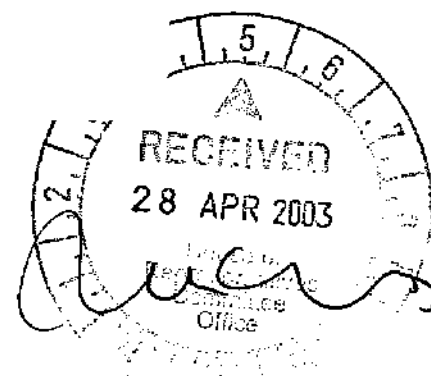


## Submission No.53

Committee Secretary  
Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA  
ACT 2600



Attention: Chairman Gary Nairn MP EDEN-MONARO

### HAZARD REDUCTION IN THE NATIONAL PARKS

*I make the following submission to the inquiry, to examine the adequacy and economic and environmental impact of hazard reduction and other strategies for bushfire prevention, suppression and control .*

Before mankind the forests were managed by nature. Without nature doing its own thing we would not have the beautiful forests and animals and birds we have today. Nature has kept the bush alive and well for millions of years.

Throughout the evolution of time nature managed the existence of the entire flora and fauna, developing a balance which best suited the complete environment. Part of the development was how the seeds and plants regenerated after low intensity fires burnt the forests. Fire is part of nature's ability to germinate seeds.

Before mankind lightning constantly lit fires during the summer. These fires burnt unhindered until they were extinguished by rain or they ran out of fuel to burn.

Because the bush was burnt frequently, there was never a heavy build up of fuel on the forest floor. When a fire did burn there was seldom enough heat generated to ignite the canopy of leaves and twigs in the treetops; the fires mainly burnt the forest floor not harming the trees.

For thousands of years the Aborigines did additional burning of the bush. When they had hunted out an area, they lit fires when leaving the area to reduce the undergrowth enabling them to see and hunt the game when they returned. Maybe they had worked out that if they burnt the bush frequently there would be more animals survive the fires and in turn they would have more animals to hunt.

Each summer the stockmen took their cattle up to the high country to graze, they lit fires as they were leaving the high country to get rid of the rank snow grass, and to create fresh green grass when the autumn and winter rain came. The fires were also lit to burn the windfalls and limbs that were torn from trees by the weight of the snow. When the bush was tinder dry in the summer, fires that were lit by lightning burnt with less intensity, resulting in minimal damage to the flora and fauna.

If there is an excess fuel load on the forest floor it will generate intense heat like a blast furnace. The temperature will be raised to the point where all wood will burn, even the greenest wood and the biggest trees will burn away until there is only ash

left. When heavy rain occurs from following storms, there is nothing left to stop extreme erosion of the steep slopes on the mountainsides.

**When the fire gets low in your fireplace at home you get cold, to create more heat you put more wood on the fire, the same result occurs in the bush, more wood burnt creates more heat.**

Hazard reduction has not been carried out in most of the Kosciuszko National Park since the National Park was created approximately 60 years ago. The horrific fires that we have seen this year will have killed a large percentage of plants, animals and birds because of the intense heat and the speed that the fires travelled.

The people who think they can manage the bush better than nature have bought about the devastation that we have seen created by the bushfires this summer of year 2003.

The present managers of the National Parks are the biggest threat to the survival, of our flora and fauna.

Scientists and other people that have been given the responsibility to manage the National Park, have failed, it is time they admit they are responsible for the outcome of the catastrophic fires this year, and make immediate decisions to rectify the bad management practices that are currently in place.

Or else come out in the open and admit that they will not hazard reduce the bush and clearly state the reasons for their decision. Instead of giving lip service to a concerned community, as they have obviously been doing.

Why don't the scientists take notice of how nature was able to preserve the bush? Nature has the answers, acquired over millions of years, of adapting plants and animals to the environment they live in. Part of the environment is bushfires.

The managers of the National Park must put in place management programmes to continue nature's way of managing our bush. If they can't do this responsibly then another body will have to be set up to look after our National Parks and our wildlife.

I await a response and thank you.

Yours



RR Walker