

Personal submission to the Senate Inquiry into National Parks.

The problem I have with the management practices of remote environs is that few of them seem to have sufficient, if any, consideration for the habitat of native flora and fauna, especially fauna.

We hear the demands of recreation and industry, but especially recreation, who promote policies that pander to the arm chair voters that wish to have a 'pristine' environment. The anomaly is that their policy of 'lock it up and leave it' is diametrically opposed to the way that the Australian environment has been developed by the indigenous peoples.

Undoubtedly, when, early in the twentieth Century, Mr Miles Dunphy started his campaign for National Parks there was a need for a moratorium. Extractive industries were not managed sufficiently and the traces of their mining activities have never been restored. There are still massive quantities of machinery in remote areas of Victoria that will never be removed because the cost of that removal, both in financial terms as well as environmental terms is too large.

I am hoping that the Senate Inquiry will heed the remarks of the Prime Minister recently when Mr Howard drew attention to history and our lack of understanding of history.

I suffer from a misspent youth and I have no educational qualification that will make you heed my words. However, I am well read on this subject and I rely upon the following resources. I wish to commend them to your Inquiry.

When it comes to the Fire History of Australia, I rely upon 'The Burning Bush – A Fire History of Australia' author, eminent world fire historian Prof. Stephen J Pyne, Arizona University.

For recent research into the study of fire and Fire Science in Australia I rely upon advice from Prof. Phil Cheney, CSIRO Canberra.

For fire fighting as it used to be in the 1980's when my source was a very senior official in the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, I rely on information and advice from Mr Athol Hodgson. His experience was at the start of green political interference in environmental management.

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For fire fighting as it is today, with the Green control of methods of fire fighting, I appreciate the fact that sometimes during his busy schedule of activities, Mr David Tainsh, Chief Fire Officer, DSE, Gippsland is prepared to discuss the issue of fuel reduction burning with me.

While David is very guarded in what he says to me and is painfully loyal to his Minister. I have often felt that, giving him a bottle of scotch to loosen his tongue would remove his reserve. This would allow me to hear how he really feels when his work is so carefully guarded by 'spin doctors' and the unattractive green policies that have been adopted by his political masters.

I am sure that David appreciates the stand made by Mr Martin Ferguson MHR, recently when he (Martin Ferguson) deplored the insidious input of green politics into the Labor Party.

In concluding the Prime Minister's comment upon our knowing our history, I would like to link that with fire history in Australia.

1. As early as AD 1642, Abel Tasman, followed by Hooker deNyptang in 1697 made entries in their logbooks, reporting smoke and flame along the coast
2. In 1773, Tobias Furneaux, exploring the coast of Tasmania recorded that 'there was a continual fire along the shore ... Tasmanians habitually carried firesticks ... applied fire beyond their windbreaks and throughout the interior.
3. Francois Peron and Baudin, a little later, commented in their log books regarding the systematic application of fire.
4. After Captain Cook, who with Joseph Banks logged much smoke and fire, Leichardt, Sturt, Stuart, Mitchell, Eyre, Gregory, Giles, Arthur Phillip and George White all recorded the use of fire.

This surely has to be overwhelming proof that Australia is founded on fire and must use fire in its environmental management.

In conclusion, I am certain that the qualities of our Australian environment with its powers of recuperation would enable us to move towards the pristine environment that Captain Cook found in 1788 when he landed at Botany Bay.

The answer to our problems of management of our environment lies in the quantity and quality of cool burns to reduce forest floor fuel loads.

Yours faithfully,

John Cribbes