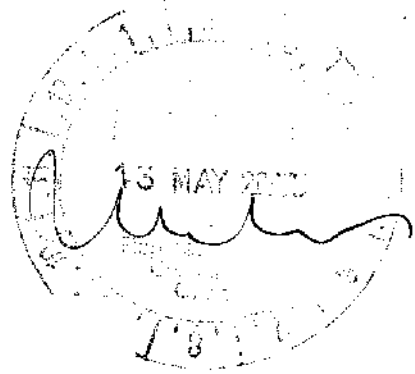


4<sup>th</sup> May, 2003



Submission No.275

Dear Sir/Madam

The following are two short reports of activities regarding the "confusion" and disregard volunteers were exposed to at the recent fires in the North East.

It is my strong belief that as volunteers our direction should come from Group Officers and local brigade officers.

The combining of DSE and CFA at one central headquarters forms a large bureaucracy which hinders actions and is very slow to react. Also local knowledge is ignored in the majority of cases.

To make efficient use of aircraft water has to be accessible and close by, which I feel requires the building of strategic dams across the area, e.g. High Plains National Park etc. These dams only need to hold five (5) megalitres, just sufficient for firefighting purposes.

**Ray Blewett**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant**  
**MUDGEGONGA RURAL FIRE BRIGADE**

**Ray Blewett, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, Mudgegonga Rural Fire Brigade****18/01/2003**

- 1350 hrs Phone call from Myrtleford Comms to respond to Myrtleford as soon as possible.
- 1420 Arrive Myrtleford. Kitted out and left Myrtleford Fire Station for Ovens at 1430.
- 1440 Arrive Ovens.
- Note** Totally ignored for 20 minutes until DSE were told by us that we were returning to Myrtleford Fire Station. As we walked away they responded. Their attitude was rude and arrogant. We picked up the fire truck and headed to the Deer Farm. Arrived at approximately 1515 hours.

All well until change over of crew at 2045.

Treated as if we did not exist and ordered about by some unknown with **two vests** on – absolute confusion. Eventually told to take fire truck and return to Ovens. Started the truck and start to move out, we were then ordered out of the truck. Stood around for 20 minutes until local brigade members decided to take matters into our own hands, either verbally or physically and moved us to Ovens. Return to Myrtleford Fire Station at 2130.

**Wash Up** Leave local CFA group members to organise things. DSE organisation completely chaotic. Strike Force crews are a publicity program and a total waste of resources.

**Stanley Fire Report – 21/01 – 22/01/2003**

- 1830 hrs Depart Shed for tea at Myrtleford.
- 2000 Arrive Beechworth and stand around for 1½ hours after checking in. It was then realised we were to go to Beechworth Fire Station.
- 2200 Arrive Stanley and take our truck in to contain fire at Lower 9 Mile Road until 0700 hours on 22/01. Removed from fireline when we were doing some good to join Strike Team. Aptly named.
- Followed Strike Team Leader Ron Cox from Longwood for 2½ hours – did nothing – waste of time and resources.
- 1000 Return to Stanley Fire Station and sit about until release time at 1130 hours. Would be still sitting there if not for DGO Neary.
- Washup** Strike Teams a total waste of resources and should be scrapped immediately.