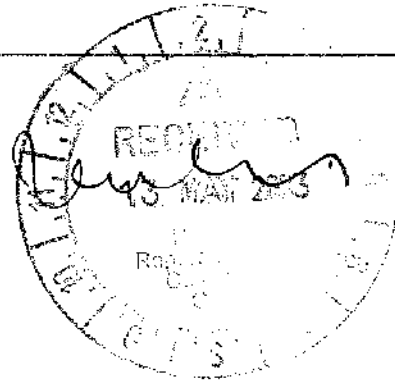


Sent: Saturday, 10 May 2003 8:47 PM
To: Committee, Bushfires (REPS)
Subject: Fw: Bushfires



----- Original Message -----

From: noonameena
To: bushfires.rep@aph.gov.au ; sophie.panopoulos.mp@aph.gov.au
Cc: [Eddie Rozitis](mailto:Eddie.Rozitis)
Sent: Friday, May 09, 2003 9:43 PM
Subject: Bushfires

Submission No.246

Submission to the Federal Government Inquiry into the Recent Australian Bushfires.

Forwarded to Sophie Panopoulos MP, Federal Member for Indi.
May 9, 2003. by email to:

sophie.panopoulos.mp@aph.gov.au

&

bushfires.rep@aph.gov.au

Submitted by.
Cameron Reid,

As a:

resident of Mt. Buffalo Road Porepunkah,
Officer of the Porepunkah Fire Brigade,
a trained, qualified & practiced fire fighter with qualifications in level 1 incident control,
a business person with tertiary qualifications in business management.

Problems encountered by one community and one fire brigade during the January 2003 Mt. Buffalo fires are believed to have mostly been caused by inept management at the Ovens Incident Control Centre. One only hopes that all communities and fire brigades affected by the recent fires did not encounter so many "hiccups". The maths would be astounding.

ACCESS

Access to fire trail on 8th January was impossible due to Parks Vic. trail closures. Our brigade with other helpers **could have extinguished the Buffalo Creek Fire on day one** if we could have driven on the fire trail installed for such purposes many years ago. The result was that the fire needed local crews to attend to it for two weeks before it was finally brought under control. Parks Vic. have now successfully closed the track again. A good example of Park Vic. managing what was once crown land.

POOR COMMUNICATION

WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES:

- Police were telling people they would be forced to evacuate.
- No advice to residents of road closure
- Community Update Newsletters not delivered to Porepunkah
- Listening sets mostly useless as Clearspot link not used until fire arrived in Buckland
- Strike teams commencing, travelling on private property without announcing themselves or intentions

WITH LOCAL BRIGADE

- Road Closures not notified to local brigade.
- No go zones declared & local brigade not notified
- As the incident was elevated to a higher level, and strike teams arrived, no provision for local brigade transition. Was not briefed on who was in control where – ie: 'Buffalo Control' , 'Eurobin Control'.
- Local brigade should know what resources are in the area and be able to call quickly for support when ERS calls come in
ie: Buckland, Eurobin, Buckland, Eurobin
- Maps for strike teams, dozer drivers & all visitors crap!
- Strike Teams crew changes too slow, missing from the front 3 – 4 hours for crew changes.

DECISION MAKING AT OVENS

- Too slow & too cumbersome
- Reluctance by strike teams to exit the bitumen and tackle the fire – due to lack of authority to act without "Ovens Approval"
- Example of Keatings Creek track clearing strike team. – while real help needed up the Buckland.
- Resource allocation & tasking from central location too slow and cumbersome

THE FUTURE?

Reduced importance and demise of CFA, Increase in community members with own fire fighting resources, Victorian Farmers Federation Fire Fighters Association, people Insuring offshore to avoid CFA levy, fire fighters resigning from the CFA out of frustration, no more volunteers for "Strike Teams" as they are not allowed to do anything.

Thanks for the opportunity to provide you with my thoughts. If I was not so busy recovering from the fires, I would write more. Hope the inquiry goes well and that we can maybe put the fires out when they are small ones next time! Please ask Parks Vic. to open their fire trails.

Please phone me if you need clarification or elaboration on any of the above.

Cameron