

Put Foresters back in the Forests

by Viv Forbes

4 January 2020

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There was a time when Australian foresters kept Australian forests safe and productive. They maintained access tracks bridges and fire breaks, undertook prescribed burning, cleared flammable litter from the forest floor, cut suckers, manned fire lookouts and maintained their own fire-fighting crews in decentralised districts. University-trained professional foresters were supported by tough experienced rangers who learned their job in the bush.

Almost every advance in bushfire management in Australia, from the science of fire behaviour to aerial burning was thanks to our foresters. Into the 1980's they were regarded as international leaders.

To pay for good forest management, sections of the forest were logged, allowing ground space and sunlight for the swift re-growth of new trees.

And those fading die-hards still beating alarm drums about man-made global warming should be reassured - the use of hardwood and softwood timber in power poles, telephone poles, bridges, wharves, posts, sleepers, haysheds and houses provided long term sequestration of the dreaded carbon. Moreover, growing trees extract CO2 more quickly than mature trees. Win, win, win.

Then we entered the Green Era. Foresters and timber-getters were demonised by urban greens, their tame bureaucrats and academics, and their ABC mates. State forests were converted to National Parks and Wilderness Areas and John Howard created the hated Kyoto Protocol Forests on private land. Timber imports rose.

Every locked-up, un-managed, un-burnt forest inevitably breeds disastrous wild-fires. The combination of heavy fuel load, poor access for fire fighters, drought, hot winds, arsonists and dry lightning has only one assured outcome – a bushfire tragedy for the forest and the neighbours. (Why are no greens chaining themselves to trees now?)

This must change. No enquiries are needed. Anyone without green blinkers can see the evidence daily. So, cut the locks, open the tracks and remove the trash. Then call tenders from local people to use recreation, tourism, timber getting or hunting feral animals to fund proper care and maintenance of our forests. A well-managed forest can pay for its own management and also keep the community safe and happy.

Control must be local. Local Foresters and local fire Wardens must call the shots on when/how to reduce flammable litter, weeds and suckers. Everyone should have the right (maybe the obligation), to fire proof their own properties and boundaries. There should be no more national parks – just local parks. And arson should be treated as terrorism.

The State governments can provide weather forecasts, bushfire warnings, radar information, aerial support and TV performances.

The Feds should return some of their tax receipts to help us to restore the forests we have lost, but otherwise they should keep out of the way.

The urban greens have had their moment in the sun. They seized management of Australian forests from Australian Foresters, and have had every opportunity over the last 25 years to apply their evergreen theories on bushfire management. The result is there for everyone to observe - total and tragic failure.



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Far too many bushfires start in National Parks. Few stay in the Parks.

It's time to get sensible forest policies and professional forest managers back on the job.

Get rid of the Red Bull and the Green Fairies – bring back the White Knights.

Viv Forbes

3 January 2020

Washpool Qld 4306 Australia

vforbes@bigpond.com

Viv Forbes has been an explorer and pastoralist in Queensland and NT for most of his long life. He has lit fires (accidentally and deliberately), and he and his wife have fought fires and had their camps, fences and pastures wiped out by fires. They were both members of a local bush fire brigade for over 25 years. (Judy was even qualified).

This article has benefitted from suggestions from experienced forest professionals and others.

Further Reading:

Green ideology, not climate change, makes bushfires worse:

<https://volunteerfirefighters.org.au/green-ideology-not-climate-change-makes-bushfires-worse>

Tasmanian Arson suspected:

<https://www.skynews.com.au/details/6119161106001>

Here are the culprits:

<https://www.michaelsmithnews.com/2020/01/greenies-on-hazard-reduction-burns.html>

While our ABC amends the past:

<https://www.theunshackled.net/run-down/abc-attempts-to-memory-hole-story-on-backburning-protestors>

Timber Imports to Rise:

<https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/import-forecast-fells-domestic-timber-20101116-17w1p.html>

Some Background:

<https://saltbushclub.com/category/bushfires/>