



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 28 March 2003

Bushfires committee calls for submissions

The new federal parliamentary committee set up to investigate what can be done to minimise the impact of bushfires has called for the public to make submissions. The committee was established by the House of Representatives.

The inquiry is being advertised in national and regional media starting this weekend.

The committee chair, Gary Nairn, the federal member for Eden Monaro, said that his electorate was one of several severely affected by the recent fires and that he and the committee members are keen to get on with the inquiry. We have been asked to report back to the Parliament in November, so that recommendations we make can start to be implemented in time for the next fire season.

Mr Nairn explained that this inquiry would take a national perspective and concentrate on what needs to be done across Australia to minimise future risks. It will add to the work of the coronial and state and territory inquiries already underway.

It is a very wide ranging inquiry looking at all aspects of the bushfire hazard situation in Australia. The inquiry will identify measures that can be implemented by governments, industry and the community to minimise the incidence of, and impact of bushfires on, life, property and the environment.

The full terms of reference for the inquiry follow. Public hearings will be held after submissions have been received, with the committee likely to visit regional areas affected by fires to hear first hand from the people involved in fire prevention and fire fighting.

The committee is seeking public input and would be pleased to receive submissions by Friday, 9 May. They should be sent to the Committee Secretary, Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires, Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600. More information about making submissions can be obtained from the committee secretariat by phone on 02 6277 4579, by email bushfires.reps@aph.gov.au or from the website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/bushfires

For comment contact the committee chair, Mr Gary Nairn MP on 02 6277 4939 (Parliament House office) or 02 6297 3952 (electorate office).

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House of Representatives Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires

Terms of reference

The House of Representatives has appointed a Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires to identify measures that can be implemented by governments, industry and the community to minimise the incidence of, and impact of bushfires on, life, property and the environment. In investigating these matters the committee will have specific regard to:

- (a) the extent and impact of the bushfires on the environment, private and public assets and local communities;
- (b) the causes of and risk factors contributing to the impact and severity of the bushfires, including land management practices and policies in national parks, state forests, other Crown land and private property;
- (c) the adequacy and economic and environmental impact of hazard reduction and other strategies for bushfire prevention, suppression and control;
- (d) appropriate land management policies and practices to mitigate the damage caused by bushfires to the environment, property, community facilities and infrastructure and the potential environmental impact of such policies and practices;
- (e) any alternative or developmental bushfire mitigation and prevention approaches, and the appropriate direction of research into bushfire mitigation;
- (f) the appropriateness of existing planning and building codes, particularly with respect to urban design and land use planning, in protecting life and property from bushfires;
- (g) the adequacy of current response arrangements for firefighting;
- (h) the adequacy of deployment of firefighting resources, including an examination of the efficiency and effectiveness of resource sharing between agencies and jurisdictions;
- (i) liability, insurance coverage and related matters; and
- (j) the roles and contributions of volunteers, including current management practices and future trends, taking into account changing social and economic factors.

The committee is seeking public input and would be pleased to receive submissions by Friday, 9 May 2003. They should be sent to:

Committee Secretary
Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Phone: 02 62774579
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Visit: www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/bushfires