

# TRANSCRIPT

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

### Subcommittee

### Inquiry into fire season preparedness

Melbourne — 19 July 2016

#### Members

Mr David Davis — Chair

Ms Samantha Dunn

Ms Harriet Shing — Deputy Chair

Mr Adem Somyurek

Ms Melina Bath

Ms Gayle Tierney

Mr Richard Dalla-Riva

Mr Daniel Young

#### Participating Members

Mr Greg Barber

Mr James Purcell

Mr Jeff Bourman

Mr Simon Ramsay

Ms Colleen Hartland

#### Staff

Acting Secretary: Dr Christopher Gribbin

Research Assistant: Ms Annemarie Burt

#### Witnesses

Mr Chris Ekinsmyth (sworn), Blairgowrie Community Fire Prevention Action Group.

**The CHAIR** — I welcome Chris and indicate that I am well aware of the work that his group has been undertaking, and indeed I have had them express some of the points that they make in their submission to me separately in Blairgowrie. If I can ask you just to step through briefly what you would like to say, and then we will ask some questions.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — The reason I gave that sheet to be distributed is that it indicates what Point Nepean really looks like. When most people think of Point Nepean they think of the Point Nepean National Park and the quarantine station. Point Nepean actually extends back a long way further than that — all the way to Rye — so there are four equal divisions, if you like. There is Blairgowrie, Sorrento, Portsea and then Point Nepean National Park. So they all have a very common problem with them.

The first thing that happened was that a community group which supports whatever it can support in Blairgowrie, called Community 3942 — 3942 being the postcode — received the Blairgowrie action plan. There it is. They were distributed as township plans. What it did show, and if I could just ask you to have a look at this: the red part, this was in 2010, was extreme fire danger. There were 45 such areas of extreme fire danger promulgated in Victoria, and this one covered the whole of Blairgowrie and not necessarily the rest of the Nepean Peninsula.

What we did was we thought, ‘Well, this is a bit peculiar’, because the Nepean Peninsula is no more than 4 kilometres wide at any point, and then it goes right down to the tip, which is Point Nepean, which is a very small tip. What we did was we thought, ‘Well, how do we get our fire danger from extreme to something reasonable?’. So what we did was we identified the agencies involved. We invited inspections, so we have had all the politicians — state, federal and local — and any other one person who we identified as being interested; so we identified David when this body was set up, and David came down and had a look.

**Ms SHING** — David who, sorry?

**The CHAIR** — Me.

**Ms SHING** — Oh, the Chair.

**The CHAIR** — Just as I indicated before.

**Ms SHING** — Sorry, no, that is fine. There are a number of Davids in relation to the Mornington Peninsula. We just need to make sure we are settled on who that is.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Should I call him ‘Chair’?

**Ms SHING** — No, no. That is all right.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — We showed him what we thought. We have achieved a great deal, but we think there is a problem in fire prevention from a community perspective. I guess that you will be getting the perspective of a lot of agencies dealing with bushfire prevention, but we are a community organisation which has no irons in the fire other than to prevent bushfire in our area.

What we think is that it is not just a matter of lack of resources. You will be told that everyone wants resources by everyone, and sure, resources would be handy, but it is more than that. From our perspective it is a lack of coordination between the agencies, and there is a lack of consistency between the agencies involved in fire prevention. In our area, the agencies are DELWP, Parks Victoria and the Mornington Peninsula shire. The police also come into it to some extent but not in fire prevention so much — —

**The CHAIR** — And the CFA.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — The CFA, sorry, as well. I am going to give you four examples of this lack of consistency and lack of coordination and then a couple of suggestions on how we think it could be overcome.

First, a very short example: Craig Lapsley, who has visited us on a number of occasions, has said that in the bushfires over summer that community alert sirens have saved lives. We have applied for such things, and we did not get them. The CFA do not believe that. It is an inconsistency between two people who should have a consistent opinion, we think.

Evacuation on a code red day: on a code red day on the Nepean Peninsula tens of thousands of people do not evacuate; they go exactly the opposite — they come down to go to the beach. So to give people the advice that on a code red day you should evacuate our area is just stupid. It is not going to happen. So what else can happen? Well, let us get something that can happen, and there are a number of alternatives, we believe, to saying to people in our area, 'Leave on a code red day'. It is not going to happen, so what do you do?

