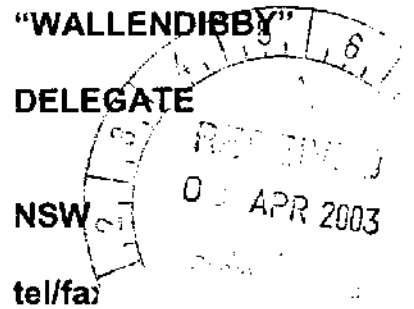


**MICHAEL NAIRN PTY LTD**

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



acn 002 123 499  
abn 76 002 123 499

8<sup>th</sup> April 2003

Dear Sir

**SUBMISSION TO SELECT COMMITTEE**

I am manager of "Wallendibby", a substantial sheep and cattle grazing property to the west of Delegate and close to the scene of recent bush fires at the southern (Corrowong) end of the Kosciusko National Park. I also hold the position of western group captain in the Bombala Rural Fire Service. I participated actively in fire control activities in this area from 20<sup>th</sup> December 2002 until 12<sup>th</sup> February 2003.

I wish to submit seven points, which I regard as of key importance in framing future policy in regard to bush fire control in this district. Some of the points, I believe have significance in other districts equally.

**1. Fire as a Natural Phenomenon**

I have read recent statements by senior public servants that fire in the Australian bush is a natural phenomenon and that as a community, we should not be concerned or surprised by the recent fires. I wish to dissociate myself from such statements. To the contrary, it is my firm belief that misguided policies which currently prevent hazard reduction fires in Kosciusko National Park have resulted in a much greater incidence of fire than would otherwise have occurred, with severe risk to and/or destruction of fauna, flora, private property and domestic livestock.

**2. Hazard Reduction in Kosciusko National Park**

Managed hazard reduction fires should be carried out annually in the early spring (depending on seasonal conditions) with close co-operation between the shire authorities and the knowledge of the local community. These burns carried out as the country comes out of winter would be relatively cool and low intensity fires, with much less destructive impact on native flora and fauna than summer fires. These burns would also create a buffer against accidental bush fires in the summer and would serve to protect Kosciusko and other national parks, state forests and private property.

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**3. Reinstatement of Annual Cattle Grazing Leases in Kosciusko National Park**

The reinstatement of the system of annual cattle grazing leases in the National Park would be a simple, controllable and very cost-effective way of ensuring that a progressive build up of fuel leading to virtually uncontrollable summer bush fires did not occur in the future. The environmental damage done by cattle is minimal. In terms of their leases, the graziers would carry out their own managed fire programme for the benefit of the grazing.

**4. Continuation of Bridle Trail – Merambego : Bydbo passing through Byadbo Paddock**

Construction work was commenced on the bridle track during the slaughterhouse fire in September 2002. This was previously discussed during the Byadbo Fire Enquiry in the late 1980s and could have played a strategic role during the recent fires if it had been completed. This should now be done.

**5. Construction of Dams**

The absence of water at the Merambego creek and at the Biadbo Paddock is a serious disadvantage. Dams should be constructed at each location.

**6. Section 44 State of Emergency**

When the State Government declares a state of emergency under Section 44, volunteer fire fighters, who in many cases give up their normal employment to assist, should be paid on the same basis as government employees.

**7. Building Code**

The Building Code should be amended to provide that dwellings in a bush environment should be an agreed minimum distance from forest or bush. Responsibility for maintaining the surroundings to such dwellings free from flammable materials should rest with the occupants.

I should be pleased to expand on any of the points made above,

In conclusion, I should like to state that over the period of the recent fires, the speed of response, co-operation between agencies and sharing of resources in the Bombala Shire was of a high order.

Yours faithfully

Clive C Cottrell  
Director & Manager  
Michael Nairn Pty Ltd