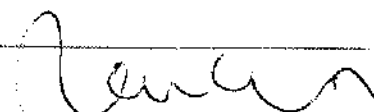


Newsome, Silvana (REPS)

From: Diane Blackwood [di@blackeng.com.au]
Sent: Thursday, 22 May 2003 9:39 AM
To: Committee, Bushfires (REPS)
Subject: Victorian Fires



To whom this may concern

The recent devastation of fires need not have been so vast in East Gippsland if the Logging Contractors deployed to be on the spot were allowed to have contained the fires at a time when they were still manageable. I was told by a contractor he had to sit at the edge of the forest and watch as the elements took control because DSE staff had to wait for a senior member to attend and supervise. These men work in the bush, live in the bush and have knowledge of the terrain like the back of their hand and they had their hands tied. The weeks ahead saw them asked to doze fire breaks that should have already been maintained. The many homes that were saved was a combined effort, but a shame to have been allowed to be such a huge affair.

The issue of 'who' was in charge and who was going to give out orders was far more important to those first at the scene rather than focusing on putting out the fire. DSE staff, CFA staff and volunteers quite rightly waited for instruction - but why? The fires picked up speed with weather condition and left them only able to skirt the edges. Should anyone have put out the fire, no doubt we would not be hearing about it...but the DSE would not have achieved the massive maintenance program and back burning exercise they were able to undertake.

The frustration of our system allowing the National Parks to suffer in the way they have and now regenerate under their own time ready for the next generation of devastation is hard to cope with. While debate whether salvage Logging will occur in State Forest is equally frustrating, I fear that there too, a mentality of let nature control us reins. As everyday lost means less wood that could have been utilised instead of wasted, and DSE staff work in circles of 'will we, wont we', very few understand what a great shame it is we have to import such a product to replace what we could have had.

When will we ever become the clever country and not pander to nonsense that threatens future generations of rural inhabitants ?

Diane Blackwood
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