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MAY 2003

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SUBMISSION TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S INQUIRY INTO THE  
RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES

28 April 2003

1. There is a requirement for more fire prevention to be carried out in the forests and bushlands that are controlled by State Government bodies.
2. In the event of fires starting they need to be immediately and aggressively fought and put out.
3. The Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) should commit all resources quickly to fight the fires and not leave fully crewed CFA tankers sitting at home in sheds whilst members are then forced to commit private equipment. This was the case in the El Dorado fire, where authorities took at least 5 hours to even begin countering it.
4. CFA, DNRE Air Wing requires improvement. Helicopters in air when El Dorado fire started should have been committed to that fire. They may have contained that fire in the first 30 minutes.
5. The Commonwealth should give consideration to striking a medal to be awarded to all personnel who went in harm's way. That is those personnel who actually held hoses went on trucks and fought fires. Most of these people volunteered for a very dangerous job for week after week giving up their jobs and holidays and leaving their own homes and properties unprotected. They therefore deserve some recognition by a grateful nation. If these people had done a similar job as members of the armed forces they would receive medals as a matter of course.

I hereby bring these points to the Committee's attention.

Yours sincerely,

*R.A.C. McDonald*

Mr Robert A C McDonald