Then we have fire fuel reduction in the national park. The national park that goes along the Nepean Peninsula all the way from Point Nepean to Flinders is called the Mornington Peninsula National Park. It is the most visited national park in Victoria. It is rated extreme by the CFA and the shire when it comes to fire fuel levels. About a year ago they had a burn-off — a controlled burn — at the Point Nepean National Park, which adjoins that park, and it got out of control. This controlled burn was on a day which was considered to be safe, with firefighting appliances all around. Everything was in favour of having a controlled burn, and yet it got out of control.

So what we have been pressing for for six years is to have some sort of division between the national park and the housing along the peninsula. We have not got anywhere with DELWP. We have not got anywhere with the national parks, whose funding is controlled by DELWP. What we did get was a fellow who came down from here, from Melbourne, and showed us on a computer that on the worst possible day that has ever been recorded a fire in the national park could not spread into the buildings that bordered it.

Now, you know, we have just experienced what I have said. We have had a controlled burn get out of control. We have got fuel levels there which are just quite extraordinary, and the chairman has visited and seen what they are, and they have gotten way, way worse in the last 20 years that I have lived down there and way, way worse since 2010, when this original report was published.

It is not just a matter of pumping resources into it. The fellow who was sitting next to me when the fellow from DELWP presented his computer report was the manager of the national park, and at the end of the session he said to me, 'Now, you've got nothing to worry about, Chris, have you?'. I said — and his name was also Chris — 'Chris, if I've got nothing to worry about, why don't you just do a controlled burn in here?'. Of course they could not; it is just impossible. It does not make sense that the fire could not spread from that national park into the neighbourhood adjoining it. That is the sort of frustration which as a community group we face. It is a lack of common sense and a lack of consistency. Everyone is saying different things, and in the end nothing is being done.

Then we have the fourth point that I would like to make, which is a difference in methodology. You will undoubtedly consider whether you have controlled burns, mechanised clearing or hand clearing. There have been examples of that done down our way in the Point Nepean National Park, quite extensive areas, and seeing what the results of that have been and what the results of the grow back have been, and yet there are still arguments. I am not going to say one is better than another, because Parks Victoria has conducted those experiments. I was there. I have been a member of the Friends of Point Nepean for 20 years and its coordinator for 15 years, which is longer than any person who works in that park has ever worked there, so I have a fair idea of what I am talking about. They are quite distinct things: when you burn, this happens; when you put machines in, this happens; and when you do it by hand, this happens. Then you follow it up a year later, and you can see what is coming back and what is not coming back. All those experiments have been made, and yet they still argue about what should be done. It does not make sense.

We have got examples of the shire doing roadside clearance where it looks clear. You walk around the corner to where the foreshore committee — that is, the Port Phillip Bay foreshore committee — have done their clearing, and it is altogether different. We are not saying one is better than the other. We live down there because we love trees. We love nature. We are not trying to get rid of it. We are just trying to say, 'At least be consistent', because if you have got a property on the corner of a street and one side of it is cleared in one way and the other side is cleared in a different way, leaving much more remnant vegetation and cut material, you would say, 'What's going on here?'. Surely there has got to be some consistency.

There should be consistency, because all these bodies meet. The shire chairs a committee which looks into these things every month. We have been in attendance at that, and everything they say is fantastic, but they go away and they do not cooperate. So what we are suggesting is that we need a person who is ultimately responsible for fire prevention. We thought it was Craig Lapsley at the start, and it is not. We want a bloke. This bloke has got to be able to —

**The CHAIR** — Or a woman, indeed.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — A bloke or a lady has got to be able to come in and say, ‘What you’re saying about this national park is nonsense’, or come in and say, ‘What you’re saying about the national park is correct’, but you need some ultimate authority. At present we have got no-one who as a community we can go to, because all the different agencies have their own ideas.

