



**Timber Communities Australia**  
**Southern Tasmanian Branch**

**Submission to:**

**House of Representatives Select Committee on the Recent  
Australian Bushfires**

**Prepared by Richard G. Gardner**  
**Bachelor of Forestry**  
**Member of Institute of Foresters of Australia, Inc**

Fires are a natural phenomenon in the Australian landscape and are inevitable as history since settlement consistently demonstrates.

Fires result from a build up of fuel over time with drier forests and grassland more prone to burn than wetter forests.

Drought and wind are major factors in determining the severity of fires.

Fuel reduction is the critical means of restricting damage to life, property and environmental values but comes at economic and environmental costs which are not popular to Government or the public at large.

Our biodiversity has been subject to fires over thousands of years since the ice ages and is the product of fire. We should then not fear the environmental damage caused in fuel reduction, knowing that it is minimal compared to severe wild fire and that nature is resilient enough to bring about recovery, even after severe wild fire.

The public dislikes smoke which is an inevitable consequence of fuel reduction by burning, but will have to be prepared to accept much more smoke in the future from fuel reduction, if better protection from severe wild fires is to be achieved.

Governments and the public, through taxation, will have to be prepared to meet the very considerable costs associated with an Australia wide adequate fuel reduction program, if better protection from severe wild fires is to be achieved.

State Governments and particularly NSW and Victoria have been irresponsible, in my view, in creating new National Parks without adequate resources for

management. This has been done at the expense of well managed native forest that had provided timber and employment in rural areas. Sadly, as a result, mills have closed and employment opportunities lost due to the Green voting influence of city dwellers and the desire of Government to seek popularity.

The forced closure of sawmills and decline in demand for native forest logging contractors has also seriously run down a traditional, ready-made, firefighting force that could always be mustered at short notice, to tackle wild fires in the early stages.

Native forests that are managed to provide timber also have access for the public, greater use of fire for regeneration operations and fuel reduction and better protection from wild fire due to the intensity of management and access.

National Parks, on the other hand, have less access, considerable public pressure not to carry out fuel reduction, and a much lower level of field management due to other priorities and budget limitations.

The lack of access in National Parks makes fire fighting more difficult and dangerous than in forests managed for timber production

Richard G. Gardner  
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