

23/05/2003

Phillip Thompson
23 May 03

To the Federal Bushfire Inquiry Committee:

We, the members of the Stanley Rural Fire Brigade would like to put forward some recommendations to your committee.

1. The D.S.E. and Parks Victoria should receive more funding to enable them to do more controlled burns in all vulnerable areas i.e. Like Stanley and other rural towns.

2. To maintain fire breaks and fire trails. There are fire breaks around the southern end of Stanley that have been blocked with fallen trees since the 26th of November 2002. The main cause of this was due to a tornado like storm that went through on this day.

We propose that they (the trails & breaks) should be cleared of debris and graded in spring annually. Fire trails that are blocked are a death trap for fire fighters regardless of fire conditions. Too much time is wasted waiting for bulldozers to clear tracks to enable fire trucks access. As was proven with the recent bushfires in the area.

3. Stanley had less than two hours to organise itself this year when the fire came over the Dingle Range. Our one and only fire tanker was at the Eldorado fire. Normally Stanley is a township of approximately 550 people. During the fires we were able to manage around 400 meals per day from the fire shed. This was managed without facilities like hot water, showers; cooking facilities had to be brought in (a BBQ on loan from the Stanley Primary School) and one toilet which had to be emptied every four days. It was a trying time for all concerned. The women that cooked and fed the firefighters 24 hours a day for over two weeks did a magnificent job under very traumatic conditions.

4. We at this Brigade hope that a lot will be learnt from the fires this year. We feel that more funding of new practices and an overhaul of forest and Parks management should be implemented immediately and not just talked about or put in the proverbial "too hard basket".

5. One point in particular that needs to be made is about local knowledge. It was felt that a lot of the other brigades wasted a lot of valuable time and energy familiarising themselves with the area (due to no fault of their own). As maps are inadequate, which may lead to dangerous situations. Our solution being that one local member to each foreign truck would go a long way to counteracting this problem.

In conclusion to the above mentioned, we feel that the air support, the heavy machinery operators and all the hard work and effort put in by everyone as a community was instrumental in the preservation of our small township.

Regards

Phillip Thompson
Fire Captain
And all members of the Stanley Rural Fire Brigade.