

## **BUSHFIRE ROYAL COMMISSION**

### **PREAMBLE**

Wildfires kill people. Young volunteers with young families die. One thousand million birds, animals, reptiles died in 2019-20 with 18 million hectares evaporated, forests dead to a foot below the surface, massive CO<sub>2</sub> release. Financial devastation for individuals and communities. It costs six times more to deal with wildfires than to prevent them.

The really criminal thing is that there have been 57 inquiries/Royal Commissions since 1939. Answers are in plain sight, recommendations ignored (National Bushfire Management Policy 2014, COAG signed off. No action.).

Solutions from this effort must be designed to be administratively lean above coal face level, confounding influences removed (local, state, federal), daylight administration with definition of budget and outcomes required. Point of failure to be clear. Most of budget to be spent at the coalface. Incompetents to be easily visible and sidelined.

This ranks with the massive expense for rubbish results in the aboriginal portfolio. Such impotence must stop. **WHAT WE ARE DOING ISN'T WORKING!**

### **KEYS**

#### What Does The Ideal Answer Look Like?

Over 50,000 years the aboriginals learnt to use fire to reduce fuel loads and burn intensity, regenerate plants and grasslands, preserve wildlife. It required mosaic burns, relentlessly. They couldn't call in a water bomber or jump in a car to escape. They had to get it right ... and did. The Greens hold them up as the masters. Ecosystems depended on this fire.

Aboriginals should work with DFA/RFS and forestry departments at a local level aiming for 10-20% fuel reduction per year for 10 years and beyond. Western Australia has been successful in fuel reduction for decades.

All Commissioners should have a copy of Bill Gammage's book "The Biggest Estate on Earth". It shows what Australia looked like on arrival of the First Fleet in 1778 and how aboriginals managed the landscape. Sensibly, the Commission should interview him about what best practice looked like based on the experience of millennia rather than latte conservationists .

## FUEL LOAD OR CLIMATE CHANGE?

██████████ 50 years fire/forestry experience at CSIRO and Monash University should also be interviewed. His opinions have a solid SCIENTIFIC basis .

1. One hectare of eucalypt drops one ton of fuel/year = 10 tons in 10 years. It doesn't rot, just dries out.
2. Fire intensity varies directly with FUEL LOAD ( increased x 10 in last 30 years) and RATE OF BURN which directly reflects fuel load too ( > x 10) = > x 100 overall.
3. The maximum intensity that we can extinguish is 3 megawatt/m. The Black Saturday Victorian fires were > 70, recent NSW and Qld fires 30 - 50. Fighting these is FUTILE the only answer is pre-emptive fuel reduction.
4. Climate change is a virtual non contributor (estimates a 1.0° C increase adds to 3% of intensity). The argument that windows for reduction burns are less is nonsense – go harder, when conditions are right. WA does successfully. These fires aren't unprecedented in size or intensity, past droughts have been longer, it has been hotter.

## GREEN PRESSURE AND GREEN TAPE

While the Green lobby and adherents have their heart in the right place, the consequences are catastrophic as noted above. The inability to easily manage forests or pick up fallen timber is proving disastrous for all life. They seem over influential on local government , both elected and administrative. It isn't possible to get quick decisions on fuel reduction burns or mechanical removal.

Reference ██████████, farmer, Blue Mountains NSW on SKY TV. Should interview him too.

He outlined his green tape experience getting approval for firebreak clearance on his property. It has taken 2.5 years and correspondence one foot high to not yet get approval (local land services, RFS, Minister for Emergency Services). Costs to apply are significant (application fees, time to fill out ludicrous paperwork, count trees, number them, botanic names, measure size, pay arborist report, replant equivalent elsewhere).

He notes that the RFS administration are indifferent. The local fire chief reports that he must fill out a 28 page document for Head Office approval for reduction burns. The response takes 2-3 years.

Who is going to bother if it's this hard ???

## SOLUTIONS

1. Administrative Structure
  - It must be lean at top and mid levels, broad at the coal face.
  - Responsibilities/budgets/outcomes to be easily visible along with any point of failure.
  - Non performers are out – people are dying with massive wildlife loss and \$ costs.
  - Approval pathway to be fixed – quick, one stop shop, local.
2. Hazard Reduction is Key
  - Local aboriginals to work with local CFA for 10-20% mosaic burning as possible. Jobs for the bush .
  - Government to ensure year round water bomber fleet availability for the inevitable break out fire complications , backup hit squads available.
  - Government will need to underwrite/insure any accidental property damage.
  - Mechanical reduction should be possible year round.
  - Catch cry if in doubt: IT'S THE FUEL LOAD, STUPID!
3. Excess clearing by the occasional sociopath is a likely small scale complication. Design sanctions to make this unattractive for a deliberate breach. It may require the odd bureaucrat to leave the office!
4. Actively educate media/people on the historical and scientific logic underpinning this. An appropriate advertising campaign will probably be needed, social medial/Twitter too. The Green lobby won't like it and their arguments will need to be actively addressed/rebuffed/Aboriginal expertise emphasised.  
A film driving 100s of kilometres through the recent black devastation, animal injury, and DEAD silence may help some understand how their approach isn't working. The fires released the equivalent of two years of Australian CO<sub>2</sub> output.  
Hopefully another two young families won't have to bury their young volunteer firefighter fathers in the future.  
The large city based green contingent with no expertise or experience are driving a lot of this, seldom seen outside a coffee shop. They need active education on what works and what doesn't. **Science and outcomes analysis must triumph over greenwash "hot gosselling"**.
5. Action other recommendations of the National Bushfire Policy 2014 as approved by COAG.  
People will be more likely to accept inconvenience / smoke if item 4 is done well. It may be harder to scrooge this budget if it is widely known that it takes \$6 x to fight fires than prevent them.  
Also if major fire incidence is one in 10-20 years since records began in 1915, it must be cost effective to reduce hazard. The projection is that 10% fuel reduction per year would drop the area burnt by 90% and intensity by more than this with major

consequences for bush and wildlife too. This should also form part of the advert/info programme.

### **FINALLY, A REQUEST**

Let's not add to the previous massive waste of community money, time and resources producing futile inquiry results. The young dead firefighters need to be at the forefront of thinking.

Your recommendations should leave politicians and bureaucrats nowhere to hide.

Note that the only beneficiaries of a bushfire crisis are politicians, media and Greens who get to strut the stage, fire services who get more funding. They are hard to find when explaining the need for burn-offs around population centres. You need to change the motivation.