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Acknowledgements:

* I acknowledge that my submission will be treated as a public document and may be published, quoted or summarised by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

* I understand that I can be contacted by the Royal Commission in relation to my submission.

SUBMISSION TO VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE ROYAL COMMISSION
By D.J. Auchterlonie.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to submit the following issues to your Royal Commission:-

1. There is a desperate need to carry out planned fuel reduction burning at the correct time of the year on a mosaic pattern in the forest. In 1997 the department that is now the DSE carried out a financial review of fire prevention and fire suppression in Victoria and found that for every dollar spent on fire prevention there is a saving of \$22.00 in damage to infrastructure. This did not include other losses such as tourism, water losses, recreation and cost to humans. There is a "Fire Triangle" of oxygen, ignition and fuel – the only thing humans can control is fuel. Adequate staff should be employed to take advantage of the "windows" of opportunity for this burning.
2. Road reserves used to be used as fire breaks. People should be able to remove fallen timber from road reserves for firewood so that the fuel load is at least reduced.
3. Cattle grazing should be re-introduced in those areas where the practice has traditionally taken place. The fuel load in those areas is now very high.
4. Water loss from wild fires has been estimated in Gippsland at 57,622 GL per annum for the burnt areas for the next 64 years. Commercially water is valued at \$2,000 per megalitre.
5. An adequate education program to teach householders fire-safe procedures on their properties should be undertaken. DSE staff could be used for this in the non burning/suppression times. Finally, adequate suppression equipment needs to be provided, but planes can't fly in high winds or the darkness so fuel reduction should be the priority.