The second thing we think is that there should be a legislative responsibility for roadside vegetation and fuel clearing. It is not just down our way, where we have got tea-trees and stuff everywhere; it is also out in the bush. If you drive along a bush road, the fire fuel adjoining the road is much different from the paddocks that adjoin it and therefore presents a different problem. Whose responsibility is it? The shire obviously cannot do it.

Lastly, and this does come to resources, we think that if we have a productivity commission, as we had in Victoria in 2005, and if the findings of that productivity commission say that there is a high cost of disasters and the resources for disaster mitigation are not there, there needs to be a balance between the cost of fixing things up and the cost of preventing them in the first place.

**The CHAIR** — Chris, can I thank you for that presentation. As I said earlier, you and others did talk through some of this with me a few weeks ago. I am going to try to very briefly summarise your key points. The first point is that there is significant risk in that area from Blairgowrie down along the peninsula — potentially catastrophic risk to property but most importantly to lives — because there is no clear disaster plan and there is no clear way in which people can move off the peninsula. Indeed your further point is that in fact on those very high heat and risk days people move to that area of the peninsula in vast numbers. That is the first point.

The second point is that there is a lack of coordination with the agencies. You have enumerated all the agencies. I will not do that again. They have different methods, there is no overarching plan and there is a lack of best practice, if I can put it that way, because of that.

The third thing, and perhaps you have not mentioned so much of this now, but you have on other occasions, is the proximity to some areas of significant growth. There is a genuine immediate risk to some properties, despite the claim that things cannot move from park and other structures and land uses to private property. There is a genuine risk there. Finally, as I said, the other aspect is weeds. You talked at length to me about the problem of clearing, about how a lot of the introduced weeds are very much rampant through areas of the peninsula and about the lack of focus on those. I do not know if I have summarised that fairly.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — The problem with looking at it from the point of view of clearing weeds is different from the fire. The weeds cause the fire, admittedly, but if we want the weeds to be cleared, then we are getting back onto resources and funding, and that is something we did not want to touch on. The point that we are trying to make is that we can do a lot better without more funding.

**The CHAIR** — Yes, I get that.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Sure, we want more funding but, putting a percentage on it, a 25 per cent improvement could be made — and I have just given you a couple of examples — in fire fuel levels —

**The CHAIR** — A coordination.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — with cooperation, consistency and common sense.

**The CHAIR** — Then on top of that additional focus we would target some of the areas with weed infestation?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Sure.

**Ms SHING** — Thanks, Chris, for your evidence and for answering the questions and providing a really detailed submission to the committee. I would like to talk about the maintenance of the existing — I think it is 38 kilometres — firebreaks along the Mornington Peninsula and the national park to in fact prevent the spread of fire. What is your view in relation to the adequacy of those firebreaks, and at what point, if ever, have they been adequate and have now ceased to be adequate?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Okay. The breaks are outlined in the Mornington Peninsula district coastal fuel strategy. There is not 38 kilometres of breaks; there is 38 kilometres of national park. That is the length of it. Now going across the national park — and the national park is only about 400 metres deep as it goes along the Bass Strait coast — there are several firebreaks. They are a good distance apart, and they are very narrow. The CFA has said that it will not send trucks into those firebreaks because they are not wide enough. Parks Victoria says they are wide enough. We had our only success in our area, in Blairgowrie, one month ago. After six years of asking for a firebreak in Blairgowrie — and Blairgowrie is 4 kilometres long — we finally got one.

**Ms SHING** — When was that?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Two months ago.

**Ms SHING** — Two months ago, okay.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — What is more, it was done after a lot of pressure, in cooperation with the shire and Parks Victoria. It is the only example of cooperation we have seen. Many of our roads where we live drive straight into the national park. The shire is clearing them. The shire is doing a great job — the shire is clearing them — but once they get to the national park it is just jungle.

**Ms SHING** — Is that the sort of confusion that you referred to at the start of your submission? It is where you talked about having:

... monitored very carefully the somewhat confused way in which the fire risk in Blairgowrie has been assessed by government and its agencies and the contradictory policies within and between agencies.

