



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

Submission No.468

Mr Gary Nairn MP
Committee Chair
Select Committee on Recent Australian Bushfires
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

July 30, 2003

Dear Sir,

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES
KATOOMBA PUBLIC HEARING - 9th July 2003**

Thankyou for the opportunity to appear before the public hearing and respond to issues raised by members of the Select Committee. Following our presentation, statements were made by other parties which we believe should be clarified.

1. It was claimed that Blue Mountains City Council has rejected developments on the basis of high fire risk, leaving people with land they could not build on.

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society has been closely monitoring development applications over the last few years and knows of none where development has been refused outright because of high bushfire risk. Some proposed designs or uses have been rejected as inappropriate for a high fire risk area, but we know of no land where no development at all has been permitted. Council practice appears to be, to offer to buy land from the property owner if all development options are refused. We suggest that the Committee get verification of this from Council.

We are aware that Council does reject developments in some instances on the basis of high fire risk, eg on August 15th 2003, an application for a SEPP 5 development at 37-41 Old Bathurst Rd Blaxland was rejected. This rejection does not preclude other types of developments on this land. SEPP 5 developments are medium to high density developments for a particularly vulnerable group of people - aged and disabled people, and subsequently greater safeguards are required.

2. The Blue Mountains City Council is unable to zone all extreme fire risk land appropriately to prevent development

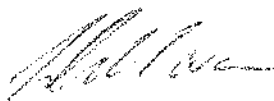
Areas of known extreme fire risk should not be developed as this puts the lives of both residents and fire fighters in danger. Council needs funding from government to allow it to zone such areas for 'no development'. Planners have indicated through both the LEP 91 and DLEP 2002 processes that they have been constrained in the amount of land zoned Environmental Protection, by the size of council's acquisition budget. The Environmental Protection Zone prohibits development except for basic utilities etc.

3. The Federal Government could play a leading role in allowing more appropriate planning

The Society believes that it would be more economical and humane for the Federal Government to provide such 'buy back' funding to prevent extreme fire risk land from being developed, than to provide increasing amounts of emergency fire fighting funds. In the Blue Mountains there is pressure to extend development further out along ridgelines into higher and higher risk areas. If this occurs, more resources will be needed for fire fighting and for rehabilitation funding.

Thankyou again for the opportunity to be involved in this Inquiry

Yours faithfully



on behalf of
Kevin Bell

President

cc Mr Kerry Bartlett MP
Mr Michael Organ MP