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SUBMISSION TO;
SENATE COMMITTEE investigating
'The effectiveness of threatened species and ecological communities'
protection in Australia'.

FROM;
EAST GIPPSLAND WILDFIRE TASKFORCE INC.
Chairperson ; John Mulligan

TO;
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
P.O. Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

This submission addresses concerns regarding

1. The role of fire in natural systems and forest management's failure to achieve sufficient fuel reduction to enable species survival .
2. The area of concern is Far East Gippsland in Victoria.

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Submission as follows;

Far East Gippsland was , when first settled by Europeans , generally open forest with a grassy understorey. It was maintained in this way by the patchwork type burning carried out by indigenous peoples and also by Nature itself by the use of lightning. This environment was a great home for bush animals. The early settlers and graziers continued the practice of patchwork burning , thus maintaining the natural environment until about the 1940's when government bodies assumed management and introduced 'no burn' policies.

The result has been a bush that has become dense with woody scrub that has both killed out the grasses and provided more fuel . Consequences have been hotter fires such as in 1983 when two thirds of the Cann River Forest District was devastated . Most of the wildlife was killed because in these areas no patchwork of differing age growth existed as a retreat. This bush has now grown back into DENSE young forest far different to the original. It supports far fewer animals in both species and number. With Department of Sustainability and Environment burning programs that are clearly inadequate , the area is facing another devastating fire risk which will decimate the remaining wildlife.

It is imperative that we return to a more natural fire regime to try and salvage some native animal life before it is too late.

At present in our area forests are regarded as a source of supply of raw products for the timber industry. Harvesting the young regenerating trees from the '83 fire for pulpwood in a clearfelling operation has similar landscape implications to that of a very hot fire . Regrowth tends to be a monoculture which has implications for habitat for flora and fauna and thus another man made stressor is added to an already at risk environment.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit.

East Gippsland Wildfire Taskforce

Contact for any further communication; Mr John Mulligan.

Per M.Stevens

Secretary.