Is that the sort of issue that you are referring to when you said there were six years without getting anything done and then finally there was some movement a couple of months ago and there is a need to get better work between agencies and parks — agencies such as the CFA, and Parks Victoria on the other hand — to deal with the interoperability of fuel reduction and land management? Is that the flavour — —

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Exactly. Our suburb is only 3 kilometres long, but we are putting enormous pressure on it. We have had enormous success in getting fuel levels down in our area, but not in other areas because we are the only ones pushing it. It is all right if we are there, but what about the people next door to us in the next suburb down, who are not pushing to have this sort of cooperation done?

**Ms SHING** — So community ownership and a total buy-in is obviously important in terms of those small areas where it requires a critical mass to maintain safety and to effectively reduce fuel. What about weed management and weed reduction? As I understand, there are additional works of weed control being undertaken or worked through with the Green Army to actually get work done to manage weed growth and therefore to manage fuel build-up over time. I see you smiling somewhat wryly, so I would welcome your views on that.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Well, when they had the Green Army teams first put out, I put in a submission. Now, I am only an old retired bloke and I have not got the facilities to photocopy and do all that sort of stuff, but my submission was not successful. However, it was picked up by Parks Victoria and the local manager, Libby Jude, who is an excellent person, used the same thing and put it in again, and it was successful. But do not forget that a Green Army team is 10 people and they are operating along a 36-kilometre frontage to Bass Strait, and I have not seen them in Blairgowrie yet. The weed problem there, you have to see it to believe it. It is a South African weed which is predominantly there. When I first went there over 20 years ago you could walk through that national park anywhere. Now you cannot walk through it, except on a defined path, because this weed has just taken over the whole place.

**The CHAIR** — It is so dense.

**Ms SHING** — In relation to the further work that needs to be done, you have indicated that you started off with a belief that someone in Mr Lapsley's position would be the appropriate person to oversee the way in which risk is managed and the way in which fuel is reduced and planned burns and other modifications take place, and you have now indicated that your view has changed and that you require someone to actually take a decision. How in your view — and I know that you are going to be positional on this, and that is precisely why you are here before the committee — would a decision be taken that would strike the right balance between maintaining biodiversity on the one hand, taking care of the existing indigenous floral and faunal species in the

area, and also minimising the risk of loss of life and damage to property in an area which is in fact growing, albeit within a very confined space? Density is increasing, the tourist and visitor numbers are increasing. There is a very, I would suggest, difficult series of decisions that would need to be taken around what takes priority in the making of that decision. What do you think should take priority in the making of that decision?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — I do not think anything should take priority necessarily. It will differ according to the particular area. I mean, I am not a greenie per se, but I am very much an environmentalist, and that is why I live in the area and that is why most of us live in the area. We just love the environment. What we cannot understand is why the different agencies do things so differently. The shire, for example, takes more material out than DELWP do. Which is right and which is wrong? We do not know. We can only look at it and we will all have different opinions. We would like what is left to be everything to everybody.

**Ms SHING** — Do you see how that is a very difficult thing to deliver, though?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Yes, absolutely it is a very difficult thing to do. The problem is that when you colour a map red like that, it should not be coloured like that because the danger is much more in certain areas than it is in others and therefore different things can be applied to it. It takes only a little bit of common sense by the people doing it and it can be done.

Another example: on one of the major access roads to Point Nepean the shire went along a footpath and cleared. Two weeks later they went along the same footpath and cleared in the other direction down to the road. So one was clearing the footpath; the other was clearing the road. We just could not believe it. We said to them, ‘What are you doing? Surely you know you’re doing this sort of thing and the one team could have done the whole lot for two-thirds of the price of doing it both ways?’. It is simply common sense.

**Ms SHING** — But that is a cost and an operational issue. So that is on the one hand. That decision might be taken for a variety of different reasons. The net result, though — subject to that two-week lag, in which case you will get vegetation build-up at different rates — is a clearing which would then in fact reduce fuel and thus potentially have a correlation to a greater degree of safety. How we get there might differ, depending on who you are talking to, and invariably it will differ. You have just indicated you would like the area to be all things to all people and for a decision to be taken that actually takes account of all interests, but inevitably there has to be a process of prioritisation.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — There does. Okay. To give you an example. Our group has taken over a bushland reserve in Blairgowrie for the very specific purpose that you are asking about in this question. In our group of 11, everyone has different points of view and the shire, who oversee the whole process, have different points of view as well. What we do is as we work we talk about it: should we do this, should we do that? The shire, for example, want to preserve a colony of bush rats. Now, most of us are not too keen on bush rats, especially if they are right next door to your house.

