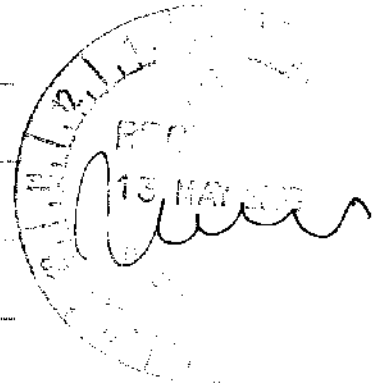


Submission No.267

Committee Secretary  
House Select Committee on the recent Australian bushfires

Submitted by: Miss Anita Martini

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 5/5/2003

**INQUIRY INTO THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES**

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please find my submission attached

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Born in 1946, I was raised in the SEC's Bogong Village where fire prevention was literally drummed into us at school and our art studies included Fire Prevention posters. With the silver ghostly remaining trees burnt in 1939 on the horizons the SEC conducted regular fuel reduction burns and the many fire tracks were kept meticulously clear. Any fires were quickly pounced upon and put out, no ifs or buts, even with the antiquated equipment of the time. The management of the SEC was aware of the danger and destruction fire could cause to a hydro scheme, its catchment of clear, pure water being mandatory.

For the past thirty years I have conducted commercial horseback tours being the initial operator. Soon after the area was handed over to the National Parks it became clearly obvious fuel reduction burns and clean tracks were not a priority to the new carers and as time past the worsening condition of same offered great concern to many locals as many tracks were virtually unpassable on horseback. When discussing these matters with the Parks we were told "don't worry the heath won't burn, we don't need tracks as we don't fight fires from the ground anymore we use aeroplanes".

Well, if you go to Bogong Village now you can see the only remaining green canopy where the Mt Arthur fire began and burnt slowly along for some days it was apparently inaccessible from the ground, when an attempt was made to get fixed wing aircraft to the rescue the winds were too high for take-off, by the time helicopters were deemed necessary the high winds blew up, the fire was off and away. We, so called "common civilians" were appalled, as the fire was not jumped on as would have been done by our fathers when they were in control.

Further to this, my observation of the control of the fire that burnt for days on the Moncreiff's gap, East Kiewa area. This fire was back-burned on the Moncreiff's gap side preventing its advance on that side, however, no attempt to back-burn from the East Kiewa river towards the East Kiewa fire track was made and the fire proceeded to sneak along quietly for some time before winds came up and the fire jumped the river and crossed "the excuse" for a firebreak which consisted of a brushed up dirt road with tea tree still overhanging and meeting above.

Mt Beauty was now in danger, although the town itself was protected by many fire trucks, the mountain was then at the mercy of the fire causing unnecessary carnage to European and native trees, rendering the mountain bike course unusable, burning fences from my and neighbouring farms and God alone knows how many native animals were needlessly incinerated.

Firebreaks were put in obviously to protect the township but not to save the mountain itself. The said breaks were begun in late afternoon with no consultation with landowners. A large concrete block 4` x 4` x 12` was dozed over the bank through two fences and only missed a building due to the terrain directing it. For some reason, the dozer then left the already made track it was clearing, to rip up a new track and promptly took a water main with it (repaired by the Water Board) to date, no attempt has been made to repair this track.

To summarise prevention of fire was non-existent, efforts to put the fire out "slow and shoddy", totally inefficient. Attempts to hastily put in firebreaks most often, ineffective and destructive.

Please, these are OUR forests, we want access to them, we don't want them or our wildlife destroyed.

yours Sincerely  
Amda Gardin.  
AVITA MARTINI.