

16 March 2010

The Research Director
Public Accounts and Public Works Committee
Parliament House
George St
Qld 4000

RECEIVED

23 MAR 2010

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

RE: SUBMISSION presented by NOGO RIVER RURAL FIRE BRIGADE regarding present fire management of EPA controlled land in Queensland presented to the PAC looking into "The Management of Rural Fire Services in Queensland."

Dear Ms Deborah Jeffrey

Please find enclosed our submission regarding present management of EPA controlled land in Queensland.

This submission is endorsed by the following members of the Nogo River Rural Fire Brigade as passed at the Biennial General Meeting of the Brigade held March 15, 2010

Bruce Burnham	Warden Nogo River Rural Fire Brigade
Tex Burnham	Permanent Deputy Warden and 1 st Officer Nogo River Rural & Warden Coomingleh South Fire Zone
Grant Burnham	2 nd Officer Nogo River Rural
Mark Salisbury	3 rd Officer Nogo River Rural
Lance Burnham	4 th Officer Nogo River Rural
Bronwyn Burnham	Secretary Nogo River Rural
Amanda Salisbury	
Carly Burnham	
Dan Burnham	
Robert Ogle	
Robyn Ogle	
Scott Hutson	
Wayne Moxham-Price	
Judy Moxham-Price	
Barbara Burnham	
Jack Woods	

The misguided use of funds and current fire policy is viewed by our members as a crisis waiting to happen. We therefore tender this submission through your representation of volunteers on the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland in the hope that a more commonsense approach will be adopted by the present Queensland Government in fire management practices.

Thank you

Yours sincerely



Bronwyn Burnham

Secretary
Nogo River Rural Fire Brigade

A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE

..... The relevance of the old adage in the field of fire management

Members of the Nogo River Rural Fire Brigade are seeking a **change in direction for the future government allocation of funding** towards the management of fire in both EPA held leases and privately owned land in Queensland.

Problem: The unnecessary huge financial cost incurred in event of a 'wild fire crisis' situation

Solution: Diversion of funding to enable a more proactive approach to averting possible 'wild fire' situations

At present, there appears to be an unlimited amount of resources and funding available in the event of a 'wild fire' outbreak. While this situation is occasionally unavoidable, a more proactive solution would save untold costly expenditure and produce better environmental outcomes.

We feel that a fraction of the cost involved in 'wild fire fighting' could be directed to the whole community in bringing roads and firebreaks up to standard before the start of the fire season.

At present, **too much emphasis is placed on FIGHTING FIRES** – this leads to erratic and often mis-directed dozing of fire breaks during a perceived crisis situation that could have been avoided with **pre-season FIRE MANAGEMENT**.

Not only does this mentality lead to poor public perception that all fires are to be feared, but poorly constructed firebreak lines can cause future erosion problems caused by inadvertent clearing of unsuitable areas. Ongoing yearly upgrades and proper maintenance of roads, as opposed to destructive hasty flat blade breaks, would help this situation.

The reduction of fuel, through safe burns surrounded by well maintained roads, when moisture levels are suitable would also be of very great benefit to all concerned. And isn't that all of us?

We, in this area- and in many others - have practised this method with great success over many years. Our area of responsibility now covers approximately 100,000 acres and adjoins the Coomnglah Forestry area. In 1949, when 'Upson Downs' was first taken up by the Burnham family, the area was managed by the Forestry Department who adopted a 'No Burn' mentality. Approximately 20 staff were employed all living on 'Redlands'- a section of the Coomnglah lease. The year 1950 was a wet year – similar to 2010- with a subsequent huge build up of fuel. Management of this fuel was poorly handled, left too late with the result that a Forestry-lit break got out of control and burnt out the whole district.

I am glad to report that this scenario has never been repeated in the following 59 years. Controlled burns after rain have been routinely carried out – whilst not necessarily extensive, but on a progressive and strategic basis.

We therefore write to you requesting

- **Assistance with road and fire break maintenance on an ongoing basis**
- **A greater recognition and use of the knowledge and years of experience gained by landholders in the responsible use of fire**
- **The promotion of respect of this local knowledge for decision making in major outbreaks leading to better liason between local firefighters and volunteers from outside the area**
- **Consideration of the above points in the education of our upcoming guardians of the land.**

FIRE IS A GREAT SERVANT, BUT CAN ALSO BE A VERY BAD MASTER

Chairman, 1st Officer

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