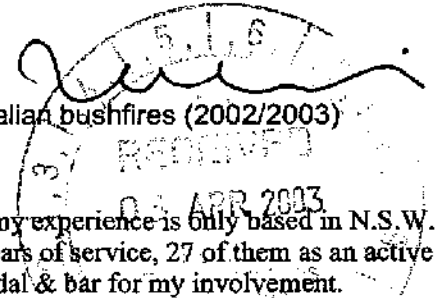


Dundas, Ian (REPS)**Submission No.4****From:****Sent:** Thursday, 3 April 2003 3:47 PM**To:** Committee, Bushfires (REPS)**Subject:** Submission to House Select Committee on the recent Australian bushfires (2002/2003)

Sir,

I wish to make a submission regarding the recent Australian bushfires although my experience is only based in N.S.W. I am a Life-member of the Hawkesbury Volunteer Rural Fire-service, with 35 years of service, 27 of them as an active Deputy-Captain of the East Kurrajong Brigade and have received a National Medal & bar for my involvement. I have been a member of the "Advisory Committee to the Snowy Mountains Region of the N.P.W.S." for nearly 9 years, am a past member of the Hawkesbury River Trust (lower Hawkesbury Committee), am a landowner with a 33 H.A. registered Wildlife reserve, and have attended The Nature Conservation Council of N.S.W. Ecological Bushfire Conference 24/25 Th March 2000 and their "Ecological Bushfire Workshop 9/10 Ht Feb.2002".

The reasons for pointing out the above are, to advise that I have not only been an Active Fire-fighter with on ground experience, but have listened to and been involved with all the discussions of **BIODIVERSITY, Threatened Species, Soil-conservation, World Heritage, Sustainable-development, ECT. ETC.**

Overview

The scale and the intensity of the fires of 2002/2003 as well as the fires in N.S.W. in 2001/2002 and the fires in 1998 and as far back as 1994 can all be attributed to one cause only. **"Land-management"**

In N.S.W. (and probably the A.C.T. and VIC. as well). the Urban Environmental movement in the form of; *Nature Conservation Council, Wilderness Society, National Parks Assoc, Colong Foundation for Wilderness, Total Environment Centre*, all with cross memberships and mainly consisting of urban Green's and academics who have no practical experience or know-how of the bush and it's long term workings, have undue influence on Bureaucrats and politicians of most parties!

This in turn results in legislation like *"The Native Vegetation Act"* *"Threatened Species Legislation"* *Wilderness Declarations"* and other environmental legislation's, which make it practically impossible for Land-owners to properly manage their properties and maintain a proper **Hazard-reduction**, programs.

N.P.W.S. of course are totally dominated by this group of urban green's and although some of their ground staff and Rangers can see and know the outcome of their misguided policies, the middle-management and their politically dominated heads can not see further than their nose, and continue with their Ideologically driven flawed management practices of declaring more land into WILDERNESS. and frustrating the "Review of Environmental Factors" needed before Hazard-reductions can be implemented, in the mistaken view that they are protecting the BIODIVERSITY and the Environment.

The fuel loads that have built up because of the above process are totally responsible for the intensity and the scale of the recent fires, and Fire-fighters are now only being used as fire suppressors in constantly more dangerous conditions, instead of acting in a fire prevention (management) capacity!

The cost to the Taxpayer through the necessity of the massive fire fighting operation and the use of Aircraft and Choppers has also gone through the roof.

The 1994 Coronial Inquiry made 125 detailed recommendations and was particularly concerned about the inadequacy of **Hazard-reduction**. The evidence satisfied the court conclusively that throughout N.S.W. during the period 1989-1993 the fuel load was not managed as intended by Parliament and high fuel loads were principally responsible for the intensity of the uncontrollable fires..

The 1998 performance audit report, titled "The Coordination of Bushfire Fighting Activities" (Auditor Generals Report 1998) recommended; **the need to improve hazard reduction strategies and to support local communities in this regard.**

The 2001 Policy Review Report for Bushfire Hazard Reduction Proposals, focussed on **clarifying and simplifying the approval process for hazard reductions.**

The 2002 Joint Committee on Bushfires, made a range of recommendations, such as;

The committee acknowledges the example of effective use of the zoning approach to hazard reductions presented by the Kurrajong Heights Rural Fire Brigade.

The committee notes that N.P.W.S. has acknowledged that it has not carried out to the full extent it's planned annual program of hazard reductions in many of it's reserves and parks and that this is a matter of concern for land holders whose property adjoins N.P.W.S. tenure and for the fire fighters within those districts.

The committee acknowledges that knowledge of local conditions is critical in determining when hazard reductions should take place and what hazard reduction is most appropriate.

The committee notes that total fire exclusion from forest area may lead to extreme fuel build up over lengthy periods, both in terms of fine ground fuel litter and in scrubby understorey growth and this also constitutes a change in habitat and ecology with possibly deleterious impacts on some flora and fauna.

The committee notes that controlled, cool burns for hazard reduction purposes minimises soil damage, by leaving the soil structure and humus content intact, while destroying the fine fuel litter.

In spite of these, and many other recommendations from the various enquires, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the various bureaucrats controlling the management of PUBLIC LANDS do not seem to listen, and continue with their Ideologically driven mismanagement of our open space.
