

Letter to the Editor

24th January 06

RE: Fuelling the Feral Fires

The hot feral fires that are raging in Victoria will have important environmental, economic and social consequences for us all. Loss of human life, serious injuries, loss of property, major ecological losses will have lasting impact on our communities.

Distorted science and misinformation from groups like the Victorian National Parks Association lead the general public to believe that our state forests would be better off locked up into National Parks. Nothing could be further from the truth. Approximately 16% of Victoria is already in National Park or protected reserve system. The land management agencies are currently inadequately funded and resourced to manage their existing lands without spreading the money even more thinly.

Add some extreme fire weather, years of limited fuel reduction burns, inexperience, closed or limited access fire tracks and we have a recipe for disaster. Our Australian forests are amongst the wildest fire prone in the world.

And who comes to the rescue and lives with the consequences of these large uncontrollable fires? It is always the local communities that surround these forests and national parks. Do our city cousins appreciate that the Country Fire Authority is a volunteer service in most rural communities? If there is a fire, there are not paid firefighters to come and put it out. It is volunteers that put their lives at risk to protect natural resources and their communities. A vital role is played by the timber industry in supplying firefighting equipment and experienced forest workers in the bush. Access tracks are kept clear and act as firebreaks in working forests

Have we not learnt something from the ecological disaster of Alpine 2003 fires? When will commonsense be "common"? Our local redgum forests could not survive high intensity wildfires. They would never recover nor would the local communities that rely them. Say No to a Redgum National Park. Our Redgum Forests for All and Forever

Yours sincerely,
Faye Ashwin
Barham NSW 2732
Ph. 54532905