**Ms SHING** — I have come across a few myself, in my backyard.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — So, you know, those sorts of things have to be talked out. Now, the bush rats are still there and they are going to remain there, but we said that we do not want them as soon as winter comes to be running in next door and disturbing things. So I think it can be done and the process of talking about it gets it done, but in the end you need a person. In our case, it is the shire officer who overlooks our group. He says, ‘This is what we’re going to do’.

**Ms SHING** — And everybody lives with that?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Sure. We have come a long way and our bushland reserve is magnificent now.

**Ms SHING** — Everybody lives with that, despite the fact that it may not be all things to all people?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Absolutely.

**Ms SHING** — All right. Thank you.

**Mr BARBER** — Just a few points of clarification. I agree up-front that it is their job to solve this problem and not yours. You are becoming an expert on this but it is actually them who should be putting these things up. Fuel reduction burning in the park — do you think it can work or it cannot work?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — It can work.

**Mr BARBER** — They did one and it almost got away but you think they should persist?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Oh, no. They have done more than one. They were going to do another quite large one right by the quarantine station, which is in Point Nepean National Park, which you have obviously heard about.

**Mr BARBER** — Sure.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — But they decided not to do it, so they did it with mechanical clearing and by handwork. It is just a matter of looking at the potential danger of the fire spreading. Now, that particular area, which was part of the plan that was put up before the last government, was not particularly dangerous, in my estimation, and yet they did not burn it.

**Mr BARBER** — I am thinking more about Blairgowrie, where, as you say, it is 10 kilometres long and 400 metres wide and backs onto everybody's backyard along the way. Do you think they would be fuel reducing along there, next to those back fences, or do you need something else there?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Well, I and the members of our group have walked along those areas. Some of them are brush fences, if you do not mind, with piles of fire fuel right next to them. There used to be right along that national park a telegraph line. You could put a mechanical mulcher there virtually without destroying any of the native vegetation and still clearing 20 metres, which is CFA minimum. So it can be done. It costs a bit but it does not cost as much as repairing the damage after a fire and it does do what the national parks — I read it only the other day — have as part of their charter, that they must be safe for everyone. Now, they are not safe for everyone and even with the best good grace of people like Libby Jude, who is in charge of our park, and Chris, the fellow who is in charge of the basic operations of the two parks, they cannot do any more than they are doing without extra resources — that is, clearing the weeds which in turn would reduce the fire fuel levels.

**Mr BARBER** — The weed you are talk about, what is that, boneseed or something?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — No. It is called polygala. It is South African and it is pervasive, but it only grows in alkaline soil and Point Nepean is alkaline.

**Mr BARBER** — Most of them are South African and guess what? In South Africa they have got all our plants as weeds.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Yes. Well, they can have ours, but we do not want theirs.

**Mr BARBER** — So getting rid of all that would make a big difference, do you reckon?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Oh, a huge difference.

**Mr BARBER** — Just on the firebreaks, then, there are some north-south firebreaks, by which I guess you mean across the park — south-west/north-east-type firebreaks?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Yes.

**Mr BARBER** — If they were 70 metres wide rather than what you say, 20 metres wide — which I presume is edge to edge, including the road pavement, a strip of 20 metres — do you think then the CFA would be more willing to send fire trucks and people in there —

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — I am sure they would.

**Mr BARBER** — when there was a fire lit?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Yes, there are several roads which go right across the peninsula — not very many, but several, and they all have 70 — —

**Mr BARBER** — I have Google maps here and it is a beautiful thing to be able to look into people's backyards.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Okay, yes. But they are 70 metres wide, those major roads. The shire has cleared them on the edges, and if the parks did the same, then they would be very clear. But part of the problem is that they do run north-south and that is based on wind and temperatures taken from *Cerberus*. *Cerberus* is a fair way from Point Nepean and it is very, very different. It is on the Mornington Peninsula admittedly, but it is a long way away. We know from living on Point Nepean or the Nepean Peninsula or at the end of the Mornington Peninsula that in the afternoon we get certain breezes which do not run north-south; they run south-west, and that would take the fire not where the firebreaks would stop it but in different directions.

