

SUBMISSION

1<sup>st</sup> September 2007

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The Executive Officer,  
Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
Parliament House  
Spring St  
Melbourne VIC 3002.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL  
RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Sir/ Madam,

In response to your letter of the 21<sup>st</sup> August re the **Consequent Impact of Bushfires on the June/ July 2007 Gippsland Flood.**

Having both visited the area and also spoken with local bushmen , we are in no doubt that the severe damage was a result of fast run-off from the burnt catchment.

History shows that drought and /or dry times are often followed by flooding rains. In the June/ July event , the catchment was so denuded over such a wide area that the run-off co-efficient was probably near 100 % , whereas in a balanced forest with a mosaic of different age burns and undergrowth , this co-efficient would have been halved at least . This would have spread the discharge into the streams over a much longer period and at this rate , the streams would have been able to cope much better.

Our East Gippsland Taskforce is concerned that if our area , ie Cann River Fire District , were to be burnt out in a bushfire as completely as the Licola Dargo area in 2007 then the possibility of similar damaging flood events in our catchments and estuaries is very real indeed. These coastal estuaries of the Far East Gippsland are the focal point of the local tourism industry as well as being ecologically in a near pristine state. To have those streams destroyed would be a catastrophe.

As you know from our previous submission we are very disappointed and concerned with DSE's forest management or lack thereof , particularly in relation to fuel reduction burning. In the Cann River Fire District we have approximately 365000 ha. of land . Approximately 300000 ha of this is forested in either State Forest or Parks ; of this area DSE claim to have burnt 30000 ha this last season but we believe the figure to be more like 20000 ha . Even at 30000 ha this represents only 10 % of our area . This rate of annual burn is not a deterrent to a major forest fire and even less so if the rate of burn for the last 2 years were averaged let alone that of the last 10 or 15 years.

It is quite clear to us that the Department of Sustainability and Environment is not concentrating on making the forests safer through judicious use of fire but rather setting themselves up as Fire Fighters.

We are going through a dry late winter / early spring in East Gippsland and at the present time we should be burning as hard as we can go for both forest preservation and forest health reasons to reduce the fuel load . But , the Department has told us ' No Spring Burning' ! Why ? Obviously too

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busy getting geared up for the coming 'fire season'. In regard to the possible risk of a spring burn escaping, it is clear that a wildfire in spring, if one did get going, is no way near as bad or damaging as a January/ February wildfire.

We do not believe that the Department has either the will or the know-how to carry out adequate fuel reduction burning on a scale that is required to create a mosaic of differing age burns which are those most simulating of nature's protection of the bush by lightning strike. It is more attractive [ and easier ] to ignore the fuel build up and to become ' fire fighting heroes' when wildfire develops in the summer.

Thankyou for this opportunity to comment further.

Yours faithfully,

John Mulligan  
Chairman  
East Gippsland Wildfire Taskforce

 : 1/9/07  
Per M.Stevens Secretary