

16 February 2007

Letters to the Editor

Victorian bushfires

Now that the eastern Victorian Bushfires are contained after 69 days on continuous burning, I along with hundreds of country Victorians, I extend my gratitude to our courageous volunteer fire fighters for their tremendous effort in containing the massive bushfires that swept across North Eastern Victoria and Gippsland. Their gallant efforts minimised loss of private assets, for which affected communities and individuals are extremely grateful.

Over a million hectares of forest lands was ravaged by these fires, equivalent to an area of about one seventh or 14% of Victoria's state forests and national parks.

These areas will eventually recover as is evident in the regrowth occurring in the Grampians after last year's inferno. But in the meantime, the loss of bird and wildlife along with erosion threats in the now desolate forests, make for a very eerie and silent world.

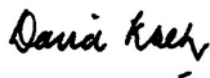
Yet, while not totally unexpected, the silence from the Greens and their contemporaries in protecting their political influence is even more eerie.

The truth is that their influence has meant regular, managed fuel reduction burns have been curtailed. Fuel loads have built up and when fires ignite, their ferocity makes it impossible for them to be extinguished.

Fire track maintenance has been ignored, making it difficult for fire fighters to reach fires.

Having raised this matter in parliament this week, I believe we desperately need an informed debate on how to best manage our forests so that they receive adequate management resources. We need to learn from the short-sightedness of a "hands-off" policy and return to proper management of our significant forest reserves as forest floor fuel build up goes unchecked.

Yours sincerely



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