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Submission No.196

Date: 9-5-03

Attention: THE SECRETARY

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE

ON RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSINESSES FAX 02 62774424

From: JENNIFER HINDMARSH

Number of pages (including this cover): 5

Comment(s):

WILL POST A COPY IN MAIL TO-DAY.

THANK YOU  
*Jennifer Hindmarsh*

COPY SENT TO GRAY NAIRN. M.P.

Reply requested: Yes:  No:



7<sup>th</sup> May 2003.

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: RECENT BUSHFIRES IN NSW AT CHRISTMAS "THE DEUA NATIONAL PARK" 2001 & 2002**

We live in a Valley, the head of the Shoalhaven River and small creeks that flow into the Shoalhaven. Our property "Jinden" is 62KM south of Braidwood. With the Deua National Park on the east & the Gourock National Park & Tallaganda State Forest on the west.

**FIRES CHRISTMAS 2001 & 2002:**

Each of these Fires were started with Lightening Strikes within "The Deua National Park Areas.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

At each of these Fires the lack of communication leaves a lot to be desired. Over past years in our area Volunteer Rural Fire Services, National Parks & Wildlife Service & Forestry Department are on different frequencies and therefore time in getting instructions through to fire fighters is delayed.

Eg: Our Son who is a Local Rural Fire fighter was called to go into the Alpine Area (Deua National Park) arrived approx 7a.m. and was asked to back burn along a Fire trail. His group waited until 2p.m. before they went to the Fire trail and then had to wait till 4p.m. before they were given permission to light from Sydney Headquarters. By that time the wind had come up.

Our other Son along with 2 Bulldozer Drivers were asked to put a Trail down a very steep Mountain, which even 4WD Vehicles & 4WD Bikes were unable to travel. The Bulldozers were only able to refuel at the top of the Mountain. This trail was completed and back burning was to take place. However the waste of time to give instructions, the fire continued to race north. All that trouble and waste of money not put to use.

Many other stories could be told both during 2001 & 2002 Xmas Fires.

**HAZARD REDUCTION:**

Hazard reduction, has to be carried out from May to August annually considering weather conditions, with commonsense and knowledge by local people, Parks & Forestry.

With the amount of land that NPWS have acquired for National Parks and Wilderness areas adjoining Private Landholders, a Buffer Zone around these

**HAZARD REDUCTION:/cont.**

areas could help to control burn along these areas for hazard reduction in Autumn/Winter.

In times of Fires threatening Private Property these Buffer Zones could be put to good use for our Fire fighters to fight fires on instead of risking their lives in mountainous rough wilderness country.

This last Christmas 2002 Fire, a Local Rural Fire person was sent on a Fire trail to check for lightning Strikes. On these trails, jump-ups were recently graded and his vehicle was stuck. Had he been further in and a fire threatening, this could have caused a serious problem. Why must these humps be so high.

With these narrow Fire trails and in conditions that were experienced during the Xmas 2001 Fires, there is a great risk with fire tankers manoeuvring on these very rocky narrow tracks. During this fire we had Fire fighters come from Western areas of NSW who are used of fighting fires on flat country.

When day light came and they found the rough terrain that they were in, they commented that they were sent in to save "Homes & Property" but hadn't seen any, only rough inaccessible country. No way would they volunteer to come back fighting fires in National Parks/Wilderness Areas of the Deua.

**PRIVATE LANDOWNERS PROBLEMS:**

Private landowners are all afraid to reduction burn due to the fact of persons willing to sue if fire ventured onto their property whether it is National Parks or Private Landowners!

It is rather sad that regards to these fires of Christmas 2001/2 when the fires came from the National Parks/Wilderness that Landholders who had their Properties & Fences burnt, have had to go to great lengths to be compensated. It was not till just before Christmas 2002 that friends we know were reimbursed for fencing & roadwork that was burnt when NPWS forced a back burn on them some 6.5KM away from the fire front during 2001.

At present from the Christmas Fires 2002 in Deua National Park on the Eastern side, the Landholders are renewing fences burnt again with back burns and we believe that they are paying this from their Insurance, will and how long do they have to wait for reimbursement.

If it was the reverse with Landholders fire entering the National Parks /Wilderness, they would very quickly sue the Landholder. Why does the Landholder have to pay from their own funds and then hopefully after a battle with NPWS finally receive compensation!

**MANAGEMENT:**

Our view is that all National Parks, Nature Reserves and Wilderness be returned back to State Forests and Crown Lands for better management. These

Lands could be leased back to Private Landholders in drought times, therefore reducing groundcover (fire hazards)! 2

### MANAGEMENT:/Cont:

Consideration should be given when over past years with State Forests managing & controlling these vast areas, fires were quickly controlled and hazard reduction maintained and both Forestry, The Volunteer Rural Fire fighters and Landholders worked together. Since the NPWS have become involved, this has not been the case.

During these 2001/2002 Christmas Fires, the Volunteer Rural Fire fighters have worked day & night, long shifts sometimes 15hrs without pay, while the NPWS knock off and go home while being paid sometimes double etc.

With the dissensions in the Rural Fire Service regarding the fires in Canberra & Kosciusko National Park area and elsewhere, we hope that this enquiry can find ways and solutions that these events can be better managed next time. Unfortunately these will not be the last fires and lessons must be learnt of how they can have co-operation from all organisations. People working from Offices in the City and from Computer Programmes of how a fire should behave can not replace the Local People who have had many years of experience & knowledge fighting fires in this inaccessible country.

Again during our Christmas 2002 fire in the Deua National Park/Dampier section. A fire started by lightening part the way down the Mountain face in inaccessible area, the NPWS spent days trying to fight this fire with Helicopter dropping water and persons down into this area. A Bulldozer and 2 persons were asked to clear the area on top of the Mountain for Helicopter landing to pick up water to bomb this fire. Another Bulldozer track had to be put in to access water and tankers had to cart water up to top of Mountain and in severe drought conditions. After a lot of waste of time and no doubt money, the Bulldozer & crew were then asked to put a track down to the fire so it could be finally put out. Why was this not done in the first instance and save this cost! Why was commonsense and local knowledge not used in accessing these wild rough areas.

Fire trails and access roads must be kept in good order so that they can be accessed quickly. Might we add that this area was recently declared wilderness and so the tracks in had been blocked off. The NPWS concerns were to block these tracks off again quickly to satisfy the "Greenies" due to being Wilderness.

### DEVISTATION TO FLORA & FAUNA:

Due to all the big fires during summer over the last 2 years, this has caused devastation to native animals and birds. We all saw the results of the Royal National Park being burnt twice in a few years, destroying native animals, bird life and driving deer onto the beaches.

If hazard reduction is carried out where and when required, this would save these "Wild Fires" destroying so much of our Flora & Fauna.

**DEVISTATION TO FLORA & FAUNA: /cont.**

After visiting the Deua National Park June 2002 and just recently, one realises how hardy the bush is and can restore itself. Why must it be "Locked Up for Wilderness" for only Bushwalkers -- it should be open for all to enjoy the wonderful, breathtaking views and for us all to appreciate what a wonderful Country we Live In!!! Keep the Tracks open and use them for times of Fire fighting and Visitors to enjoy the Bush.

National Parks will never be able to manage their areas as no Park Ranger will work! They only drive 4WD's and Cars at the Tax Payer's expense with University Education but no practical and commonsense ways to manage these Wild Spectacular Mountainous areas.

Parks and Forestry should be there for everyone to enjoy and be proud of, this is our Heritage to be passed on for the future generations.

Yours faithfully



John M Hindmarsh & Jenette E Hindmarsh.