do not have enough knowledge about the Canberra or recent NSW fires, to make an interstate contribution.

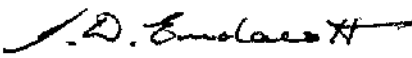
Therefore I am sending you a photocopy of my Victorian paper, in the hope that your Enquiry may be able to pick out relevant portions which may be useful.

I would just like to direct your attention to a few of my salient points :

- (1) The need to give full consideration to the huge amount of forest fire research which has taken place over the years, commencing about 1951. To form an opinion on the merits and demerits of Fuel Reduction Burning without giving weight to all this data would be a dereliction of the Committee's responsibility.
- (2) To complement the scientific side, the considered opinion of practising field foresters should be entertained - that the two pillars of effective forest fire control in Australia's sclerophyll eucalypt forests are :
 - a) An ongoing programme of Forest Fuel Management - both State Forest and Parks
 - b) As much forest vehicular access as can be afforded - both State Forest and Parks
- (3) My own conviction - that the Community Fireguard Programme, developed by the Victorian CFA, could well be accepted as a useful solution to the vulnerability problem of rural/urban interface and forest neighbourhood communities, in the light of the January 2003 experiences. (But my radical suggestion is that the Forest and Park Management Authorities should also be vitally involved) I envisage CFG inducing, facilitating and assisting threatened communities to become largely responsible for their own safety, vis-à-vis bushfires.
- (4) I am sceptical about the cost/benefits of such heavy dependence on helicopter water bombers. I would very much like to see the Enquiry recommending a searching appraisal.

I attach a copy of Phil Cheney's contribution to a Bushfire Forum at ANU, of several weeks ago. This paper illustrates the thinking of a contemporary forest scientist who also capable of giving us a reality check.

Yours sincerely,


Norman Endacott