

C02/797

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25 MAR 2002

The Hon Peta Seaton, M.P.
Member for Southern Highland
C/- Parliament House
Fax 029 230 3355

Erich Schutte
30 Chanter Road
Thirlmere NSW 2572

Tuesday, 19 March 2002

Dear Madam,

In regards to the Bushfires that desolated much of our area on Christmas Day 2001

Introduction

I attended a Public Meeting at Oakdale Workers Club on 19th February. I listened to the general comments made by the Public on bushfire issues. I was somewhat astounded as to how much vital information was brought in to view. My own assumption as to why the Black Christmas Fires were so furious, was reaffirmed by others that had some knowledge on bushfires.

Fury of the fire

It should be clear that these fires became so furious due to the accumulated ground-litter in the water catchment area. Since the Water Board handed over control to Sydney Water, the control of the catchment area was given to the totally inexperienced run National Parks & Wildlife Association. (Referred to as NPWA throughout this submission)

Explanation

During the Water Board's management of the water catchment area, controlled burning in the Warragamba Dam Catchment Area was done periodically with good reasons. Having a look at the geographic map of the catchment area, one quickly can see that most valley's run from west to east. Considering that the predominant winds also come from the west, it should be obvious that fires, which often start at Starlight Track or Camclot Station, could be devastating to the settled areas on the easterly end of these valley's.

These Valley's become chimneys with the wind behind fires and they are burning extremely fast. I have seen a fire coming from Camelot to Buxton in 4 hours.

Water board fire prevention

The older workers on the Water Board and the people living in the danger zones experienced many fires and due to this the Water Board periodically burned these Valleys from the east to the west. Controlled fires normally burn slow into the wind and give wildlife a chance to get out of the way. No excessive harm is caused through such action. Any wildfire coming through after would slow down automatically in previously burned areas and these fires can be controlled without great difficulty.

National Parks & Wildlife Association takeover

Due to the ignorance of the NPWA managements, no controlled burn has taken place in the catchment areas since their takeover from the Water Board. It becomes very clear that through inexperience and bad advice taken from poorly equipped consultancies, the NPWA is plagued with one blunders after another.

NSW Government

Our NSW Government is to blame for giving more powers and responsibilities to white Elephants such as the NPWA. Here again the public is now forced to pay the bill of discissions made by bad and bias Government.

Conclusion

A lesson from these Black Christmas Fires should be learned by all people in NSW. The fires are out. However, the hardship that was caused is going to be felt by many for a long time to come. Many wounds can not be healed. The cost of the fires flows on to all people in NSW. This already can be seen in raising insurance policies and the loss of No-Claim-Bonuses. The NSW Government and NPWA stand condemned over there lack of hazard prevention over the last 10 years and should be held financially liable for the follow on extra charges and the dreadful losses suffered by people living adjacent to the

Warragamba catchment. How many more people now will not or can not insure property due to raising cost of insurance?????????

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. P. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "R".



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

PETA SEATON, M.P.

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

SHADOW MINISTER FOR THE
ENVIRONMENT

ASSISTANT TO THE LEADER OF THE
OPPOSITION ON WOMEN



19 March 2002

The Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Bushfires
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000

Dear Secretary

I have enclosed a submission from Mr Erich Schutte of 30 Chanter Road, Thirlmere 2572 for consideration by the Joint Select Committee.

I would be grateful if you would register this submission, and ensure all Committee Members are made aware of it and the content of the submission be considered in detail.

Yours sincerely

Peta Seaton MP
Member for Southern Highlands
Shadow Minister for Competition and
Consumer Protection
Shadow Minister for Small Business
Shadow Minister for Insurance Regulation
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