**Mr BARBER** — Across the park.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — In other words it would take — —

**Mr BARBER** — That is an ocean breeze, obviously.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Yes. Exactly.

**Mr BARBER** — It would take it straight across the park towards — —

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Straight across the park. And it is not just Blairgowrie; it is Sorrento and Portsea as well.

**Mr BARBER** — I have not been down to those people's backyards, but Google maps, Google Earth view, certainly gives you a very clear — you can see the line of the park but you can also see that the bush continues unbroken straight into a lot of people's backyards, which is clearly the way they want it or like it. So I think it would depend on the fire conditions at the moment as to whether the CFA decided to send people to face up to the fire front — fires being towards them — —

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — But you see the other thing, Greg, that they have not taken into consideration is that in the summer there is a great deal of hot air that comes from Portsea — sort of like this chamber really.

**Mr BARBER** — I do not know if I can do anything about that.

**Ms SHING** — It is getting very warm in here, gentlemen.

**Mr BARBER** — So, yes, fire breaks across the park are one thing. Are you saying, though, that you think there should be a cleared area at the back of all these people's fences, along the park?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — The ideal situation would be a clearing of the woody weeds and dead tea-tree in the park; in other words, restore the park to what it used to be and in that way the fire danger would be reduced 70 or 80 per cent.

**Mr BARBER** — The understorey, no overstorey.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Yes, there are large trees there, but you have got to set a light to something and most of the stuff that it would set alight is dead; it is just dead wood or weeds.

**Mr BARBER** — I am just wondering, though, if you are proposing — and this would be on the park side of the fence, not in people's backyards — but for that length it would be 20 metres wide and some kilometres long of vegetation removal down to a sort of a grassless hedge level — no overstorey.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — We are trying not to make those sorts of judgements. We have suggested a variety of things, including that, but really it is up to Parks Victoria and DELWP to decide what is going to be most effective. What we are not satisfied with is someone coming down with a computer plan saying, 'It's not going to burn', because we know that is not true. So what you are suggesting could be it and it could be it without any major reduction of native vegetation.



**The CHAIR** — In fact an improvement, arguably, in some areas, where the introduced species actually crowd out and block out some of the stuff — —

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — They do.

**Mr BARBER** — I do not imagine those weeds just appeared overnight; I imagine successive governments have allowed those weeds to grow there like that.

**The CHAIR** — Decades.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — We are not blaming anyone. I have been there for 20 years, and, as I said, 20 years ago you could walk through the whole area without impediment. Now you cannot walk through any of it except on a path.

**Mr BARBER** — Just on the evacuation question, though — I take your point, a lot of holiday coastal areas have the same issue — if a fire alert went up on the internet or whatever, or people just started smelling smoke, they would run in the other direction, would they not?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — They would go to the beach.

**Mr BARBER** — To the north beach?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Yes.

**The CHAIR** — Or south.

**Mr BARBER** — Do you think there are any weather conditions under which they should close the park and not allow people to go to the beach on the south side?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — They do. They close Point Nepean National Park — how many times a year? Four or five. But they do not close the Mornington Peninsula National Park, which is the extension of it running along Bass Strait. Never.

**Mr BARBER** — Never closed. So do you think there are any weather circumstances in which that should be done?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — I do not know that you could do it, because you can get into the Mornington Peninsula National Park from virtually anywhere. There are streets all along it running straight into it.

**Mr BARBER** — We have not talked much about the sources of ignition of these uncontrolled fires, but given how close it is to suburbia, they would mostly be human sources, would they not?

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Absolutely.

**Mr BARBER** — Possibly visitors, possibly people in their own backyards.

**The CHAIR** — Chris, I thank you and your group for your stewardship and enthusiasm. I was certainly very impressed when I met with you and I think the committee will be similarly impressed so we may have further discussions. Thank you.

**Mr EKINSMYTH** — Thank you for your time.

**Committee adjourned.**