

2 May 2003

Ms. Sophie Panopoulos

Fax: 5721 8196



Dear Madam,

**Re: SUBMISSION - BEECHWORTH BUSHFIRES**

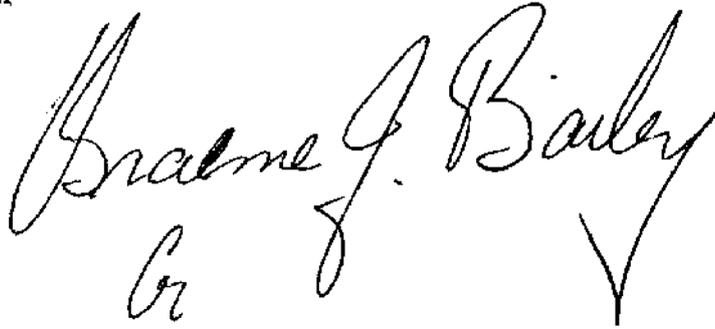
1. One of the significant areas affected by the recent bushfires was the farmland and National Parks in the immediate vicinity of the township of Beechworth in the North East of Victoria.
2. Although the fires, it appears, did not start in the parks themselves, the fires did start in areas adjacent to those parks and quickly entered them.
3. In a policy prior to the elections, the Government "closed" those parklands so that access by way of fire trails was restricted. Previous Governments had also allowed for the closure and deterioration of fire trails and other tracks that provided access into parklands.
4. That restriction of access provided an obstacle and in many cases, prevented fire control in the recent fires.
5. Should the Government decide to continue with the policy of closure of parklands and restriction of access, it is submitted that a "buffer" zone should be created at the margin and within parks to provide access by fire fighters should future fires occur and also as a buffer zone so that the intensity of the fire on the edge of parklands is reduced.
6. That buffer zone, I suggest, should be of a significant depth of up to 1 kilometre dependent on the intensity of the farm/agricultural activities adjoining the park and the intensity of undergrowth within the park.
7. The buffer zone could be an area in which wood gathering for domestic usage is permitted of dead trees, other selected trees that threaten adjacent lands, fences and improvements. Also it should be permitted for wood gatherers to collect wood and litter from the floor of this buffer zone. Such policy would maintain the buffer zone and provide a source of income to the parkland authority.
8. Further, it is suggested that this proposal would in effect, be a proposal that allowed the local communities access to wood gathering and also provide in effect, a self-policing arrangement for the clearance of combustible material.

2 May 2003

I make the above submission as a person that has been resident in Beechworth for a period of 30 years, has been involved in the control and volunteer fighting of previous bushfires and independently as a Councillor of the Indigo Shire.

Yours faithfully,

**GRAEME J. BAILEY**  
Councillor

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Graeme J. Bailey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the printed name and title.